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ABSTRACT

CHINA—THE NEXT MILITARY RIVAL?

by LTCOL Kevin Lee Kelley, USMC, 39 pages.

Since the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the United States has been the sole superpower of the world. In concert with its allies, the United States has been able to act with relative impunity militarily around the globe. The most recent example of that unshackled military strategic freedom was the United States led NATO campaign, Allied Force, of 1999. The campaign was conducted against Serbia, despite the strenuous objections of nuclear capable Russia and China. This military freedom of action, in part, was possible because the United States has no military peer competitor.

China has a growing economy and has posted double digit defense budget increases annually for the past decade. China is in the midst of a military modernization that could produce a rival military power, thereby dramatically changing the strategic concerns of the United States as it attends to its global interests. Will China be the next military rival to the United States?

This monograph reviews the historical relationship between the United States and China. The potential conflict areas, emphasizing Taiwan, between the two nations are examined to determine if important national interests are involved which would serve as motivation for conflict. Finally, China's military modernization is studied in terms of doctrine, strategy and weapons systems to determine if the Chinese believe they can defeat the United States. The monograph concludes China is the next military rival to the United States. China is preparing to engage and defeat the United States.

China - The Next Military Rival?

MONOGRAPH

BY

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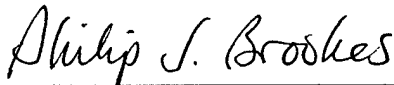
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this monograph is to answer the research question as to whether the Peoples Republic of China will be the next military rival to the United States?

The issue is framed by exploring the historical relationships of the two countries. The most probable areas of conflict is examined to determine if important Chinese and United States interests are involved, with an emphasis on the East Pacific region and Taiwan in particular. China's ability to challenge the United States militarily is assessed to determine the feasibility of success for China in a conflict between the two nations. If the Chinese are judged to have the necessary important interests at stake in the potential areas of conflict and believe they have the military capability to defeat the United States, then the Peoples Republic of China must be considered the next military rival to the United States.

The United States found itself facing off with the Soviet Union around the globe in a bipolar world following World War Two. The two superpowers had mutual and individual strengths and weaknesses which each tried to exploit to its advantage. Although the two superpowers were involved in numerous large and small conflicts, they never actually engaged each other because of the threat of mutually assured destruction resulting from their huge nuclear weapon arsenals. Examples of these conflicts were Vietnam, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, and the Cuban Missile Crisis.¹

The Soviet Union collapsed as a nation and fragmented into many nation states in 1991. Since that time, the United States in concert with its allies has been able to act with relative impunity militarily around the globe. The most recent example of that unshackled strategic freedom was the Kosovo campaign waged in 1999 to bring an old Soviet and Russian ally,

Serbia, to heel. The United States, with its NATO allies, conducted the campaign despite the objections of nuclear capable Russia. Only the United States retains the capability to conduct worldwide military operations that span the full spectrum of warfare from stability and support operations to major theater war.²

One nation has the potential interests at stake and is embarked on an extensive military modernization program that could earmark it as a strategic opponent to the United States. Barry Buzan and Gerald Segal in discussing global military power relationships in the future believe China has that potential.

There is only one power on the horizon that has the potential to shift the current diffuse and decentralised pattern of military power in any significant way --- China. This is not the place to discuss the bases and prospects of Chinese military power. But it is the place to note that China is the only state that could bring the world back to a notion of global military power by engaging the current great powers in a major confrontation. Given its size and economic potential, China may well be set to become the world's largest power and it certainly already operates as the major regional power in one of the key areas of economic growth. China already has non-status quo power and the only one which is in the dangerous state of transition from poverty to prosperity, and from communism to pluralism. Whether China rises or falters is the single most important unknown about the global future of military power.³

Various subject matter experts and authoritative sources disagree on the likelihood of conflict between China and the United States. They also are at odds on whether China will achieve the capability to challenge the United States militarily. It is important to assess the validity of these views in developing United States policy towards China.

Thucydides believed nations go to war over interests, fear or honor.⁴ One of the elements which influences China's national strategy is its long history. It is home to the oldest continuous major world civilization, with records dating back 3,500 years.⁵ Given those facts it is useful to explore China's historical relationship with the United States. Larry Wortzell, Director of the Asian Studies Center of the Heritage Foundation, wrote "Nationalism in China today is built on

what the Chinese education system has emphasized, the humiliation of China at the hands of foreign powers from the Opium War to the establishment of the PRC.”⁶

The United States must be considered one of those foreign powers responsible for humiliating China. The United States State Department documents, “The First Opium War erupted in 1840. China lost the war; subsequently, Britain and other Western powers, including the United States, forcibly occupied ‘concessions’ and gained special commercial privileges.”⁷ United States intervention in Chinese affairs began in the 1840s and continues through the present standoff over Taiwan.

The United States military, in particular Navy and Marine Corps, have a long history of conducting contingency operations in China. Marines and sailors, of the USS ST LOUIS, landed in Canton during 1844, at the request of the American consul, to protect American lives and property from a Chinese mob. In 1855, Marines landed in Hong Kong and Shanghai to protect American lives and property. During 1856, the American consul sent a message to the USS PORTSMOUTH that “American interests were in imminent danger”. The landing party of 287 Marines and sailors defeated 4,000 Chinese troops, killing over 500, in several engagements over a three-day period.⁸

Growing Chinese animosity towards foreigners resulted in most Western powers establishing legation guards at their diplomatic missions in Peking. A Marine Legation guard was established in 1898. One was also established at the American Consulate in Tientsin. The city of Peking was encircled and control fell to the Boxers, an anti-foreign organization, in 1900. Marines fighting in unison with allied troops fought off numerous assaults against the legations. A relief expedition of over 18,000 allied troops, including 1st Marine Regiment and part of the 9th

Infantry Regiment, defeated the Boxers in Tientsin and Peking and relieved the besieged legation guards.⁹



Fig 1.1 U.S. Marines in Peking, 1900

Between 1922-1941, Marines had an almost continuous presence in China to protect American lives and property from the raging civil war between the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) led by Chiang Kai-shek and the Chinese Communist Party led by Mao Tse-tung. As much as an entire Marine Brigade led by Brigadier General Smedley Butler was stationed in China during this period. The Marines were finally withdrawn to the Phillipines just prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.¹⁰

Following World War Two, the United States supported Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Party in its civil war with the communists. The Communist Party successfully drove the Nationalists off the mainland to Taiwan in 1949. Taipei was proclaimed the provisional capital of China until the mainland could be re-conquered. The Nationalist government continues to refer to Taiwan as the Republic of China.¹¹



Fig 1.2 Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang at an April 1942 meeting in Maymyo, Burma, with Lt. Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell, American commander of the China Expeditionary Forces during World War II

The United States, as part of a United Nations force, was conducting combat operations in North Korea in 1950. United Nations forces had advanced to positions adjacent to the Chinese border along the Yalu River by mid November 1950. On 27 November 1950, Communist Chinese forces crossed the border and attacked the United Nations forces in support of the North Korean Communist forces. Intense combat between communist and United Nations forces, primarily United States Army and Marine units, produced a stalemate and a truce was agreed to on 27 July 1953.¹² United States forces, under the United Nations banner, continue to serve in the Republic of Korea to deter further communist aggression.



Fig 1.3 1st Marine Division-Koto-ri 8 December 1950

As a result of the Korean War, the United States signed a Security Treaty with the Nationalist government on Taiwan. However the Cold War was at its height and both the United States and China desired an alliance to stave off the expansionist agenda of the Soviet Union. As a precursor to such an alliance, the Nixon administration issued the Shanghai Communique of February 1972 which stated that all Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Strait agreed there is only one China. The communique was ambiguous as to which China, communist or nationalist, was the “one China”. The United States has consistently maintained that resolution of the Taiwan issue must be peaceful.¹³

The Carter administration, began full normalization of relations with China on 1 January 1979, thereby disregarding a recent vote by Congress that no relations were to be established with China at the expense of Taiwan. President Carter also abrogated the Security Treaty between the United States and Taiwan. Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act and it became law during April 1979 in response to the presidential actions. The Act obligates the United States to supply Taiwan with the defensive weapons necessary to maintain the balance of power in the Taiwan Strait. It also stated that diplomatic relations with China rested on the expectation that the future of Taiwan would be decided by peaceful means and that any other method would be of “grave concern” to the United States.¹⁴ The meaning of “grave concern” in terms of United States reaction was left ambiguous.



Fig 1.4 Deng Xiaoping and Jimmy Carter

China has steadfastly attempted to isolate Taiwan from the United States. One example was the joint United States-China Communique of August 1982, in which the United States pledged to gradually reduce the armaments sold to Taiwan. The communique has had little impact because the United States has not perceived a lessening of tensions in the Strait. The United States has continued to demonstrate its resolve to see the status of Taiwan resolved peacefully through the present Clinton administration.¹⁵

Two events of the 1990s that occurred outside of the East Asia region should also be reviewed for their impact on the relationship between America and China. The Persian Gulf War that the United States, along with coalition partners, fought against Iraqi aggression in Kuwait is viewed as a masterpiece and is avidly studied by the Chinese to detect vulnerabilities in the way America conducts warfare.

Compared to any war in history, the Gulf War can be considered a major war. More Than 300 warships from six carrier groups, 4,000 aircraft, 12,000 tanks and 12,000 Armored vehicles and nearly two million soldiers from more than 30 nations took part in the war. Of the 42-day war, 38 days were air strikes, while the ground war lasted only 100 hours. The U.S.-led multinational force crushed 42 Iraqi divisions, and the Iraqi forces suffered 30,000 casualties and 80,000 prisoners; 3,847 tanks, 1,450 armored vehicles, and 2,917 artillery pieces were destroyed, while the U.S. forces only lost 184 people, but incurred the enormous cost of \$61 billion.¹⁶

They study this war and the follow-on operations that continue through the present as examples of a new type of war that Americans have developed and can only be defeated by the asymmetric methods of "Unrestricted Warfare", which is guiding their military doctrine and modernization.¹⁷

Another intervention conducted by the United States, along with NATO allies, in 1999, has greatly affected Chinese views on the United States and its propensity to interfere with what China considers to be internal security matters (i.e. Taiwan). NATO conducted an air campaign against Serbia to stop the ethnic cleansing of Albanians from the Serb province of Kosovo. The Chinese government strongly opposed

the intervention. The Chinese Embassy in Belgrade was bombed by mistake as a result of a targeting error. The Chinese official position was that they believed it was done intentionally and propagated that position throughout the state controlled media. A violent demonstration occurred outside the United States Embassy in Beijing that the government allowed to continue for several days on the year later, this quote shows the intense feeling still resident among Chinese citizens.¹⁸

We were all hot-headed and angry. But now we've taken to heart the government's Advice to study hard and make China strong. We need to make our country stronger so it won't be subject to bullying anymore.

-Zhou Jiubo, 21, management student, participated in brick throwing



Fig 1.5 Chinese students protest at U.S. Embassy in Beijing, 10 May 1999

If it is true that nations go to war over interests, fear and honor, the possibility for conflict between China and the United States would appear high. United States interventions in China, backing Chiang Kai-shek during the revolution, continuing interference in the Taiwan issue, and subsequent interventions in the Gulf and Kosovo have certainly given China reason to feel dishonored and fearful of the United States. It remains to be established if the United States and China possess significant enough interests to warrant armed conflict. The following chapter analyzes those conflicts of interests for their potential to draw the two nations into war.

CHAPTER TWO

POTENTIAL AREAS OF CONFLICT

*"Our relationship with China will in large measure help to determine whether the 21st Century is one of security, peace, and prosperity for the American people."*¹⁹

A study of China's potential to become a military rival to the United States must next consider the possible areas of conflict between the two nations to determine if there is a viable source for military conflict. This section reviews the most likely friction points between the two nations and their interests as they are portrayed by authoritative sources. This review demonstrates whether the motivation to engage in armed conflict is present.

U.S. Ambassador to China, Admiral Joseph Prueher (USN, Retired), said in May of 2000 that a number of tough issues continue to divide the United States and China, ranging from Taiwan to human rights and nuclear non-proliferation.²⁰ The United States policy toward China is one of engagement and an attempt to form a strategic partnership in the region to enhance stability and economic growth.²¹ It is a great strategic question for the 21st century whether China aims toward harming the United States or its vital interests?²²

Many subject matter experts believe China and the United States are headed toward conflict. Brian McDonald, president of the Atlantic Council of Canada, is pessimistic for the future. He said, "In the long run it is clear that a Chinese-American collision is coming, that's the only place I can see real confrontation."²³ To make an informed judgement this monograph will review each of the issues as they pertain to the two nation's interests.

The United States has defined its national interests in three categories. Those categories are designated vital interests, important interests, and humanitarian and other interests. In defining those categories, the United States has also, in general terms spoken to what types of action it might take if those interests are threatened.²⁴

Vital interests are defined as,

Those of broad, overriding importance to the survival, safety and vitality of our nation. Among these are the physical security of our territory and that of our allies, the safety of our citizens, our economic well-being and the protection of our critical infrastructures. We will do what we must to defend these interests, including—when necessary—using our military might unilaterally and decisively.²⁵

Important national interests are defined as,

These interests do not affect our national survival, but they do affect our national wellbeing and the character of the world in which we live. In such cases we will use our resources to advance these interests insofar as the costs and risks are commensurate with the interests at stake. Our efforts to halt the flow of refugees from Haiti and restore democracy in that state, our participation in NATO operations in Bosnia and our efforts to protect the global environment are relevant examples.²⁶

The final category of humanitarian and other interests is defined as,

In some circumstances our nation may act because our values demand it. Examples include natural and manmade disasters or violations of human rights, supporting democratization and civil control of the military, assisting humanitarian demining, and promoting sustainable development.²⁷

These interests will be pursued by a American strategy based on three objectives: enhancing national security, bolstering economic prosperity and promoting democracy abroad.²⁸

China's national security strategy is not published in a particular document like the United States has done, however, their historical actions, writings and statements provide evidence of Chinese security strategy. The Department of Defense has defined Chinese security strategy utilizing those sources. The following quotation was taken from a report to Congress on Chinese military power.

China seeks to become the preeminent power among regional states in East Asia. Beijing is pursuing a regional security strategy aimed at preserving what it perceives as its sovereign interests in Taiwan, the South China Sea, and elsewhere on its periphery and protecting its economic interests, while at the same time promoting regional stability.

Beijing's primary priority is to prevent further steps by Taiwan toward permanent separation, with a long-term objective of eventual reunification under China's terms. China also seeks to counter what it perceives to be Japan's growing military cooperation with the United States and to prevent what it views as a rebirth of Japanese militarism. At the same time, it will continue to value the economic benefits it derives from its access to Japanese technology, trade, and foreign investment. Maintaining stability on the Korean Peninsula also is one of Beijing's regional security goals. China's other important security goals in East Asia include preventing the development and deployment of a regional theater missile defense (TMD) system, particularly one involving Taiwan; defending its claims in the East and South China Seas; and, promoting its political and economic interests via such organizations as ASEAN, APEC, and the ARF.

Beijing's actions in the region will be shaped in good measure by its relations with Washington and by its perceptions of US ties to South Korea, Japan and, Australia. China likely will continue to promote what has been referred to as a "strategic partnership" with Russia marked by cooperation over border issues, trade and investment, and military sales. China's security interests in South Asia center on Pakistan and India--both nuclear-armed countries--and Beijing's desire for peace and stability on the subcontinent. In Central Asia, Beijing remains concerned about the spread of Islamic fundamentalism into Xinjiang, while promoting efforts to develop energy resources, trade, and closer political ties with states along its border.

Outside the Asia-Pacific region, China seeks to enhance its status as a great power. While Beijing prefers bilateral diplomacy, it is attempting to expand its role and exert a greater voice in international forums. Beijing also is seeking out economic opportunities and promoting China's international influence and stature. It continues to give high priority to thwarting Taiwan's quest for international recognition. Beijing remains firmly committed to expanding its political and economic presence in such areas as Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, and Africa; however, China has no ambitions to establish a military presence in these regions.

Despite its refusal to renounce its right to use military force against Taiwan, Beijing has consistently emphasized its desire to achieve national reunification peacefully through agreement with Taipei based on the "one country, two systems" formula. Some in China are aware that war with Taiwan could be economically and politically devastating. China's main national policy priority remains economic reform and development within an environment that is both peaceful and stable. To that end, Beijing has avoided activities that might threaten its economic growth and its access to foreign markets, investment, and technology. In initiating a military conflict with Taiwan, Beijing would run the risk of jeopardizing both its continued economic development and its political standing, especially among those regional states with which it has unresolved territorial disputes. China's resolve to employ military force, however, should not be discounted.²⁹

The next step in the review of possible areas of conflict between the United States and China is to examine those areas as they relate to the national security strategies of the

two nations. This monograph accepts the published United States National Security Strategy and the Department of Defense interpretation of Chinese security strategy as reported to Congress during 2000 as valid policy statements.³⁰ These two national security strategies will be used as criteria to evaluate the possible areas of conflict for their potential for armed conflict between the two nations.

The United States has officially stated that it seeks increasing acceptance for democratic values, respect for human rights and the rule of law around the world. It has included humanitarian and other interests as a separate category of United States interests in its security strategy. It has singled out China as allowing religious persecution and stated it will work to combat that practice. The United States vision for the Pacific region links security interests with economic growth and American commitment to democracy and human rights. It has also stated it will pursue progress on human rights and rule of law issues with China. This broad area is obviously contentious between the two nations, however, nothing in the stated policy or recent experience would indicate that the United States is willing to use armed force to further these humanitarian interests.³¹ Human rights do not meet the criteria as an interest worthy of armed conflict between the two nations.

Maintaining the democratic government and the sovereignty of the Republic of Korea is a possible exception. The Korean peninsula has seen United States and Chinese troops locked in combat during the Korean War. Since then, tensions between North and South Korea, the United States and China have cooled considerably. The North Koreans have agreed to suspend their nuclear programs in exchange for Western aid and the two Korean heads of state have conducted summit talks. The two nations appear to be headed

toward reunification. China trades with South Korea and maintaining stability on the Korean peninsula is one of China's regional security goals.³²

Despite those positive trends, both China and the United States have demonstrated their resolve to protect their national interests on the peninsula with military force. The United States continues to maintain a sizable military presence in South Korea in conjunction with their alliance. China remains critical and distrustful of this alliance and views it as a possible threat to China. The Korean peninsula remains a highly volatile area of possible conflict between the United States and China.³³

China has been accused of proliferating weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile technology to rogue nations; Pakistan, Iran and Libya. It is alleged that China pursues these policies as leverage against United States influence. The idea being to cause the United States multiple problems around the globe to diminish the influence it can have in the Pacific region. "Beijing is single mindedly pursuing its ambition to limit U.S. influence and become the unchallenged power in Asia."³⁴

United States concerns over China's proliferation of weapons technology to rogue states has been the subject of Congressional Hearings and has been condemned publicly by high ranking officials.³⁵ One of the United States key security objectives in Chinese policy is "strengthening China's adherence to international nonproliferation norms, particularly on its export controls on ballistic missile and dual use technologies".³⁶ It is clear the United States considers the spread of dangerous technologies, such as weapons of mass destruction, to be a threat to a vital national interest.³⁷

China is considered a threat by India that could destabilize the region. India's Defense Minister in May of 1998 said, "China is potential threat number one."³⁸ The

Indians are rapidly expanding their naval capability and have been conducting naval presence exercises in the contested South China Sea, an important region to both China and the United States.³⁹ In addition, China has been accused of aiding Pakistan's development of nuclear weapons in its arms race with India.⁴⁰ Both China and India are nuclear capable and both are rapidly expanding their naval capabilities by purchasing Russian military equipment including ships, submarines, aircraft, airborne early warning aircraft (AWACS) and cruise missiles. These developments could result in armed conflict between China and India, which could also mean United States involvement to defend its interests in the region.⁴¹

China perceives the United States as a hegemonic power since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Luo Yuan, Director of the prestigious Academy of Military Science in Peking, said, "The United States global strategy in Europe is to contain Russia's revival and in Asia to contain China's growth, and is to preserve United States hegemony in the world."⁴² China believes the American plan to build a National Missile Defense for the continental United States and forward deploy Theater Missile Defense to cover allies in South Korea, Japan, Taiwan and forward deployed United States forces is merely an American attempt to maintain military dominance throughout the world. "Officers at the Academy of Military Science here said a U.S. decision to build such a system would trigger a worldwide arms race, inflict tremendous political costs on the U.S. and give rise to the most serious negative consequences on global security."⁴³

China has formed a strategic relationship to counter this perceived American hegemony. This view was put forward in a joint Chinese-Russian statement describing their initiative,

The nature of the [U.S. missile defense] plan is to seek unilateral military and security advantages. Implementing this plan will have the most grave adverse consequences not only for the security of Russia, China and other countries, but also for the security of the United States and global strategic security... Therefore China and Russia are firmly opposed to such a system.⁴⁴

The Chinese leadership appears equally opposed to a Theater Missile Defense System. "Incorporating Taiwan in any foreign missile defense system in any way is unacceptable, and will seriously undermine regional security."⁴⁵ The Chinese have demonstrated their determination to challenge United States military dominance with this Russian partnership. "The partnership is an effort to oppose hegemony and supremacy, and one single country dominating the world."⁴⁶ David Shambaugh, a China specialist at George Washington University and the Brookings Institute, made these comments about the Sino-Russian partnership, "On one level, this is a classic real-politik balance of power, but on another it has an appearance of a unified front against the United States."⁴⁷

The United States decisions to deploy a National Missile Defense and Theater Missile Defenses in the East Asian region have not been finalized, but development testing continues. It is an obviously important interest to the United States. Senator Jesse Helms, Republican of North Carolina, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, commented, "After issuing nuclear threat after nuclear threat, China has the nerve to complain that a U.S. missile defense is a threat to their security? To the contrary, leaving the American people vulnerable to Beijing's nuclear blackmail is a threat to U.S. national security."⁴⁸ Congressional opinions on the subject are critical because they must approve funding before fielding of either system would be possible.

A recent Congressional report warns of an anti-American alliance in the Russian-Chinese partnership. "To challenge American dominance, Russia today cultivates its strategic partnership with the Peoples Republic of China---a partnership explicitly

targeting American interests around the globe and founded on increasing both the Peoples Republic of China and Russia's military capabilities against the United States.”⁴⁹ This issue of National and Theater Missile Defense effects a stated vital interest of the United States, “the physical security of our territory and that of our allies, the safety of our citizens”.⁵⁰ If the United States moves forward with the fielding of a National Missile Defense or a Theater Missile Defense, especially one involving Taiwan, there would be a direct conflict of stated security interests. This conflict of Chinese and American interests, especially concerning Theater Missile Defense for Taiwan and the East Pacific region, indicate potential to involve China and the United States in another Cold War and possibly a real conflict.

Another contentious area is the South China Sea, where United States and Chinese interests could conflict. “Each of these cases [Taiwan, Korea and South China Sea] also offers a dangerous combination of unresolved conflicts, intense nationalism and competing strategic interests.”⁵¹ The South China Sea involves competing interests from a number of Pacific Rim countries of China, Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia and from outside powers of United States, Japan, India and South Korea. The Pacific Rim nations listed have outstanding territorial claims on the Spratly and Paracel Islands. The area has large energy resources (natural gas and petroleum), is in the middle of a major shipping lane, and can serve as a key military basing area and refueling point.⁵²

Chinese activity in the area has been one of slowly, but surely occupying more and more of the disputed islands. Their activity has been characterized as a “creeping invasion”. Some skirmishing in the area has occurred as the other Rim nations are

angered by this activity, but lack the military capability to back up their claims. The Philippines and Malaysia have strengthened their military relationships with the United States while Vietnam is seeking the same with Japan and India.⁵³ India and Vietnam have planned joint naval exercises in the South China Sea. These exercises have been characterized as being inflammatory and designed to antagonize the Chinese. "From a Chinese standpoint, that's a pretty gratuitous intervention of India into a place where China wants to dictate terms to the Southeast Asians. India's intervention will not be welcomed by China."⁵⁴

China has made claim to large areas of water in the South China Sea as "historic waters" of the Chinese Empire. This designation would remove these waters from the internationally recognized Freedom of Navigation regime. The Chinese have not restricted access, however the potential for them to do so during a future crisis remains.⁵⁵

The "historic waters" China is claiming would indicate a collision of national interests in the South China Sea. These "historic waters" straddle major shipping lanes utilized by United States and allied naval and commercial shipping. In addition, National and Theater Missile Defense will have sea based components that will require freedom of navigation in these waters.⁵⁶

Freedom of Navigation for United States and allied naval and commercial shipping is essential to the United States as a maritime nation.

Our need for strategic mobility to deploy our forces overseas is one of the primary reasons we are committed to gaining Senate advice and consent to ratification of the Law of the Sea Convention. Need for this treaty arose from the breakdown of customary international law as more and more nations unilaterally declared ever larger territorial seas and other claims over the oceans that threatened the global access and freedom of navigation that the United States must have to protect its vital national interests. In addition to lending the certainty of the rule of law to an area critical to our national security, the treaty protects our economic interests and preserves our leadership in global in global ocean policy. The Law of the Sea Convention thus buttresses the strategic advantages that the United States gains from being a

global power.⁵⁷

Should China restrict access to the disputed South China Sea “historic waters” there would be a clear threat to United States vital interests and great potential for military conflict.

The greatest potential area for military conflict between the United States and China is Taiwan.⁵⁸ June Teufel Dreyer, China expert of the University of Miami, wrote, “Of all the issues now straining relations between Washington and Beijing... none has more potential for immediate escalation into armed hostilities than the standoff in the Taiwan Strait.”⁵⁹ Taiwan has evolved into a democracy with a vibrant economy and the majority of its population does not desire reunification with China. The United States is committed by the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979 to a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue. Meanwhile, China regards Taiwan as a renegade province and has refused to renounce military options to bring Taiwan into line. To that end, China has engaged in a rapid military buildup since 1995, which could signal preparation for invasion. In particular, China has deployed and continues to add more theater ballistic missiles along its coast opposite Taiwan, is building its power projection forces, and developing capabilities to deter or deny area access to other countries.⁶⁰ According to the United States Department of Defense, “Since the early 1990s, the focus of Chinese military strategy has been on preparing for potential military contingencies along China’s southeastern flank, especially in the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea. China’s military strategy emphasizes acquiring capabilities to counter improvements to Taiwan and other regional military forces, as well as preparing for capabilities the United States might bring to bear in any conflict.”⁶¹

Senator Helms gave this guidance to Ambassador Prueher during his confirmation hearing, "You go tell the leadership in China that we in the United States like and want to get along with the Chinese people—we just don't want Taiwan to get kicked around."⁶² Senator Helms' statement is a fair representation of the United States "One China" policy. Secretary of Defense William Cohen recently said, "We do not support any movement toward independence on the part of Taiwan. But we also support the Taiwan Relations Act and will continue to insist that the resolution of the differences that exist between China and Taiwan must be resolved peacefully. We are committed to seeing a peaceful reconciliation or resolution of the issues."⁶³ The viability of this policy is yet to be determined.

The Taiwan issue is made more complex because it involves three governments, all with varying interests, rather than just two, the United States and China. The Chinese threat of force has been made in connection with Taiwan declaring independence as a nation. The Chinese Defense minister, General Chi said, "On Taiwan our policy is all too clear. It is a policy of peaceful reunification and one country, two systems. We have also made it very clear that we do not undertake to give up the use of force."⁶⁴ A recent change of government on Taiwan to a party with an independence platform has raised China's anxiety over the issue.⁶⁵

The economic interests that would be damaged for all three nations appear to be a common incentive to resolve the Taiwan issue peacefully. Taiwan's trade with and investment in mainland China is substantial. China's stated number one priority is economic growth.⁶⁶ A conflict with China over Taiwan would have large economic effects on the United States because of its trade relationships with the Pacific Rim

countries. The economic wellbeing of the United States is a vital interest of the nation.⁶⁷ Taiwan would avoid massive infrastructure and economic disruption if the issue could be settled peacefully. In a scenario put forward by Marvin Ott, professor of national security policy at the National War College, the issue would be settled peacefully if Taiwan rejected independence and acceptance of the "One China" principle while China grants Taiwan special autonomy status, similar to Hong Kong. The United States would be satisfied by this arrangement as well because of the peaceful resolution of the issue.⁶⁸ The likelihood of such a resolution, though logical on the surface, is unlikely because the population of Taiwan, a democratic society, does not favor reunification with China.⁶⁹

The United States National and Theater Missile Defense initiatives are viewed by the Chinese with mistrust and they see them as intimately linked with the Taiwan issue. "If a military conflict over Taiwan erupted, Chinese leaders fear the United States would use nuclear threats to prevent China's invasion of Taiwan, to stop a conflict from escalating, or to force a resolution on U.S. terms."⁷⁰ A National Missile Defense would make the United States impervious to nuclear attack while allowing it to threaten use of its own nuclear weapons on adversaries. Theater Missile Defense would offset the advantage China currently holds over Taiwan with its deployed Theater Ballistic Missiles, thereby reducing its leverage within the region. China's military leaders appear to be the most influential group in China regarding the Taiwan issue.⁷¹ Regarding the Missile Defense issue, China's chief arms negotiator, Mr Sha Zukang said, "To defeat your defenses we'll have to spend a lot of money, and we don't want to do this. Economic development is China's number one priority. But otherwise, the United States will feel it can attack anyone at any time, and that isn't tolerable."⁷²

The Chinese have threatened the United States with nuclear strikes on the continental United States if it intervenes on the Taiwan issue. Senior Chinese military leaders may doubt the United States' willingness to risk war with a nuclear armed China and the inherent casualties it would suffer. The Commander in Chief of United States Pacific Command, Admiral Dennis Blair, has said "Taiwan's future will be determined peacefully—this means that we will not allow it to be bullied or invaded."⁷³ Other major conflicts have begun with miscalculations of American resolve. They include World War Two with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the North Korean invasion of South Korea, and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. This makes any policy of ambiguity risky in terms of the "One China" policy.⁷⁴

Ambassador Prueher has said the Chinese do not have a good perception of United States military strength.⁷⁵ This could play into any miscalculations China might make about United States resolve or readiness to intervene in a Taiwan crisis. Another ominous signal of military conflict is the willingness of high Chinese officials to threaten the United States and speak and write of military conflict with the United States on a routine basis. Chinese Defense Minister, General Chi, has been quoted as saying war with the United States is "inevitable."⁷⁶ The Chinese military is apparently proceeding along those lines. "A cross-strait conflict between China and Taiwan, involving the United States has emerged as the dominant scenario guiding PLA force planning, military training and war preparation."⁷⁷ The preparations China is making would indicate there are conflicting interests between the United States and China over the Taiwan issue and that there is definite potential for armed conflict.

The review of respective national interests involved in the most contentious issues dividing the United States and China show demonstrated potential for the two nations to engage in armed conflict if each nation follows its stated interests through to the end as determined by their national security strategies. China's desire to be able to challenge the United States militarily in what it views as pursuit of national interests has been established. The next chapter will review the Chinese military modernization effort to determine if the Chinese could develop the means to successfully engage the United States militarily.

CHAPTER THREE

CHINA THREAT REVIEW

“A powerful empire collapsed without a single shot being fired, vividly corroborating the lines of the famous poem by Kipling, ‘When empires perish, it is not with a rumble, but a snicker.’ Not only was this true for the former Soviet Union, today the Americans seem to be following in the footsteps of their old adversary.”⁷⁸

The above quotation, from a book written by two Chinese Peoples Liberation Army colonels, aptly demonstrates a Chinese view toward the United States. There is a general perception that the United States is in decline and China is on the rise. This can be drawn from available open source writings and statements of Chinese officials. One view of China’s assessment of the future portrays a movement away from American hegemonism towards a multi-polar world that will see a much weaker United States in terms of national power.⁷⁹ This view has been documented by Larry M. Wortzel, an established China expert who has immense personal experience in the region and authored several books on Chinese relations.

Today’s “sole superpower” is in severe decline. The United States risks declining so rapidly that it may not even be one of the five multi-polar powers and may fall to the level of a mere “regional power”. This continual decline of the United States in the decades ahead is an important feature of the Chinese assessment, so this study provides more details on this subject than on China’s views of other major powers.⁸⁰

China sees itself as one of those emerging multi-polar powers that will surpass the United States in terms of comprehensive national power by 2020. Comprehensive national power is a combination of natural resources, economics, scientific and technological capability, social development, military capability and government regulatory capability.⁸¹ This monograph considers this Chinese assessment of the future world to be an assumption that Chinese leaders have used for future military doctrine and modernization.

In assessing China's potential to be a military rival to the United States it is necessary to analyze Chinese military doctrine. This monograph uses Chinese writings and the evaluations of various China subject matter experts to define overall Chinese doctrine at the strategic level. Their doctrine guides their military force modernization. The monograph reviews Chinese military modernization efforts as it relates to Chinese doctrine and strategy.

The previous chapter established the Korean peninsula, the South China Sea and Taiwan as viable potential areas for conflict between the United States and China based on respective national interests. China's military planning has established that the Chinese believe Taiwan to be the most critical. "Moreover, a cross-strait conflict between China and Taiwan involving the United States has emerged as the dominant scenario guiding PLA force planning, military training, and war preparation."⁸² This chapter will focus on China's military modernization efforts as they effect possible military contingencies for Taiwan.

The Department of Defense has reported to Congress that China believes it must be prepared to fight against an enemy that possesses advanced information technologies and long range, precision-guided weapons after witnessing Operations Desert Storm in the Persian Gulf and Allied Force in the Balkans. They are reorganizing their military with three components in mind; a small high-technology force for regional contingencies, a large low to medium-tech force for internal security, and a small nuclear deterrent force. If war is perceived as inevitable, China would seek to gain a quick, decisive victory that would preclude outside power (United States) involvement and also minimize economic impact. Should an outside power intervene, China would seek to

inflict high casualties and vigorously attack the enemy's will to fight by all means available.⁸³

China's military doctrine has changed from preparing to fight a protracted land campaign to preparing to fight a "local war under high-tech conditions". One of the primary drivers for this doctrinal change was the Persian Gulf War and the striking victory gained by the United States against a symmetric conventional enemy. The second driver was NATO's Kosovo air campaign, in which aerospace and information systems were decisive. In both cases, the Chinese believe the Iraqis and the Serbs were much too passive in their resistance. The Chinese have determined future conflicts will have shortened ground campaigns and that success lies in seizing the operational initiative and striking key enemy systems. The Chinese believe they can offset the advantages possessed by a more advanced enemy by striking first.⁸⁴

The Chinese evaluate their military-industrial complex to be too far behind the United States to compete by attempting to produce a symmetrical force for a head to head conflict. However, they believe they possess the ability to produce "selective pockets of excellence" which attack critical American vulnerabilities. These selective pockets include ballistic and cruise missiles, electromagnetic, laser, and information operations.⁸⁵

Various authoritative sources disagree on the effectiveness of the Chinese military modernization efforts. There is a problem with gauging Chinese progress. Their society is closed and their communist system makes it easy for them to maintain secrecy. They are especially adept at denying the United States intelligence information on nuclear weapons developments and force modernization via satellite imagery.⁸⁶ Visitors to China are allowed to see only the things the Chinese government wants them to see.

The other thing that clouds the issue is the Chinese superb practice of deception—when capable, feign incapacity. This is the way they operate. They'll throw up smoke screens. They'll take you to backward factories. They'll lead you down the garden path, and you'll always get some gullible person coming back saying their military is backward. For example they'll use obsolete tanks. That's because that's what the Chinese wanted them to see.⁸⁷

Many experts believe China, despite its intentions, has too many obstacles in its path to realistically challenge the United States in a military showdown. Former Secretary of Defense, William Perry, has acknowledged China's increasing offensive capability, especially in respect to Taiwan, and growing sophisticated weapons trade with Russia. But about American primacy, he said, "For the foreseeable future, the United States will be the world's leader in military strength, economic strength and technology."⁸⁸ On the other side of the argument, Edward Timperlake, China expert, writes, "Right now, they're a very capable regional power. They're moving rather quickly to superpower status."⁸⁹ United States Congressman Christopher Cox, Republican from California, said, "We need to view the Peoples Republic of China as a strategic competitor, rather than a strategic partner."⁹⁰

The United States and other nations have made mistakes in the past in conducting strategic assessments of future enemies. Those mistakes in assessment include: static, side-by-side, force-on-force comparisons of military units or capabilities, failure to identify friend from foe, failure to identify enemy employment of forces, failure to make assessments from the aggressor's point of view, failure to understand geographic scope, and finally neglecting open sources for studying secretive nations.⁹¹ It is necessary to review the ongoing Chinese military modernization as it relates to their Taiwan strategy, which was developed with the purpose of deterring or defeating American intervention.

It is important to note that the Chinese believe the United States can be militarily defeated. Their analysts have studied the Persian Gulf War to support that belief.

U.S. Armed Forces revealed many weak points. For example, the combat consumption was too great, and it could not last long. There was great reliance on the allied countries. The high-tech equipment was intensive and its key links were rather weak; once they were damaged, combat effectiveness was greatly reduced. Also if the adversary of the U.S. was not Iraq, if the battle was not fought on the flat desert, if the Iraq armed forces struck first during the phase when U.S. armed forces were still assembling, or if Iraq armed forces withdrew suddenly before the U.S. armed forces struck, then the outcome of the war might have been quite different.⁹²

Chinese modernization efforts are being built around power projection capabilities to secure a regional objective and area denial capabilities to prevent outside power intervention, with particular emphasis on a Taiwan scenario involving the United States. Chinese military planners believe high-tech systems are too complex and that over-dependence on information systems is a potential vulnerability. They will use asymmetric methods to attack these weaknesses. The Chinese believe they can combine information warfare (computer network attacks) with special operations to attack an enemy's operating systems, thus pre-empting a head-on confrontation.⁹³

This monograph will study the modernization efforts of the Chinese military in respect to a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. This is reasonable because that scenario has emerged as the dominant planning scenario for the Chinese Peoples Liberation Army.⁹⁴ It is theorized that China's military strategy for seizing Taiwan is based on four pillars.⁹⁵

These pillars are

- 1—The elimination of intervention threat by the United States.
- 2—Precision strikes with missile and air forces combined with gaining air superiority over the Strait and Taiwan.
- 3—Information Operations at the strategic, operational and tactical levels.

4—Special Operations Forces seize key facilities followed by amphibious and airborne forces.⁹⁶

China's modernization efforts will be studied as they apply to these four pillars.

China has been modernizing its nuclear missile force. They have been using supercomputers to simulate advanced warhead detonations, which allows them to forgo underground testing. These supercomputers came from the United States and were covertly used for this purpose despite agreements precluding their use for military purposes.⁹⁷ The Chinese have also been using computer hackers to break into classified United States computer systems to steal advanced nuclear weaponry information. "China is one of the most aggressive foreign powers seeking to glean data on nuclear weapons via computer from U.S. weapons laboratories. The Chinese are known to use several forms of computer attacks to gain access to the information."⁹⁸ In addition, the Chinese may have penetrated Los Alamos Nuclear Laboratory with one of its agents and attained nuclear weapons secrets by espionage.⁹⁹ China has clearly exerted extensive efforts to improve and enlarge its strategic weapons capability.

China's nuclear modernization fits under the Chinese military strategy of eliminating the threat of United States intervention on a strategic level. June Dreyer, China expert from the University of Miami, said, "China is already expanding its nuclear weapons arsenal. China wants to use the threat of a nuclear strike against San Francisco or Los Angeles as a deterrent to the U.S. helping Taiwan."¹⁰⁰ High Chinese officials have voiced this threat repeatedly.¹⁰¹ A planned United States National Missile Defense could neutralize this threat and is consequently a large concern to the Chinese strategy of deterring American intervention.¹⁰² This leaves China with three options; stop

deployment of the National Missile Defense as it is attempting to do diplomatically, increase nuclear arsenal as it is doing to enable nuclear strike on America despite shield, or invade Taiwan prior to deployment of the shield.¹⁰³

The United States intervention threat would also be eliminated if its armed forces were denied entry into the Taiwan Strait area. China does not possess the high-tech military industrial capability to develop and produce the necessary air and naval weapons systems required to effectively exclude United States forces from the area. This has required China to purchase advanced weapons systems from other parties, specifically Russia and Israel. China has also established a strategic partnership with Russia. A recent report by Congressional national security specialists has determined that the types and amounts of Russian weapons sales to China has undermined key United States strategic assumptions about the emergence of China as a military threat to the United States and Taiwan. The report claims, "Any truly thoroughgoing combination of Russian and Peoples Republic of China technology and resources would surely produce a peer competitor for the United States more quickly than is otherwise commonly supposed."¹⁰⁴ The validity of this claim is not established, but would seem to be intuitively correct given Russia's advanced technological capabilities.

To support these weapons purchases China has had 12-13 percent defense budget increases annually for the past decade and it is believed the actual budget is three to four times larger than the official published figures.¹⁰⁵ The defense budgets are being fueled by Chinese economic growth. In considering that, Congressman Duncan Hunter, Republican from California, said, "Whichever side of the debate one is on, everyone has to concede American dollars are arming Communist China today. If the cemeteries of

this country one day hold the bodies of Americans in uniform killed with weapons purchased by American trade dollars—that will be the greatest tragedy of this new 21st century.”¹⁰⁶ This quote may or may not be considered as political rhetoric, however it is demonstrative of the division of opinion on the American strategic assessment of China. China is attempting to acquire advanced military systems from foreign sources.

China attempted to buy Phalcon aircraft, airborne command and control and early warning radar system (AWACS), from Israel. The United States was concerned because the Phalcon would have dramatically increased China’s ability to conduct integrated air operations over the Taiwan Strait. Israel cancelled the sale under heavy United States diplomatic pressure. A similar system is available from Russia.¹⁰⁷

China is upgrading their air force significantly with large purchases of high performance aircraft. They have purchased Russian engines to upgrade their current Israeli F-10 fighters. They are buying 45 SU-30 MKK fighters, 48 SU-27 SK’s and have a license from the Russians to build an additional 200 SU-27 SK’s in China. Alexander Pikayev, military expert with the Moscow Carnegie Center, said, “these additions will significantly extend the Peoples Liberation Army Air Force’s projection of force in the Taiwan Strait region and could deal a tangible blow to a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier battle group stationed in the Taiwan Strait.”¹⁰⁸ This would negate the United States positioning of carrier battle groups between China and Taiwan as it did in 1996 to deter Chinese aggression.

China has devoted considerable resources toward improving its navy. China currently has its navy organized in three fleets and is expanding to add a fourth fleet designed for power projection and reinforcement of the existing three fleets. They have

acquired two Sovremenny destroyers equipped with state of the art “Sunburn” anti-ship missiles from Russia and have plans to buy at least two more. These weapons systems were specifically designed by the Russians to threaten United States carrier battle groups.¹⁰⁹

China is rapidly improving its submarine force with the acquisition of Russian Kilo attack submarines. This has greatly increased China’s anti-submarine warfare capability. “As a result, China’s submarine fleet could constitute a substantial force capable of controlling sea lanes and mining approaches around Taiwan, as well as a growing threat to submarines in the East and South China Seas.”¹¹⁰

China has or is acquiring the different strategic, operational and tactical weapons systems it has determined necessary to support the first pillar of its Taiwan military strategy. It has the strategic nuclear deterrent to threaten the continental United States should it attempt to intervene during an invasion of Taiwan. The United States plan to deploy a National Missile Defense may negate this capability in the future, but at present it is a reality.¹¹¹

China has acquired the fighter and attack aircraft to achieve air superiority, but lacks the necessary AWACS type of aircraft to coordinate and integrate the necessary air operations over the Taiwan Strait. It also lacks an in air refueling capability. China is attempting to fill these shortfalls, however they limit China’s ability to project air power over the Taiwan Strait.¹¹² Should China remedy these shortfalls, their ability to deny the United States military access to the Taiwan area could become plausible.

The second pillar of the Chinese military strategy for the invasion of Taiwan would be precision air and missile strikes against key targets (command and control

facilities on Taiwan, airfields, air defense, navy combatant ships, etc.). The aircraft acquisitions and shortfalls noted above have a direct bearing on this part of the strategy. China has also deployed over 200 ballistic missiles that range Taiwan and is projected to increase that number to 800 by 2005. 2005 is the same time frame projected by the Department of Defense for China to fix its AWACS and aerial refueling shortfalls.¹¹³ This would infer China will be capable of carrying out the second pillar of its Taiwan military strategy by 2005.

The third pillar is conducting Information Operations at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. "China has the capability to penetrate poorly protected U.S. computer systems and could potentially use CNA (computer network attack) to attack specific U.S. civilian and military infrastructures. This anti-access strategy is centered on targeting operational centers of gravity, including C4I centers, airbases, and aircraft carrier battle groups located around the periphery of China."¹¹⁴ The Chinese propose an "Unrestricted" form of warfare for the future. "Warfare is now escaping from the boundaries of bloody massacre and exhibiting a trend toward low casualties, or even none at all, and yet high intensity. This is information warfare, financial warfare, trade warfare, and other entirely new forms of warfare, new areas opened up in the domain of warfare."¹¹⁵ The Chinese plan on paralyzing the high-tech strength of the United States through attacks on military, economic and governmental computerized information systems.¹¹⁶

The United States believes the Chinese have adequate hardware and software along with a strong understanding of the technologies involved in information operations. The Chinese are also developing defensive measures to counter computer network attacks

on their units. The Chinese incorporate such attacks against their army and below level headquarters during training exercises.¹¹⁷

China is developing measures to restrict United States intelligence gathering through its space assets while increasing their own space capabilities. China is acquiring anti-satellite technologies such as jammers for use against the Global Positioning System network of satellites and laser weapons to damage or destroy American reconnaissance satellites. China also has numerous joint projects underway with other countries to develop its own space capabilities, many of these are being conducted with Russia.¹¹⁸ China is obviously striving to attain the knowledge and technologies required for support of the Information Operations pillar of its Taiwan strategy.

The fourth and final pillar of the Chinese strategy is to use Special Operations Forces to seize key facilities to enable follow-on amphibious and airborne forces. China is increasing its amphibious lift capacity and currently can move 11,000 troops and 250 tanks in one move. Likely facilities for seizure by special forces would be airfields and ports. China would also use its special forces for reconnaissance, and destroying key command and control assets, transportation nodes and logistics centers. China has devoted increased resources to these Special Operations Forces since the Persian Gulf War.¹¹⁹

China's ability to synchronize and coordinate all the varied operations by its armed forces required to support its four pillars of the Taiwan Strategy is questionable. Chinese joint training is considered a weakness by the United States Department of Defense. China does not have the command and control capabilities or the space capabilities for 'real time' surveillance and reconnaissance required for a successful

invasion of Taiwan if the United States intervened. However, China does understand the theoretical concepts involved in joint, integrated warfare and is making efforts to overcome its shortcomings. Despite these efforts, the Pentagon estimates that China is two decades away from gaining these capabilities.¹²⁰ It should be noted that this estimate is disputed by a recent Congressional report, “The Peoples Liberation Army’s modernization and joint warfighting capabilities are developing at a rate far ahead of the Pentagon’s previous predictions.”¹²¹

This chapter has depicted Chinese military modernization efforts as they relate to established national interests. China’s military strategy for invading and subduing what it considers the renegade province of Taiwan has been established. Chinese weapons systems acquisitions as they relate to this military strategy have been reviewed. The monographs review and analysis of Chinese modernization of its military doctrine and capabilities of its armed forces demonstrate that China is preparing for military conflict with the United States, especially in a Taiwan scenario. It is only reasonable to assume that China believes it can be successful in such an undertaking for it to devote such national attention and treasure to the effort. China has some significant challenges to overcome for its military modernization to enable it to be effective against the United States. These areas include conducting and integrating joint warfare, along with the acquisition of required power projection assets. The assessments of time needed to overcome these challenges range from a few years to never.

The final chapter establishes the monograph’s final conclusions concerning whether China is the next military rival of the United States? These conclusions will be based on the historical relationships between the two nations, their respective national

interests and the potential of China to engage the United States in military conflict and win.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSIONS

The monograph has reviewed the long and often tense relationship, which has developed between the United States and China and the humiliation the Chinese connect to it. There are numerous flash-points involving vital or important national interests on both sides that could spark military conflict between the United States and China. China has developed the military strategy, an asymmetric doctrine, and is attempting to acquire the necessary military systems to engage the United States militarily in a South China Sea or Taiwan area scenario.

Currently, China's ability to engage the United States militarily and believe it can win is very doubtful by almost all accounts. The most likely area for conflict is Taiwan and they are assessed as second class in that scenario. Admiral Dennis Blair, Commander in Chief of the United States Pacific Command, recently testified in Congressional hearings, "The Peoples Liberation Army still lacks the capability to invade and control Taiwan. It maintains a quantitative edge in all branches of service, but does not have an adequate power projection capability to quickly overcome Taiwan's more modern air force and geographical advantages."¹²² China is addressing the power projection deficiencies and is forecasted as surpassing Taiwan's capabilities in the air superiority arena by 2005 by the Department of Defense. They already have naval superiority over Taiwan.¹²³

China experts are divided on China's world military power potential or even its viability to continue to exist as a state. Robert Kaplan wrote, "China's fourteen percent growth rate does not mean its going to be a world power. It means that coastal China,

where the economic growth is taking place, is joining the rest of the Pacific Rim. The disparity with inland China is intensifying.” Due to pollution, demographic changes, resource scarcity, he goes on to write “We will probably see the center challenged and fractured, and China will not remain the same on the map.”¹²⁴

China’s ambitions to dominate Asia and retake Taiwan are clear, however the gap between their ambitions and military capabilities might have been growing. The technological and organizational deficiencies facing China that must be addressed to enable it to militarily challenge the United States are considerable and would be considered insurmountable except for one development. China and Russia forming a strategic partnership, and perhaps military alliance, has given China ready access to high technology and China has the money to buy it. In addition to naval and aircraft purchases, China has over 2,000 Russian military experts assisting its modernization efforts.¹²⁵ If China maintains its current course, it is prudent to believe it will quickly overcome its technological deficiencies.

China’s modernization efforts and desired endstate are reviewed by China expert Jossef Bodansky.

“Thus, in the aftermath of the United States led NATO air campaign [Operation Allied Force in Kosovo], the Peoples Republic of China has already embarked on a comprehensive strategic build-up aimed to enable it to both deter a unilateral United States intervention in the near future and then provide the Peoples Liberation Army with the operational capabilities to conduct and win the confrontation with the United states over the future of the Eastern Hemisphere and China’s own destiny as a great power.”¹²⁶

Our historical relationship with China, the Persian Gulf War, and the Kosovo operation have convinced China that the United States will continue to intervene in internal Chinese affairs and that conflict between the two nations is inevitable.¹²⁷ Another China expert, Richard Fisher of the Jamestown Foundation, in relation to China’s major military

modernization program said, "it is designed to subdue Taiwan, then achieve dominance throughout the Asia-Pacific region."¹²⁸

It has been demonstrated that the United States has vital economic and security interests in the East Asia region. The National Security Strategy states, "The United States will not allow a hostile power to dominate any region of critical importance to our interests."¹²⁹ China's actions of developing an offensive power projection capability, its intent to recover Taiwan and the Spratly and Paracel Islands, along with the statements of its leaders telegraph its intentions to dominate the East Asia region. To allow a foreign power to dominate the East Asia region would be a direct threat to United States vital interests in the region.

It must be assumed China is pursuing its military modernization because it believes the current asymmetric warfare doctrine can be used to realize its political goals in the region. China believes it can deter United States intervention in the area with the threat of mass American civilian casualties from nuclear strikes. China believes it will gain the capability to effectively deny United States military forces access to the East Asia region with the modernization initiative underway. Experts differ on the effectiveness of the modernization program, but the desired end-state is clear.

Given the facts, it is prudent for the United States to consider China as its next military rival. The term, military rival, refers to China competing militarily with the United States for the common objective of military dominance in the East Asia region. The facts are that China considers the United States an enemy historically, the United States and China have conflicting vital interests, and China is rapidly pursuing a military

modernization with the United States projected as the primary enemy. To not treat China as a military rival, at least in the East Asia region would be illogical.

The United States should pursue policies that will neutralize the four pillars of Chinese military strategy for the invasion of Taiwan. If the Chinese realize their military strategy is not plausible, they will pursue peaceful relations with Taiwan. National and Theater Missile Defenses should be deployed as soon as technologically feasible. Taiwan's military capabilities as they compare to China's should be thoroughly analyzed by the Department of Defense and any projected shortfalls rectified to deter Chinese aggression. Contingency plans should be updated, with specific Chinese military acquisitions accounted for, with specific emphasis on deterring or defeating Chinese aggression into the Taiwan and South China Sea regions. The United States should seek strengthened alliances in the Asia-Pacific region to counter China's desired dominance of the region. Finally, the United States should make clear to China what United States intentions are pursuant to these regions to prevent any miscalculations on China's part.

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