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TITLE: China's Rise Toward Regional Hegemony and Taiwan as a Possible Catalyst for Armed Conflict with the United States

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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Executive Summary

Title: China's Rise Toward Regional Hegemony and Taiwan as a Possible Catalyst for Armed Conflict with the United States

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Thesis: China has positioned itself for regional hegemony of the Asian-Pacific through its economic expansion, increased political influence, and its expanding military to create defensive measures to deter United States military involvement. Also this paper will discuss Taiwan as a potential trigger that could cause the US and China to enter into armed conflict.

Discussion: The Chinese economy expanded massively since 1978 and its influence within the Asia-Pacific region has become more entrenched through the years. After Deng Xiaopeng's directive which urged China to maintain a low profile and expand the economy and influence the question of "for what purpose" has become apparent. China has also expanded its military capability which is primarily focused on deterring the U.S. military's ability to influence the region as it has done since the end of WWII. From China's perspective, it also has unfinished business with Taiwan and has vowed to reabsorb Taiwan, to accomplish a political objective of the Chinese Communist Party and achieve the strategic requirement of breaking out of the first island chain. China's endstate is to attain regional hegemony and become the dominant figure within the region but the only way to accomplish this goal is by pushing the U.S. out of the region.

Conclusion: Due to the committed relationship between Taiwan and the U.S. and the proclamation by China to reabsorb Taiwan, this sets the stage for China and the U.S. to potentially engage in armed conflict sometime in the future. As China's economy expands and its military capabilities become more competitive with the U.S., the chances for armed conflict grows, and ultimately Taiwan could be the trigger for the armed conflict between the two nations.

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Preface

When I was growing up in the 1980s the resounding threat to the U.S. was the Soviet Union, and later on after I enlisted in the Marine Corps, in 1991, I recall the tactics were centered around defending against the Soviet threat. But in the background the growing threat of China in the Asia-Pacific region has been steadily growing but, it seems from my perspective, that we as a Marine Corps or DOD at large, have not paid enough attention to China. Although we have executed a “Pivot to Asia” policy we as a DOD have not had a commitment to learning more about Chinese Strategic Culture and made an investment to focus our efforts on a communist nation whose economy and military is projected to surpass the U.S. capabilities in the next few decades. It seems to me that China represents an impending threat to stability not only in the Asia-Pacific but across the globe and we need to begin to invest heavily in learning everything we can about Chinese strategic culture.

I would like to thank my Wife, Leslie, for being my rock and for doing the “Lords Work” in raising our six children...you make a daily sacrifice so that I can have the greatest career known to man...that of a Marine. Also I would like to thank Dr. Christopher Yung for his patience for my stereo-typical “Ugly American” attitude toward international relations, specifically toward China. Also a thanks to my class mates, Changyin Lee (AKA Derrick)-Taiwan Marines, Say Tan-Singapore Navy, and Will Norcott-British Royal Marines, for their advice and recommendations in the writing of this paper. Last but by no means least, I would like to thank LtCol Owen Nucci and Dr. Bill Gordon for your inspiration and support on a daily basis...you two are just good men, thank you for your faith and confidence you have had in me.

Introduction

Since 1978 the Chinese economy has seen continuous, steady, and record growth and has most recently become the second largest economy in the world after the United States, and is currently forecasted to surpass the United States in the coming years. What has also occurred is China's aggressive military buildup of its navy, air capabilities, and anti-access/area denial systems (A2/AD). Although the Chinese are not yet a peer of the United States military, which has a committed presence in the area, China does have military dominance over the South and East China Seas when compared against all of China's neighbors. China has taken advantage of this regional military dominance and has aggressively taken possession of several island features within the South China Sea. Many of these regional aggressive acts are proof that China is capable of using military force when facing an opponent, they can militarily intimidate or defeat. The Chinese could argue that they are only providing area denial capabilities and that they are only interested in securing regional waters to protect their borders and shores from potential hostile actions by the United States and its regional allies. Many theorists and strategists have been attempting to determine what China's long term intentions are, and specifically whether they have intentions of establishing economic and military dominance of China's own region (regional hegemony). Through a building block approach, this paper will illustrate how China has positioned itself for regional hegemony of the Asia-Pacific through its economic expansion, increased political influence, and its expanding military to create defensive measures to deter United States military involvement. This paper will also discuss Taiwan as a potential trigger that could cause the US and China to enter into armed conflict with one another.

In order to explain China's desire to establish regional hegemony in the Asia Pacific, this paper will lay out the path that has been taken by China since becoming a communist country in

1949, and the key elements that occurred which have influenced China's ascension to great power status. "The Century of Humiliation" was the core motivation for change in China and continues to be leveraged today by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) influencing nationalism within China. This thesis will describe the contribution of Deng Xiaoping's "directive outlining principles of a strategy"¹ leading some analysts to conclude that China does have a Grand Strategy. China's explosive economy will also be reviewed owing in large part to the CCP relaxing governmental constraints and limited liberation of its economic sectors to encourage international investment into its economy. Following the steady growth of its economy China used its economy and military to expand its borders and seize contested island chains within the South China Sea and to intimidate China's Asia-Pacific neighbors. Additionally, this thesis will discuss how China is creating specific military platforms to challenge the dominance of the United States aircraft carrier groups and the establishment of A2/AD zones within the South China Sea. This paper will close with an analysis of how the CCP is leveraging Chinese nationalism to support the endurance of the Communist Party in China and to support an aggressive military plan to establish Chinese regional hegemony by creating military dominance within the two main island chains off of the coast of China.

Century of Humiliation

The first element of contention that the Chinese have toward the West is what is called the "Century of Humiliation", which has shaped Chinese views of the international system and has cemented China's distrust of Western powers to include the United States. The "Century of Humiliation" began in 1839 when the British sent gun boats up the Yangtze River to influence

¹ Aaron L. Friedberg, "Going Out": China's Pursuit of Natural Resources and Implications for the PRC's Grand Strategy. (National Bureau of Asian Research, Energy Security and the Asian-Pacific, Seattle Washington, 2014) pulled 4 Jan 2017, Pg. 12 <https://www.ou.edu/uschina/SASD/SASD2007readings/Friedberg2006GoingOutpdf>

and force the Chinese ruler to open China's ports and markets for trade in opium, which began the first "Opium War."² What followed the conclusion of the "Opium Wars" were the "Unequal Treaties", which required China to open new trading ports to nations of the West (Great Britain, Germany, France, and The United States) and to provide free travel of foreigners into the interior of China, and the ceding of territories and regions .³ This time period was the beginning of the end of the Qing Dynasty and by 1911 the Qing Dynasty had fallen and a new fragmented rule was created by warlords that had developed their own economies and locally funded militaries. This left China without a strong central government or the means to defend itself from foreign intrusions.⁴ Ultimately the "Century of Humiliation" ended with a brutal occupation by Imperialists Japanese forces and a bloody civil war that brought communism to China as the ruling party, led by Mao Zedong and the of Chinese Nationalist forces fleeing to Taiwan where they established the Nationalist government.

Following the conclusion of the "Century of Humiliation" a narrative was developed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) which stated, "China as a perpetual victim of Western nations and their continued determination to subjugate it, and painting China as a peace loving and craving nation."⁵ A major portion of the narrative is laced with a great deal of Chinese insecurity and distrust of the West that continues to today, which is apparent in a speech given in

² Alison A. Kaufman, The "Century of humiliation" and China's National Narratives. (China Analyst, Center for Naval Analysis (CAN): Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security review Commission Hearing on "China's narratives Regarding National Security Policy" 10 Mar 2011) Pulled 3 Jan 2017, www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/3.10.11kaufuan.pdf. Pg 2

³ Elizabeth C. Economy and Michael Levi. *By All Means Necessary: How China's Resource Quest Is Changing The World.* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2014) pg 15.

⁴ Ibid. pg 16

⁵ Alison A. Kaufman, The "Century of humiliation" and China's National Narratives. (China Analyst, Center for Naval Analysis (CAN): Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security review Commission Hearing on "China's narratives Regarding National Security Policy" 10 Mar 2011) Pulled 3 Jan 2017, www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/3.10.11kaufuan.pdf. Pg 4

2004 by the then Chinese President Hu Jintao, “Western hostile forces have not yet given up the wild ambition of trying to subjugate us.”⁶

Deng Xiaoping and Grand Strategy

If Mao Zedong’s era is described by violent upheaval in the creation of the PRC and the brutality of internal and continuous revolutions to maintain governance within, and a new found but limited international respect, then the Deng Xiaoping era is one that signifies change and growth. Deng Xiaoping could be compared to Mikhail Gorbachev-- the Soviet Union’s maverick General Secretary of the Party-- whose time in leadership brought about signature change within the Soviet Union and ultimately the fall of the Communist Government in Russia. Although Deng Xiaoping’s leadership did not predicate the fall of the Communist Party in China, it did bring about change in the country that transcended the nation and laid the ground work in China to become the power it is today. Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger describes the difference between Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping by stating: “Mao destroyed traditional China and left its rubble as building blocks for ultimate modernization. Deng had the courage to base modernization on the initiative and resilience of the individual Chinese.”⁷ Deng focused on four areas of modernization “agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology” and he did so through reforms focused on foreign investments and gradually introducing market forces into the state-run economy.⁸ The type of change that Deng Xiaoping introduced would have been seen as an unacceptable outrage in his predecessor’s regime, but if it had not been for the reforms instituted by his forward thinking, China would not have enjoyed the massive economic growth that it has had.

⁶ Ibid. Pg 4

⁷ Ibid. Pg 321

⁸ Elizabeth C. Economy and Michael Levi. *By All Means Necessary: How China’s Resource Quest Is Changing The World.* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2014) Pg 20.

Deng Xiaoping is also indirectly responsible for articulating, what some view, as a Chinese “Grand Strategy”. Aaron L. Friedberg explains that Deng Xiaoping realized that for China to become a major power on the globe then “China needed time” and through his “24 character directive” he encouraged the Communist leadership to “Observe calmly; secure our position; cope with affairs calmly; hide our capacities and bide our time; be good at maintaining a low profile; and never claim leadership.”⁹ Friedberg argues that China’s post-Cold War Grand Strategy is: “Avoid conflict, primarily with the United States; build comprehensive national power; advance incrementally, in order to consolidate a position of strength; maintain stability, defend sovereignty, achieve pre-eminence, and pursue parity.”¹⁰ Friedberg goes on to express the value of a grand strategy by quoting British historian B.H. Liddell Hart:

The role of grand strategy-higher strategy- is to co-ordinate and direct all the resources of a nation, or a band of nations, towards the attainment of the political object of the war-the goal defined by fundamental policy...fighting power is but one of the instruments of grand strategy-which should take account of and apply the power of financial pressure, of diplomatic pressure, of commercial pressure, and, not least, of ethical pressure, to weaken the opponents will.¹¹

Not all would necessarily agree that Deng was trying to create a grand strategy to mislead and dupe the West for the purpose of creating a plan to become a hegemonic preeminent power. Chinese professors Dingding Chen and Jianwei Wang, from Macau University in China, wrote an article describing Deng Xiaoping’s 24 Character Directive and how the phrase “keeping a low profile” became a tenet in Chinese foreign policy. But their explanation for why he used this phrase does not align with many Westerner’s interpretation, when they stated, “Deng used it to

⁹ Aaron L. Friedberg, “Going Out”: China’s Pursuit of Natural Resources and Implications for the PRC’s Grand Strategy. (National Bureau of Asian Research, Energy Security and the Asian-Pacific, Seattle Washington, 2014) pulled 4 Jan 2017, Pg. 12 <https://www.ou.edu/uschina/SASD/SASD2007readings/Friedberg2006GoingOutpdf>

¹⁰ Ibid. Pg 6

¹¹ Ibid. Pg8

describe China's foreign policy orientations when China was facing serious domestic difficulties and tremendous pressures from the West as a result of the Tiananmen incident in 1989...

...Facing an uncertain international situation in which major Western powers suspended high-level diplomatic interactions with and imposed economic and political sanctions against Beijing after the turmoil, Deng told other Chinese leaders that China should *lengjing guancha, wenzhu zhenjiao, chenzhuo yingfu* (*observe calmly, secure our position, cope with affairs calmly*)... We will only become a big political power if we keep a low profile and work hard for some years; and we will then have more weight in international affairs.¹²

Chen and Wang argue that Deng was advising his fellow party members to not over-react to the pressures of the West and to instead focus on growth and China will eventually have the capacity to push back against the West. Chen and Wang go on to state that Deng's proclamation stuck and his successors would continue to use Deng's adage to focus China's foreign policy objectives. Jiang Zemin stated "observe calmly, cope with affairs calmly, never seek leadership, hide brightness and cherish obscurity, get some things done"¹³, and Hu Jintao declared that China needs to "continuously keep a low profile and proactively get some things done"¹⁴, both leaders used these statements as a strategy to keep China focused, and this is a reflection of Deng's continued influence. Chen and Wang make a good argument that Deng may not have crafted the 24 Character Directive to create a grand strategy. It can be argued that as the directive was handed down to his successors, and as China's economy, military capability, and influence expands, a grand strategy for regional hegemony could begin to take shape.

¹² Dingding Chen and Jianwei Wang. "Lying Low No More?: China's New Thinking on the *Tao Guang Yang Hui* Strategy." *China: An International Journal* 9, no. 2 (2011): 195-216. <https://muse.jhu.edu/> (accessed April 24, 2017). Pg 197.

¹³ *Ibid.* Pg 198

¹⁴ *Ibid.* Pg 212

But not all Chinese leadership agree with the continuance of the “Lying Low” policy created by Deng. Liu Mingfu, a PLA member at the National Defense University believes that China should overtly challenge the dominant position of the U.S. globally.¹⁵ Also Luo Yuan, a major general in the PLA Academy of Military Science (AMS) highly criticizing the U.S. stated, “China should have the guts to ‘show sword’ when necessary”¹⁶ Although these provocative statements by PLA officers does not in and of themselves stipulate that China has hegemonic intentions, it does illustrate that some in China believe it has reached the point that lying low is no longer a requirement and China should take a preeminent role.¹⁷

Economic Expansion

As stated earlier the Chinese economy has flourished in the last 35 years and is on pace to supplant The United States as the largest economy in the world. Since 1978 China has assembled an average GDP output of 10% growth per year up until 2014, raising per capita GDP from around \$155 US dollars to around \$7,500 US dollars by 2014 bringing over 800 million of its citizens out of poverty.¹⁸ The accomplishments in the Chinese economy is truly unparalleled and has done a great deal in creating a middle class in China. A growing middle class not only means an improvement in many of the average Chinese lives but China has seen an increase in local Chinese spending.

¹⁵ Dingding Chen and Jianwei Wang. "Lying Low No More?: China's New Thinking on the *Tao Guang Yang Hui* Strategy." *China: An International Journal* 9, no. 2 (2011): 195-216. <https://muse.jhu.edu/> (accessed April 24, 2017). Pg 200

¹⁶ Ibid Pg 200

¹⁷ There is also a popular saying making the rounds in China that “We should stop believing in ghosts”, which means that the Chinese government shouldn’t worry so much about what one of its dead leaders had to say decades ago.

¹⁸ Jonathan Eckart. 8 Things You Need to Know about China's Economy. (World Economic Forum, project Specialist, Economic Growth and Social Inclusion Initiative, 23 June 2016) Pulled 4 Dec 2016, Pg 2. www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/06/8-facts-about-chinas-economy/

Initial moves that Deng's Communist Party conceived, planned, and executed were modernizing the agrarian and industrialization sectors. Concerning farming, the change was made to reduce the commune system of family owned farms in production which had been established by the Maoist regime. Called the "Responsibility System", gradually farms would be returned to each peasant household to control its own production, meaning that as long as government quotas were being met surpluses could be sold on the open market. By 1984 the majority of household farms were transitioned from the commune system and, by 1987 a fifty percent increase in food production was noted while a 150 percent decrease in time spent farming to produce the annual crop, and by 1999 China had become agriculturally self-sufficient.¹⁹ In the industrial sector changes were made to increase efficiency by instituting what is called "Industrial Responsibility System" which offered financial incentives for high performance to the enterprise systems workers and also allowed for a profit sharing agreement that allowed the industrial managing system to keep all profits above what the agreed (between industry enterprise and the government) profit requirement had been.²⁰ The CCP justified these liberal moves by stating: "The difference between a socialist and capitalist economy does not lie in the existence of a commodity economy or the function of the law of value but in the ownership system and the existence or not of an exploiting class, and whether the workers are the master of the house."²¹

In 1980 "Most Favored Nation" (MFN) trade status was given to China by the United States and has been renewed each year after. This has brought a large amount of "foreign direct

¹⁹ Constantine C. Menges. China: The Gathering Threat. (Nelson Current, Nashville Tn, 2005) Kindle Location 2350.

²⁰ Ibid. Kindle Location 2368

²¹ Ibid. Kindle Location 2402

investments and billions of dollars in international economic aid.”²² With the increase in China’s economy and growing requirements for expanding infrastructure a higher demand has been placed on raw materials. What the Chinese government found was that as the demand for raw materials increased the greater dependence on foreign importation of these raw materials. In a 2003 White Paper on mineral resources produced by the CCP “Beijing claimed that China will depend mainly on the exploitation of its own mineral resources to guarantee the needs of its modernization program. At the same time, the White Paper declared, it is an important government policy to...make use of foreign markets and foreign mineral resources.”²³ Formally the government recognized that it will need to increase foreign investment into the Chinese economy and continue Deng’s initiative to open to the West. Since 1980 the consumption of oil, coal, and natural gas has doubled every dozen years and this is being driven by the ever increasing demand for electricity, and its consumption of copper, iron-ore, and aluminum has risen exponentially.²⁴

Ever since Deng made his lasting mark on Chinese strategy China has been focused on the engine that powers its military buildup and its regional and global influence, and that engine was economic growth. Deng’s focal point was to build the “comprehensive power” of China which cannot be limited to increasing “military power” in building national security strength.²⁵ Deng went on to place importance in “economic development” and placing its importance over “defense development” which was articulated in an article entitled “Deng Xiaoping’s Strategic

²² Ibid. Kindle Location 11328

²³ Elizabeth C. Economy and Michael Levi. *By All Means Necessary: How China’s Resource Quest Is Changing The World*. (Oxford University Press, New York, 2014) Pg 22. Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, “China’s Policy on Mineral Resources,” White Paper, December 23, 2003.

²⁴ Ibid. Pg22.

²⁵ Peng Guangqian, “Deng Xiaoping Strategic Thought”, in Michael Pillsbury, ed., *Chinese Views of Future Warfare*, NDU Press, Washington, D.C., 1997, pg 3.
<http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/ndu/chinview/chinapt1.html#2>

Thought” whose author noted, “Defense development is only a part of national economic development, and should be planned and developed in coordination with national economic development.”²⁶ Of course a focus on economics is not an indicator of China’s intention to pursue regional hegemony, however, Deng and China in placing a concerted focus of effort on economic development signifies their intent to use the economy as the engine that truly transforms China into a major power.

Chinese intentions for Regional Hegemony

The United States realized early on, with the declaration of the “Monroe Doctrine”, to proclaim regional control and sought out the capability to enforce the Western Hemisphere as a U.S. controlled region. Does it not make sense that China would come to the same “realist conclusion” and want the same?²⁷ In China’s history, China used to be the regional hegemon and enjoyed dominance over the Asia-Pacific theater and was able to set rules for trade and tribute with neighboring and even faraway states. So from the perspective of China it makes sense that it would want to place itself in a position to once again lead in the Asia-Pacific theater and replace The United States as the perennial power within the region. Although it may or may not seem logical that China’s ultimate goal is to attain regional hegemony the U.S. does not know for certain what China’s true intentions are. John Mearsheimer describes this problem when describing “Offensive Realism Theory” and his listed five assumptions, indicating that “intentions are a different matter. States can never be certain about the intentions of other states,

²⁶ Peng Guangqian, “Deng Xiaoping Strategic Thought”, in Michael Pillsbury, ed., *Chinese Views of Future Warfare*, NDU Press, Washington, D.C., 1997, pg 4.

<http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/ndu/chinview/chinapt1.html#2>

²⁷ John J. Mearsheimer. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. (W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 2014) Pg 375.

because intentions are inside the heads of leaders and thus virtually impossible to see and difficult to measure.”²⁸

This thesis takes the realist viewpoint in speculating on the impact of China’s rise in the future, based on China’s past actions and its employment of “Active Defense”. John Mearsheimer quotes E. H. Carr in describing the realist perspective by stating “Realism tends to emphasize the irresistible strength of existing forces and the inevitable character of existing tendencies, and to insist that the highest wisdom lies in accepting, and adapting oneself to these forces and these tendencies.”²⁹ In other words a nation will shape its foreign policy and military stance to defend or deter against the existing tendencies of other powerful nations, such as China building up its military capabilities to deter U.S. naval capabilities. Mearsheimer goes on to say that there is evidence that Chinese leaders would like to develop the capability to push the U.S. Navy beyond both the first and second island chains.³⁰ Also he quotes a Chinese spokesperson summing up Beijing’s perspective concerning Chinese objections in 2010 toward the U.S. aircraft carrier (USS George Washington) in performing maneuvers in the Yellow Sea: “We firmly oppose foreign military vessels or planes entering the Yellow Sea and other waters adjacent to China to engage in activities that would impact on its security and interests.”³¹ According to Mearsheimer this perspective of China wanting to push the U.S. out of the region makes sense and follows suit with what the U.S. did through the implementation of the Monroe Doctrine. Therefore, according to Mearsheimer’s realist perspective, it would be a natural progression for China to establish hegemonic dominance in the Asia-Pacific.

²⁸ Ibid. Pg 363

²⁹ John J. Mearsheimer. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. (W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 2014) Pg 17

³⁰ Ibid. Pg 374. *The author summarizes chapter 11 of Robert Kaplan’s book “The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us about Coming Conflicts and the Battle against Fate.*

³¹ Ibid. Pg 374

Christopher Ford makes a number of points in his article describing “Realpolitik with Chinese Characteristics” concerning China’s penchant for violence “when the balance of forces permits, hidden by an ideational front.”³² He goes on to explain that Alastair Iain Johnston, Michael Swaine, and Ashley Tellis have contended that:

Chinese history demonstrates not so much a Confucian approach to issues of war and peace but in fact a realism that actually preferred military force as a means of resolving disputes when that option was available, and that pursued what today might be known as soft-power competition only when the balance of forces left the empire no other choice.³³

Ford also highlights a combination of influences on Chinese foreign policy in the interweaving of “realist and Confucian inclinations.”³⁴ Ford leverages the opinion of Huiyun Feng, whom is a respected Phd of political science and International Relations, and on U.S. – China relations, by stating that “Mao Zedong was a realist and Deng Xiaoping was more Confucianism...and that Feng saw China as more a defensive realist than offensive.”³⁵ Andrew Scobell’s perspective differs somewhat with Feng, although he agrees that China’s strategic culture is “dualistic” in including “defensively minded Confucian elements with offensively oriented realpolitik elements coexist.”³⁶ Where Scobell disagrees, however, is that he believes that the “realist elements seem more important...resulting in a Chinese ‘cult of defense’ in which realist behavior dominates but is justified as defensive on the basis of a pacifist self-perception.”³⁷ In Scobell’s

³² Christopher Ford. “Realpolitik with Chinese Characteristics: Chinese Strategic Culture and the Modern Communist Party-State. (National Bureau of Asian Research. Strategic Asia 2016-17. Understanding Strategic Cultures in the Asia-Pacific) pg. 28.

³³ Ibid. pg 40

³⁴ Ibid. pg 41

³⁵ Ibid. pg 41. Huiyung Feng is an associate professor and senior researcher at Utah State University. She holds a Phd in Political Science, majoring in International Relations. She is a consistent contributor in works concerning China-US relations and most notably wrote a book in 2007 called *Chinese Strategic Culture and Foreign Policy Decision-Making: Confucianism, Leadership and War*; in which Ford references for his article.

³⁶ Ibid. pg 41

³⁷ Ibid. pg 41

article on “China and Strategic Culture” he identifies the irony in the Chinese thought process on justifying an overt offensive attack as a defensive effort:

Significantly, China’s largest military conflict in the post-Mao era—an attack against Vietnam in February 1979—was triggered by Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia. Although it was China that invaded Vietnam, Beijing officially labeled this war a “self-defensive counterattack” [ziwei huanji]. According to two military thinkers: “[A] strategic counterattack implies a strategic offensive.” The strategists continued: the February 1979 self-defense counterattack against Vietnam, from the military operational standpoint, offensive actions were employed. Nevertheless, the essence of this kind of offense was a self-defense counterattack.³⁸

Scobell and Ford both believe that the Chinese foreign policy is truly based on a realist perspective, and although they do not explicitly agree with Mearsheimer and call it “offensive realism”, they both agree that an offensive component exists in Chinese military actions.

Dr. Yuan-Kang Wang, who is a “Taiwan Fellow” with the Brookings Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies (CNAPS), states there are two basic schools of thought amongst China’s analysts in which he summarizes: “Some suggest that China should play a ‘dominant’ role in the regional, if not global affairs, and should ‘reshape’ a world order that better suits Chinese interests. Others put forth a somewhat qualified view and suggest that China should play a preeminent role in regional security affairs, with global economic interests, but should not become a global military power.”³⁹ These two perspectives noted by Dr. Wang are important because they both reflect that China should play at minimum a dominant or preeminent role regionally.

³⁸ Andrew Scobell, *China and Strategic Culture*. (Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2002) pg 9

³⁹ Yuan-Kang Wang. China’s Grand Strategy and U.S. Primacy: Is China Balancing American power? (The Brookings Institution: Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies. Washington D.C.. July 2006) Pg 6. Dr. Yuan-Kang Wang is a “Taiwan Fellow” for the Brookings center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies (CNAPS): In his footnote he references Meng Honghua (An analyst at the Communist Central party School), summarizes the various views into four categories: Regional Great Power, Asia-Pacific regional great power with global influence, great power with global influence, and World great power.

In the Asia-Pacific, determining Chinese intentions are at the crux of the matter so it is left to the U.S. to determine what the core interests or vital interests of China are. One area of vital interests for both countries is the maritime domain which includes the South and East China Seas and are important to both for reasons of security. China recognizes along with the U.S. that secure sea lines of communication (SLOC) are a vital part of their economy and that they should be protected, therefore it makes sense that both states recognize the United Nations Convention on Law of Sea (UNCLOS) (the United States has yet to have ratified UNCLOS).⁴⁰ Yung states that, “China selectively adheres to international law or stretches the interpretation of the international law to suit its own interest,” specifically he is referring to how exclusive economic zones (EEZ) are interpreted by UNCLOS whether they can be entered into by military ships and aircraft without the permission of the state whose EEZ is being entered--China stating that they cannot.⁴¹ From the U.S. perspective it is a method used by China to attempt to keep the United States Navy out of the South China Sea (and other near seas of China), whereas, China sees it as the U.S. attempting to spy on Chinese military operations being conducted in the area.

Another driver for Chinese intentions in the Asian-Pacific are tied to prescriptions for future PLAN dominance designed by Admiral Liu Huaqing, who is considered by some to have been a “Mahanian” figure within Communist China and who worked alongside Deng Xiaoping. “Admiral Liu’s vision, articulated a three-step Mahanian strategy that China appears to be closely following to this day...Step 1. Break out of what he called the ‘near seas’ and the ‘First Island Chain; Step 2. Break out of the ‘Second Island Chain’ in which he projected China would be able to accomplish by 2020; Step 3. China would be projected to achieve global naval

⁴⁰ Christopher Yung and Wang Dong. U.S.-China Relations in the Maritime Security Domain. (NBR Special Report #57, Apr 2016) Pg. 5

⁴¹ Ibid. Pg. 6

supremacy by the year 2050.”⁴² Christopher Yung and Wang Dong place similar level of focus on the “Island Chains” when they articulate the “Chinese Interests in the Maritime Domain” when stating, “to be able to deny or deter during wartime other powers’ ability to pose threats within strategic maritime zones or layers of defense that are defined by the first and second island chains...”⁴³ This means that the island chains have a great deal of importance to both security and defense for China for some time and illustrates why for the Chinese its intentions regarding the interpretation of permitted activities within the EEZ associated with the South and East China Seas. An additional point is the specific islands associated with each chain. Most notably in the first island chain is the island of Taiwan and, being the anchor point in the first chain, is a potential reason that China and the U.S. could eventually end up in armed conflict, in which this paper will discuss more in depth in the next few pages.



⁴² Peter Navaro. *Crouching Tiger: What China’s Militarism means for the World.* (Prometheus Books, Amherst New York 2015) Pg. 53.

⁴³ Christopher Yung and Wang Dong. *U.S.-China Relations in the Maritime Security Domain.* (NBR Special Report #57, Apr 2016) Pg. 7

Chinese Military Expansion

One of this paper's arguments is that China will act like a realist state – similar to its American counterparts in the nineteenth century – and will seek to dominate the Asia-Pacific region. A substantial piece of evidence supporting this assertion is China's record of military build-up. Now to speak specifically to China's military investment it has been steadily increasing its investment into its military modernization effort, and according to Jane's Defense Industry, China increased defense spending an additional "ten percent in 2015" to an amount of about 141 billion USD, and that China has been making double digit increases in spending for some time.⁴⁴ Although an amount of 141 billion is not close to the defense budget of the U.S., which sits at about U.S. \$708 billion; however, when compared to the military requirements that either nation has, the peer competitor comparison is more convincing. Currently China is the world's second largest military spender expending about 2% of its GDP compared with the U.S. percentage of 4.7.⁴⁵ Percentage of GDP tells us that China could have the capability to greatly increase its spending, additionally, due to cheaper labor costs, and reduced environmental controls that exist in China, it is substantially less expensive for China to manufacture goods than it is in the U.S., and that includes weapon systems of all kinds.⁴⁶

China has committed the majority of its spending in building up the capabilities of its PLAN and missile systems, to give a marked increase in its sea and air capabilities, in which most are designed to deter or defeat U.S. aircraft carrier strike groups to produce an A2/AD effect within the first and second island chains, but primarily the first. In providing the A2/AD

⁴⁴ Jon Grevatt. China announces 10% military spending increase. (Jane's Defence Industry, Bangkok, Mar 2015) Pg. 1

⁴⁵ Robert D. Kaplan. *Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea And The End of a Stable Pacific*. (Random House, New York. 2014) Kindle Location 674

⁴⁶ Peter Navarro. *Crouching Tiger: What China's Militarism means for the World*. (Prometheus Books, Amherst New York 2015) Pg. 48

effect China has combined three main platforms to work to provide an overwhelming effect to keep carrier strike groups from influencing the near seas of China: submarines, anti-ship missiles, and mines.

According to Robert Kaplan, China will have over 75 submarines in the next few years, which will exceed the U.S. submarine order of battle. He goes on to state that the Chinese are outbuilding the U.S. by eight to one since 2005.⁴⁷ Granted the majority of China's submarines run on diesel power, at the same time many of them have "air-independent propulsion systems" (AIP) allowing their submarines, to remain submerged much longer operating off of battery power, which also makes them much quieter and makes them more difficult to locate.⁴⁸ When you couple the large number of submarines, with a quiet propulsion system, equip them with cruise missiles and torpedoes, they become one element of an overwhelming factor to accomplish A2/AD.

China has made great strides in anti-ship cruise missiles which can be outfitted on multiple platforms, such as catamarans, surface ships, and also submarines. The sheer volume of China's cruise missile inventory is impressive and according to Peter Navarro, "Taiwan alone has 1,500 pointed at them,"⁴⁹ and according to the Department of Defense "China has the most active land-based ballistic and cruise missile program in the world."⁵⁰ Also China has developed a very capable mobile ballistic missile system that uses satellite guidance and can target and hit moving ships, like aircraft carriers, such as the DF-21.⁵¹ Finally, it needs to be noted that

⁴⁷ Robert D. Kaplan. *Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea And The End of a Stable Pacific*. (Random House, New York. 2014) Kindle Location 623

⁴⁸ Peter Navarro. *Crouching Tiger: What China's Militarism means for the World*. (Prometheus Books, Amherst New York 2015) Pg. 81

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* Pg. 68

⁵⁰ Robert D. Kaplan. *Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea And The End of a Stable Pacific*. (Random House, New York. 2014) Kindle Location 689

⁵¹ Michael McDevitt, "The Strategic and Operational Context Driving PLA Navy Building" in Kamphausen & Scobell, eds., *Rightsizing the People's Liberation Army: Exploring the Contours of China's Military*, Strategic

mobile ballistic missile systems are extremely difficult to track and target. Not only do the cruise missiles threaten U.S. forward operating bases such as in Japan and “Informal Allies” such as Taiwan, a newly developed “hypersonic glide vehicle” has been tested in 2014 and can reach speeds up to “Mach 10” which is over “7,700 miles per hour.”⁵² *Aviation Week* explains, “because the hypersonic glide missile can maneuver aerodynamically, it is much harder to hit,”⁵³ which could overwhelm land based U.S. and allies’ missile defense systems.

The final element to the Chinese triad of systems to create the overwhelming effect of A2/AD within the island chains is the large number of mines that China has at its disposal. China claims to have stockpile over fifty thousand mines which is the largest amount in the world, and their devastating effects of crippling a multi-billion-dollar ship is probably China’s most cost effective threat that they can employ. The vast inventory of mines that China possesses have multiple modes of employment to include acoustic, remote-control, and rocket-rising mines that can be programed to detect a particular type of vessel, that is traveling overhead, before it deploys.

Although not as diverse, the PLAAF has seen a number of improvements and modifications in its platforms to enhance capability. China has recently tested and is placing into service its version of fifth generation stealth fighter called the J-20, which is modeled after the F-22 Raptor, but the Chinese version has larger fuel capacity which could give it greater capability in flying height and flight time. China has also increased the number of fourth-generation aircraft up to five hundred since the year 2000, and reduced the total number of its fighters from

Studies Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA, September 2007, pp 501. Peter Navarro. *Crouching Tiger: What China’s Militarism means for the World.* (Prometheus Books, Amherst New York 2015) pp 58.

⁵² Peter Navarro. *Crouching Tiger: What China’s Militarism means for the World.* (Prometheus Books, Amherst New York 2015) pp 69

⁵³ *Ibid.* pp 69

three thousand to two thousand reflecting improvements in the overall quality of the fighters it has in stock.⁵⁴ This also indicates efficiency in maintenance cost by removing outdated and outmoded technology in their fighter fleet. The implication of the increase in fighter technology elevates China's capability to present a peer competitive match against the U.S. fighter capabilities that could be launched from an aircraft carrier or land based airfields from Japan.

The last specific area that China has developed is anti-satellite capabilities which became known when China shot down one of its own satellites in January 2007. Some interpreted this action as follows: "China was developing technologies that could potentially threaten American space-based intelligence, reconnaissance, and communications capabilities and thus prospectively 'blind' U.S. forces operating in the Asia-Pacific during a crisis."⁵⁵ Since the Gulf War U.S. forces have leaned heavily on their intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capability that was enhanced by satellite imagery. With China's evident capability to degrade strategic communications and limit the battlefield and airwaves to WWII communications technology, such an action would greatly hamper U.S. capabilities all the way down to the tactical level, much less attempting to plan, organize, and target with theater level assets.

The full spectrum of the A2/AD capability sets described above can be injected throughout the first island chain which includes both the South and East China Seas, represents a defensive network to deter U.S. naval and air capabilities. China is also developing offensive and power projection capabilities to increase its sphere of military influence outside of the island chain network. Starting with the PLAN, China currently has only one working aircraft carrier (Liaoning) that has been limited to a training role, but according to Peter Navarro, China is

⁵⁴ Robert D. Kaplan. *Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea And The End of a Stable Pacific*. (Random House, New York. 2014) Kindle Location 695

⁵⁵ Martin A. Smith. *Power In The Changing Global Order*. (Polity Press, Malden, Ma, 2012) Pg 150

currently constructing much larger and “quite-modern carriers.”⁵⁶ Additionally China has developed four types of guided missile destroyers and three types of guided-missile frigates with the following intention, according to Andrew Nathan and Andrew Scobell, “these will enable the navy to make the initial transition from a coastal defense force to an ocean-going, or blue water, force.”⁵⁷ Admittedly for China to produce a capable carrier strike group much less, multiple groups, will take a number of years, most likely decades, but China has the time and the economic ability to do so. In addition to the carrier strike group construction, the Chinese PLAN has an interest in and is preparing for expeditionary maritime missions, by acquiring a hospital ship and replenishment oilers.⁵⁸ China also has a very robust nuclear capability housed in both their Second Artillery units and in their PLAN Jin-class type 094 ballistic-missile submarine.⁵⁹ The Second Artillery is in charge of all of China’s ballistic missile forces which include both conventional and nuclear warheads. These warheads are carried by both stationary and mobile (underground rail) launching systems delivering intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), intermediate-range ballistic missiles, and short-range ballistic missiles.⁶⁰ Lastly, as Christopher Yung and Ross Rustici point out in their publication, China is considering setting up overseas bases in support of “the protection of the people and fortunes overseas; the guarantee of smooth trading; the prevention of the overseas intervention which harms the unity of the country; [and]

⁵⁶ Peter Navarro. *Crouching Tiger: What China’s Militarism means for the World*. (Prometheus Books, Amherst New York 2015) Pg 84

⁵⁷ Andrew Nathan and Andrew Scobell. “China’s Search for Security”. (Columbia University Press, New York, 2012) pg. 288

⁵⁸ Andrew Nathan and Andrew Scobell. “China’s Search for Security”. (Columbia University Press, New York, 2012) pg. 289

⁵⁹ Peter Navarro. *Crouching Tiger: What China’s Militarism means for the World*. (Prometheus Books, Amherst New York 2015) Pg 78

⁶⁰ Andrew Nathan and Andrew Scobell. “China’s Search for Security”. (Columbia University Press, New York, 2012) pg 290

defense against foreign invasion.”⁶¹ Although the stated purpose for the overseas bases is for China to protect its foreign investments and citizens it still represents a force projection capability.

Specifically concerning the A2AD threat, it represents a very formidable proposition for the U.S. to respond and attempt to penetrate into the first island chain due to the overwhelming effects of China’s redundant systems and missile launch capabilities. So what event would need to take place, outside of the U.S. receiving a conventional or nuclear first strike from China, for the U.S. to commit military forces to engage in armed conflict with China within the first island chain? The only plausible reason would be in support of an ally within the region. But which U.S. ally or friend would China risk armed conflict with the U.S.? China has made it clear that Taiwan is its sovereign territory (Taken from them during the *Century of Humiliation*) and that China is unwilling to “negotiate” over, and views U.S. behavior as “interference into China’s internal affairs”. All other disagreements China is willing to “forward proposals of shelving difference, and joint development” concerning other territorial waters like the South and East China Seas.⁶² Concerning Taiwan, however, the issue is absolutely non-negotiable for China.

Taiwan as the Catalyst

To China, Taiwan represents the last section of territory that it lost during the “Century of Humiliation,” specifically to the CCP leadership, in which, the mantra was instilled in them by their original leader Mao Zedong. Mao lumped Taiwan in with the rest of the multiple territories that China lost during the humiliation time period “To territories Mao considered part of that

⁶¹ Christopher Yung, Ross Rustici, Scott Devary, Jenny Lin. “Not an Idea We Have to Shun”: Chinese Overseas Basing Requirements in the 21st Century. (National Defense University Press, Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs Institute for National Strategic Studies China Strategic Perspectives, No. 7, 2014) Pg 8

⁶² Christopher Yung and Wang Dong. U.S.-China Relations in the Maritime Security Domain. (NBR Special Report #57, Apr 2016) Pg. 12

historic China—Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang, Mongolia, border regions in the Himalayas...”⁶³ Since Mao every CCP leader and government as a whole has stressed regaining territories and regions that were considered lost during the “Century of Humiliation.” There is also an element of credibility for the CCP government itself to its people that it governs or rules. Aaron Friedberg articulates the importance of the CCP delivering on its promise to recover Taiwan by stating: “The CCP has staked its legitimacy in large measure on the promise that the Party will reclaim every inch of the territory taken from China during its century of weakness and humiliation... Taiwan’s continued separation from the mainland is thus, at best, a lingering affront to the CCP’s stature and self-regard.”⁶⁴ The CCP has shown itself to be insecure about its position and multiple times in its history has cracked down hard on its citizens to maintain good order and discipline, most noteworthy is the Tiananmen Square atrocity in 1989. During the Tiananmen incident anti-government protests had spread across over 300 cities throughout China, and students inside the square were conducting a hunger strike. Ultimately the PLA was called on to quell the demonstrations and disperse the students.⁶⁵ The picture of the T-72 PLA tank closing in on an immovable demonstrator was seen on television around the world and placed the CCP in an embarrassing position. Similar to the Tiananmen Square incident which spread embarrassment and potentially challenged the CCP rule; the continued existence of Taiwan presents a rather large democratic blemish on the face of the CCP. The last time that the CCP attempted to flex its muscle toward Taiwan was in 1996 when Taiwan held its first democratic elections. The CCP response toward Taiwan drew two U.S. aircraft carrier strike groups in

⁶³ Henry Kissinger. *On China*. (The Penquin Press, New York, 2011) Pg 100

⁶⁴ Aaron L. Friedberg, “Going Out”: China’s Pursuit of Natural Resources and Implications for the PRC’s Grand Strategy. (National Bureau of Asian Research, Energy Security and the Asian-Pacific, Seattle Washington, 2014) pulled 4 Jan 2017, Pg. 18 <https://www.ou.edu/uschina/SASD/SASD2007readings/Friedberg2006GoingOutpdf>

⁶⁵ Henry Kissinger. *On China*. (The Penquin Press, New York, 2011) Pg 400

response to the provocation, which ultimately left the CCP feeling impotent without the capability to deter incursions from the U.S. Navy. Hence the development of China's A2/AD strategy.

The United States cannot afford to let Taiwan fall to Chinese absorption any more than the CCP can give it up. Although The U.S. has many strategic and important relationships in the regions, namely Japan and South Korea, the U.S.-Taiwan relationship represents a key element of resolve within the Asian-Pacific region showing other U.S. allies the dedicated commitment the U.S. has within the region in the face of an ever-growing presence of Chinese military and economic growth and dominance. Some scholars have recommended that the U.S. move away from Taiwan and allow China to retake Taiwan. Scholars like Charles Glaser profess that there will not be any long term negative effects by turning away from Taiwan, but will instead encourage long term stability and continued economic growth for both China and the U.S. through a "grand-bargain".⁶⁶ Heritage Foundation scholar Dean Cheng counters Glaser's argument with, "The idea that the United States would walk away from a commitment that it has maintained for some 40 years is absolutely the sort of thing that would make America's allies, not just in Asia, but around the world, deeply question our willingness to be there. This is the sort of thing that would affect not just America's position in Asia, but America's position in Europe."⁶⁷ This action would have global effects and would encourage other challenges from major powers to minimize U.S. influence. It would have a catastrophic effect on the U.S. relationship with Japan as well and Japan's security which is articulated by Professor Yoshihara, "If China were to ever take Taiwan either peacefully or by force, China gets to cut that First

⁶⁶ Charles Glaser. Will China's Rise Lead To War? Why Realism Does Not Mean pessimism (Foreign Affairs, 1 Mar 2011) Pg 4-5

⁶⁷ Peter Navarro. Crouching Tiger: What China's Militarism means for the World. (Prometheus Books, Amherst New York 2015) Pg. 244

Island Chain in half, essentially cutting in half the U.S. forward posture in the Asia-Pacific region.”⁶⁸ By giving up the first island chain the U.S. is welcoming China to begin to apply additional pressures on the second island chain, which was the eventual goal of Admiral Liu previously discussed. Unless the U.S. is willing to accept a massive reduction in global influence, Taiwan must be held.

The only question remaining is how likely is it that China would make a military move on Taiwan, and when would it likely make that move? As John Mearsheimer articulated there is no way to truly know an adversary’s intentions, so we are left with looking at the indicators of an adversary’s capabilities changing over time. If China truly has a grand strategy and it follows a time table and method as illustrated by Admiral Liu, which identifies a PLAN break out of the second island chain by 2020, it could be in the near term. China has shown that if it believes it has the military capability to intimidate, as it has done in the South China Sea to Vietnam and the Philippines to take the Paracel and Spratley islands, then China may believe it has the military capacity to intimidate the U.S. with its conventional and nuclear capabilities to eventually attempt to seize Taiwan.

Opposing Views

There are some opposing views to the realist perspective which include an economic solution to Taiwan and the Asia-Pacific coming under the control of China principally through economic means, as well as the perspective that China wants nothing more than to maintain the direction of peaceful ascent ensuring mutual cooperation and success among its neighbors. In regards to the economic solution, China is currently the “largest exporter of manufactured goods”, and has displaced the United States as the “Largest trade partner” as stated by Geoff

⁶⁸ Ibid. Pg 120

Dyer in his book “The Contest of the Century.”⁶⁹ Dyer goes on to say, “It has displaced the U.S. as the largest trading partner of a host of countries, from Japan and South Korea to South Africa and Brazil, slowly turning the map of global commerce red.” He goes on to say, “over the next decade it will invest overseas between \$1 trillion and \$2 trillion (overseas investments). This financial muscle will be one of the most important driving forces in the global economy over the coming decades.”⁷⁰ This economic influence across the globe could persuade the international perspective on Chinese actions and could replace U.S. influence with Chinese influence which could impact Asian-Pacific nations from looking to the U.S. and instead look to China. Lastly Dyer states that the Chinese are looking to make the U.S. economy completely irrelevant when he states, “There is now a lobby in Beijing that wishes to use the coming wave of investment to generate a new phase of globalization in which all the roads—business, financial, and political—converge on Beijing. Xu Shanda, a Chinese economist, argues for the launch of a Chinese “Marshall Plan” in the developing world, loans and aid that would create their own demand for Chinese goods.”⁷¹ Again as an example of using soft power (economic influence) in making the U.S. irrelevant within the Asia-Pacific region, and potentially gaining international political support to approve of overt Chinese actions in areas such as the South China Sea. Also the implied effect will bring Asia-Pacific nations to want to get closer to China for the economic gain which would minimize U.S. influence in the region. All of these examples that Dyer describes can be considered the “Long Game” for China simply gaining more influence in the region due to economic growth, and creating greater soft power within the region to influence countries like Taiwan or even Japan.

⁶⁹ Geoff Dyer. “The Contest of the Century”. (Alfred A. Kopf, New York, 2014) Pg. 252

⁷⁰ Ibid. Pg 252-253

⁷¹ Geoff Dyer. “The Contest of the Century”. (Alfred A. Kopf, New York, 2014) Pg. 254

Although all of what Dyer is stating may be true concerning the “growing influence of the Chinese economy”, what Dyer does not speak to is the influence of “Chinese Nationalism” and its influence on the Chinese Communist Party, primarily on its expectations for the Party to raise China to a preeminent state. Also of influence is the growing Chinese middle class and its expectations to continue to grow, and its belief in the greatness of China and the expectations on the Chinese Communist Party will influence it to act out pre-maturely and overtly coerce Taiwan to capitulate to China’s demands and relent to becoming once again a formal province of China. Lastly, the U.S. cannot turn away from the Asia-Pacific because of the history that is involved. The last time that the U.S. ignored or turned a blind eye to the Asia-Pacific the U.S. was dealt a devastating blow by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor. Since the end of WWII the U.S. has maintained a commitment to remain in the region developing and maintaining relationships with the regional partners to ensure that another threat does not develop from the “West”.

Conclusion

China has aspirations and it specifically includes dominating Asia-Pacific. China believes, due to its long history, that the Asia-Pacific region is its domain and it wants to be the primary agent of control within its own region. This paper does not recognize a desire on China’s part to attain global dominance but instead has focused on China’s desire to re-capture a “Regional Hegemony” status. Deng Xiaoping made a distinct change in the direction of China by instituting an “Opening to the West”, thereby greatly enhancing China’s economic influence, but also subtly instituting his 24 Character Directive for China to keep a low profile. And due to China’s expansive economy, the nation has expanded its military capability, investing in A2/AD capability systems and focusing its funding on military technological advances to, seemingly, deter U.S. Aircraft Carrier strike groups from being able to threaten inside of the

second island chain. Lastly China's desire to gain regional hegemony requires Taiwan (Pillar of the first island chain) to capitulate, so that China can expand its influence into the second island chain and into the Pacific Ocean. China is interested in the "Long Game", but due to the influence brought to bear on the CCP by its own citizenry it could urge a premature action towards Taiwan and the U.S. may not have any choice but to respond in kind.

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