



**NAVAL  
POSTGRADUATE  
SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

**THESIS**

***WEI QI: ANCIENT GAME,  
MODERN GREAT POWER TOOL***

by

Andrew P. Melton

December 2020

Thesis Advisor:  
Second Reader:

Douglas A. Borer  
Thomas Jamison

**Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.**

**THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK**

<b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.				
<b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)</b>		<b>2. REPORT DATE</b> December 2020		<b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b> Master's thesis
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> <i>WEI QI: ANCIENT GAME, MODERN GREAT POWER TOOL</i>			<b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Andrew P. Melton				
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A			<b>10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.				
<b>12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.			<b>12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b> A	
<b>13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)</b> <p>Since the People's Republic of China (PRC) was labeled a strategic competitor to the United States, it has become essential to understanding the strategy and expansion of its global influence. The PRC has the largest and fastest-growing navy in the world and intends to use it to support and protect its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the mechanism of global influence via infrastructure investment. The PRC's efforts are expensive and widespread, creating an illusion of inevitability and success against the Western-controlled world order. This thesis examines PRC expansionism through a model built upon the concepts of Wei Qi, an ancient game that is won by having the most influence or control of the board, develops strategic thinking, and creates an understanding of an opponent's interests and opportunities. The thesis applies the Wei Qi model to the nations of Australia and Djibouti, demonstrating its applicability to understanding the PRC's global ambitions and strategic gains in areas where the United States is present. The Wei Qi model also highlights the limited effectiveness of the PRC's economic-centric approach and provides holistic and balanced options for the United States to counter PRC expansionism.</p>				
<b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b> China, great power competition, <i>Wei Qi</i> , Go, Wei Chi, strategy			<b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 79	
			<b>16. PRICE CODE</b>	
<b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b> Unclassified	<b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b> Unclassified	<b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b> Unclassified	<b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b> UU	

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

**Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.**

***WEI QI: ANCIENT GAME, MODERN GREAT POWER TOOL***

Andrew P. Melton  
Lieutenant Commander, United States Navy  
BA, Clemson University, 2009

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS  
(IRREGULAR WARFARE)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
December 2020**

Approved by: Douglas A. Borer  
Advisor

Thomas Jamison  
Second Reader

Douglas A. Borer  
Chair, Department of Defense Analysis

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

## **ABSTRACT**

Since the People's Republic of China (PRC) was labeled a strategic competitor to the United States, it has become essential to understanding the strategy and expansion of its global influence. The PRC has the largest and fastest-growing navy in the world and intends to use it to support and protect its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the mechanism of global influence via infrastructure investment. The PRC's efforts are expensive and widespread, creating an illusion of inevitability and success against the Western-controlled world order. This thesis examines PRC expansionism through a model built upon the concepts of Wei Qi, an ancient game that is won by having the most influence or control of the board, develops strategic thinking, and creates an understanding of an opponent's interests and opportunities. The thesis applies the Wei Qi model to the nations of Australia and Djibouti, demonstrating its applicability to understanding the PRC's global ambitions and strategic gains in areas where the United States is present. The Wei Qi model also highlights the limited effectiveness of the PRC's economic-centric approach and provides holistic and balanced options for the United States to counter PRC expansionism.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>I.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>A. WEI QI GAMEPLAY.....</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>B. THE RULES.....</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>C. THE BOARD AND SEQUENCING.....</b>	<b>4</b>
	<b>D. IMPORTANT CONCEPTS OF WEI QI.....</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>E. THE ENVIRONMENT OF COMPETITION.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>	<b>13</b>
	<b>A. WEI QI AND ITS APPLICATION TO CHINESE HISTORY AND STRATEGY.....</b>	<b>13</b>
	<b>B. CAN WEI QI BE A HEURISTIC MODEL?.....</b>	<b>16</b>
	<b>C. HOW DOES WEI QI REFLECT GREAT POWER COMPETITION?.....</b>	<b>17</b>
	<b>D. LITERATURE GAPS.....</b>	<b>19</b>
	<b>E. METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES.....</b>	<b>20</b>
	<b>F. SOURCES.....</b>	<b>21</b>
	<b>G. BREAKING DOWN THE WEI QI MODEL.....</b>	<b>21</b>
	<b>H. THE GAME BOARD IMAGINED.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>III.</b>	<b>AUSTRALIA AND THE WALL.....</b>	<b>27</b>
	<b>A. APPLYING THE WEI QI MODEL.....</b>	<b>28</b>
	<b>1. Where Is the Case Study On the Board? In the Game?.....</b>	<b>28</b>
	<b>2. What Is the Amount of and Use of Zheng and Qi in the Area?.....</b>	<b>29</b>
	<b>3. Are These Forces Becoming Overwhelming with Irresistible Power Across All Aspects of DIME?.....</b>	<b>37</b>
	<b>4. Are These Forces Developing a Favorable Situation with Great Potential to Achieve Political Objective?.....</b>	<b>39</b>
	<b>5. Is China Taking and Maintaining the Initiative? Is There a Void to Fill?.....</b>	<b>40</b>
	<b>6. Is the Relationship Between China and the Country a Ko?.....</b>	<b>40</b>
	<b>7. What Is the Framework That the Forces Are Providing? What Strategy Is Being Used? What Liberties Do the Pieces Provide?.....</b>	<b>40</b>
	<b>B. CONCLUSION: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b>DJIBOUTI: THE GATEWAY TO THE CENTER.....</b>	<b>43</b>

A.	<b>APPLYING THE <i>WEI QI</i> MODEL.....</b>	<b>44</b>
1.	<b>Where Is the Case Study On the Board? In the Game?.....</b>	<b>44</b>
2.	<b>What Is the Amount of and Use of Zheng and Qi in the Area? .....</b>	<b>45</b>
3.	<b>Are These Forces Becoming Overwhelming with Irresistible Power Across All Aspects of DIME? .....</b>	<b>47</b>
4.	<b>Are These Forces Developing a Favorable Situation with Great Potential to Achieve Political Objective? .....</b>	<b>48</b>
5.	<b>Is China Taking and Maintaining the Initiative? Is There a Void to Fill? .....</b>	<b>49</b>
6.	<b>Is the Relationship Between China and the Country a <i>Ko</i>? .....</b>	<b>49</b>
7.	<b>What Is the Framework That the Forces Are Providing? What Strategy Is Being Used? What Liberties Do the Pieces Provide?.....</b>	<b>49</b>
B.	<b>CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>51</b>
V.	<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>53</b>
A.	<b>INTERPRETATION OF THE MODEL .....</b>	<b>53</b>
B.	<b><i>WEI QI</i> MODEL AND FUTURE ANALYSIS.....</b>	<b>54</b>
	<b>LIST OF REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>55</b>
	<b>INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST .....</b>	<b>61</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Basic Rules of the Game.....	4
Figure 2.	Standard Blank 19 x 19 Board.....	5
Figure 3.	Geography of <i>Wei Qi</i> .....	6
Figure 4.	Baseline Game Board Representation .....	25
Figure 5.	Australian Representation on the Game Board.....	29
Figure 6.	Representation of Djibouti on the Game Board.....	44
Figure 7.	BRI Network November 2020 .....	50

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.	<i>Wei Qi</i> Model.....	21
----------	--------------------------	----

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Ajin	The sense that something that has taste or lingers, the effect of actions
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand, United States mutual defense agreement
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
AUS	Australia
Baduk	Korean name for Wei Qi
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CHAFTA	China–Australia Free Trade Agreement
CNA	Center for Naval Analyses
CPTTP	Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership
DIME	Diplomatic, Informational, Military and Economic levers of national power
G20	Group of Twenty, international forum for governments and central bank governors from 19 countries and the European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
Go	Japanese name for Wei Qi
IMF	International Monetary Fund
<i>Ko</i>	A life or death situation, strategic national interests, red line criteria
Liberties	the four cardinal points of a stone, the opportunities any action provides
MARTA	Mega Regional Trade Agreement
NPS	Naval Postgraduate School
OBOR	One Belt, One Road
PLAN	People’s Liberation Army-Navy
PRC	People’s Republic of China
Qi	The extraordinary use of forces, abnormal use of national power
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
Shi	the alignment of forces, the propensity of things, or the potential born of disposition

SLOC	Sea Lines of Communication
SOE	State Owned Enterprise
Territory	Region or location in which influence can be carved out
TPP	Trans Pacific Partnership
UN	United Nations
UNLOS	United Nations Conventions on the Law of the Sea
<i>Wei Qi</i>	Ancient Chinese board game, means encirclement game or encirclement chess
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization
Zheng	The regular use of forces, overt use of national power



## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to thank my family for the hours of patient listening and insightful comments as I verbally worked out this idea in my head. Special thanks to Dr. Doug Borer and Dr. Thomas Jamison on their calm guidance and encouragement through this process. Also want to thank my fellow classmates of the Defense Analysis Department who have helped build this concept along the way.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

## I. INTRODUCTION

The People's Republic of China's (PRC) continued military and economic growth, illegitimate island building; and aggressive actions in the region surrounding the South China Sea have been recognized as threats to U.S. global strategic interests. Within both the military and academic literature there has been much analysis and debate, not only on the nature of this behavior but also how to limit and counter it. To date that focus has been centered mainly within the first island chain. The first island chain being the group of nations ranging from Japan down to Indonesia, including the busy Sea Lines of Communications (SLOC) of the South China Sea and East China Sea. This perspective potentially blinds decision makers and planners to the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) grander strategic plan and exposes the United States to envelopment by Chinese influence and power in the greater Indo-Pacific region.

A potential corrective lens through which to examine and shape a response to CCP strategic actions is to apply lessons from the ancient board game of *Wei Qi*. A two-player strategy game, which uses stones to represent forces and influence and traces its roots to the time of Sun Tzu and the Warring States period (c. 475–221 BC). Examining *Wei Qi* is beneficial in processing CCP strategy not because of its cultural origins but because of how the game replicates the current global competitive climate created by the international world order and the limitations Nuclear Deterrence puts upon the players against aggressive actions encouraging the use of hybrid warfare.

This thesis first presents the gameplay, concepts and perspective of *Wei Qi*. Next it explores the current environment in which the two players, the U.S. and the People's Republic of China (PRC), inhabit and how *Wei Qi* gameplay replicates those conditions. Finally, it uses *Wei Qi* structure and the concept of "reading," or strategic analysis, to develop a model to help military planners, analysts and decision makers to ask the relevant questions when observing CCP actions in the grey zone. Once developed, the model is applied to two case studies, one examining Australia and the other Djibouti, both of which have relevance to the U.S. and PRC for Diplomatic, Informational, Military and Economic (DIME) reasons. The case studies describe the historic bi-lateral relationships between

those countries and China, and then apply the *Wei Qi* model of analysis. Using this technique produces a well-rounded understanding of the importance each country has to China, the levers of influence China is using, and how effective they are, and helps infer ways the United States could employ their own pressure to counter.

#### A. *WEI QI* GAMEPLAY

*Wei Qi*, which translated from Mandarin means “encircling chess” or “encirclement board game,” is an ancient two-player strategy game that is often compared to chess and its influence upon military and political strategy in the West.<sup>1</sup> Both board games adhere to a set of rules and game mechanics that encourage planning one’s own moves ahead, understanding your opponent, observing his or her actions and projecting the possible outcomes of their decisions. Their differences are in the game mechanics and the objective of the players which result in different strategies and processes. *Wei Qi*’s objective is to own the most territory on the board or to encircle the opponent, whereas in chess, the goal is to capture the king and achieve complete capitulation. These differences in objectives shift the perspective of gameplay, decision making and the pace of the games. The game pieces are also a noticeable difference. In *Wei Qi* simple white and black stones are used and they are restricted to a single move or placement on the board. Chess uses multiple pieces, each has their own rules on how they can be captured and how they can move across the board. These differences in game mechanics and piece movement speak to the different cultural representations and perceptions within each game. Chess’ rules reflecting medieval European ideas of class separation and the inherent differences in capability between them.<sup>2</sup> Whereas, *Wei Qi* stones represented a single person and how it takes coordination and planning to claim territory and victory. This strategic perspective reflects the battles for dominance in the era of Warring States, which saw small kingdoms competing for power and influence through military might, deception, and political

---

<sup>1</sup> David Lai, “Learning from the Stones: A Go Approach to Mastering China’s Strategic Concept, Shi:” (Fort Belvoir, VA: Defense Technical Information Center, May 1, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.21236/ADA423419>.

<sup>2</sup> Lai.

maneuvering in ancient China.<sup>3</sup> Another way the two games differ is in the way they define victory, chess requiring capitulation or capturing of the King. In *Wei Qi*, the winner is the player who controls the most territory on the board, which can be done by the narrowest of margins and only controlling 51% of the board. This perspective of narrow victory and understanding that losses of territory to your opponent will occur is a key aspect of the strategic thought of the game.

## **B. THE RULES**

The rules of *Wei Qi* are relatively simple and are laid out in Figure 1 as described in Scott Boorman's *The Protracted Game*.<sup>4</sup> Despite the simplicity of the rules, the gameplay develops into a mixture of multiple tactical actions and small stratagems across the board that coalesce into a larger strategy in order to achieve a victory by even the smallest of margins. In *Wei Qi*, the winner is the one who mathematically owns more of the board, meaning that victory can be won with 51% of the board. The rules also indicate a sense of cooperation between the players, who while competing there is an order to the play and agreement on when there are no other options available. This development of a cooperative cum competitive environment is a small but significant reminder of what the relationship between the two great powers can be.

---

<sup>3</sup> Sun Tzu, "The Art of War." (New York, Oxford University Press, 1963).

<sup>4</sup> Scott A. Boorman, *The Protracted Game; a Wei-Ch'i Interpretation of Maoist Revolutionary Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969).

1. Empty board at start of the game
2. Black plays first
3. Turns alternate between Black and White and consist of placing of one stone only on any vacant intersection
4. The objectives of both sides are
  - a. to encircle vacant intersections (territory)
  - b. to capture or kill hostile stones
5. A group of one or more stones is captured by occupying with stones of the opposite color every board intersection to which the group adjoins
6. Captured stones are removed from the board
7. Stones that are not actually captured but that can be captured at the will of the opponent are termed dead and count at the end of the game as captured
8. The game ends when neither side considers itself able to gain further territory or to kill or capture additional enemy stones
9. The score of a side is the sum of the number of intersections of territory that it has encircled and the number of stones captured or killed by the end of the game
10. The side with the higher score wins

Figure 1. Basic Rules of the Game

There are additional rules that are applied in professional matches when there is a handicap between players of different skill levels. For the purposes of this analysis, those rules are not required, though an argument could be made that the U.S. has already been given this benefit by being the sole hegemon for the past 30 years with a distinct advantage in the economic and military realm.

### C. THE BOARD AND SEQUENCING

Another unique feature of *Wei Qi* and a major difference between Chess is the board on which the game is played. The game board in Chess is an 8 x 8 grid normally of black and white tiles. Each tile is a position that can be taken by another piece as long as the rules dictating its movement allow it. In *Wei Qi*, the standard board is a 19 x 19 grid (see Figure 2).

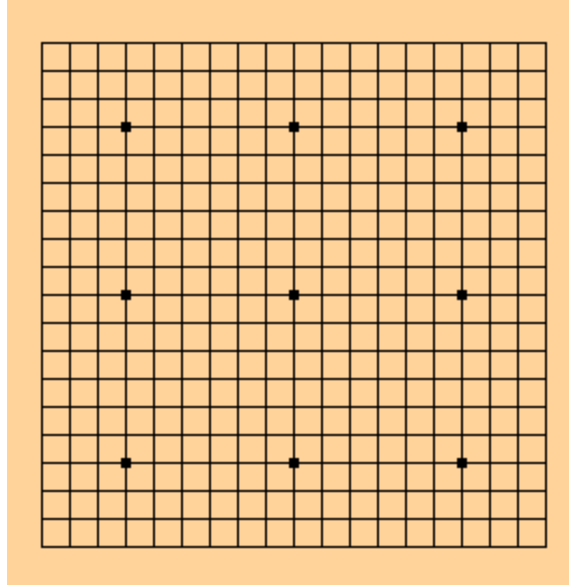


Figure 2. Standard Blank 19 x 19 Board<sup>5</sup>

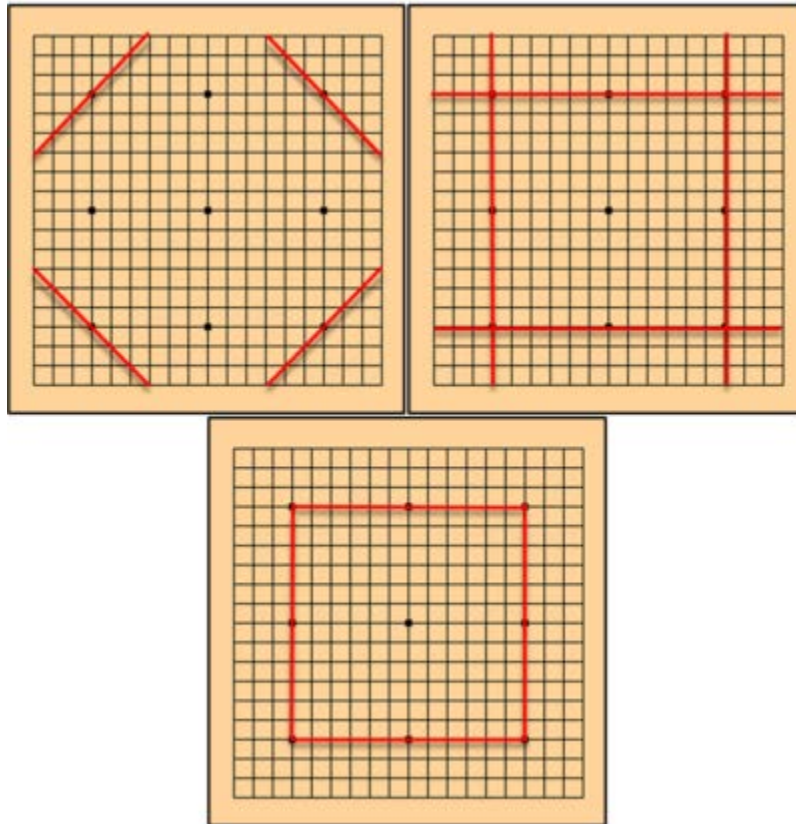
However, it is not the tiles that are important or counted but the intersections on where the lines meet is where pieces are placed. Another key difference is that in Chess the pieces are arranged at the start of the game on opposing sides, creating a strict border and sense of ownership to a side of the board. In *Wei Qi*, the board is blank and a player can start placing pieces anywhere there is an open spot. The players in *Wei Qi* must develop their own areas, and until strong positions are created, the opposing player has the opportunity to limit the size and development of these territories.

Sequencing within *Wei Qi* is similar to sequencing in military planning; there are different phases in a campaign and areas of the board that are focused on during those phases of the game. There are two limiting factors that create these phases in the game: the number of intersections on the board and the number of pieces that each player possesses. There are 361 intersections on a 19 x 19 grid, and the white player has 180 pieces, while the black has 181. Black gets the extra piece because it starts first and normally is the identified weaker or junior player. The interaction between the intersections and number of pieces create the three phases of the game: opening, middle and end phase correlating

---

<sup>5</sup> Source: Mateusz Hudzikowski, "The Go Game Model in International Politics Research," *Strategic Impact* 49, no. 4 (2013): 79–91.

to the number of plays, with moves 1–50 being the opening phase, 51–100 the middle and moves 101–180 being the end. Traditionally, this means a player is focusing on the three major “geographic points” of the board: the corners in the beginning, the walls during the middle and the center during the end phase. These geographical points are displayed in Figure 3.



Top left: Corners should be focused on in the beginning; Top right: Wall should be focused on during the middle portion of the game; bottom: Center will be the final competition area for game<sup>6</sup>

Figure 3. Geography of *Wei Qi*

There are no rules stating that a player must start by building in the corners, but it is the prudent move to create a corner so as that is a place in which you can project influence

---

<sup>6</sup> Hudzikowski.



and guarantee some ownership of the board. The transition to the walls next allows a player to continue taking ownership of the board without overextending their reach and exposing gains to the opponent. The walls tend to either help enhance or limit the players corners, depending on how aggressive each player is and how much a player can deceive or distract the opponent. The center is normally the area where the game ends because it is where the corners and extending walls meet and players vie for the last pieces of real estate in order to win. Within these limitations of moves and these “geographical regions,” players can attempt a nearly limitless amount of stratagems and tactics in order to carve out the most territory.

#### **D. IMPORTANT CONCEPTS OF *WEI QI***

With an understanding of the rules and geography of the board, there are a couple of key concepts of *Wei Qi* that should be explored. These are the ideas of territory, liberties and its relation to life and death of the pieces, *Ko*, *Aji* and *Shi*. These basic concepts of *Wei Qi* are the fundamental building blocks of strategic thinking within the game. Another aspect of *Wei Qi* that a player and reader of this thesis must understand is that the game has regional presence. In Korea the game is known as *Baduk* and Japan it is known as *Go*. As such, many concepts and definitions are multi-lingual and are best understood in those other languages and will appear in this thesis as such.

Territory on the game board is empty points that are surrounded, or controlled by a player. Control in this instance means that the “open space” inside the territory controlled by player A is within a living group, or group that can capture any stone that player B attempts to place in there. The goal of the game is to try and develop these territories in order to take up as much of the board as possible. This creates a realization that one’s opponent will also control territory and there is nothing that can be done about that.

Liberties are the empty space or open points that are adjacent to a stone on the board, with a single stone potentially having four liberties. The number of liberties can be increased by creating a chain of stones, which adds together their available liberties, making them stronger and more resilient. Liberty is the English word for this concept, with *Dame* being the Japanese and *qi* being the Chinese word for them. The Chinese word *qi* is

defined as breath, meaning these stones are breathing or alive. If a stone or chain of stones were to lose their liberties that, would mean that they no longer are breathing and are dead. This is how stones are captured and neutralized: by the opponent encircling the chain and taking away their liberties. Hence, a chain or territory that has a significant amount of liberties can survive and is less open to being captured.

A *Ko* is a life or death situation where two alternating single stone captures would repeat the original board position. The alternating captures could repeat indefinitely, preventing the game from ending. This normally occurs in an area where the players have territories meeting on the board and the determination of the *Ko*, will mean a potential loss of that chain. The *Ko* rule was created to avoid an indefinite stalemate: if one player captures the *Ko*, the opponent is prohibited from recapturing the *Ko* immediately. While this might seem like it means a potential loss, it creates an opportunity to either play the board to increase the liberties of the chain for a small loss, or a player can use the *Ko* rule to create space to move in another part of the board. The key aspect of a *Ko* is the determination of the potential losses of the *Ko* outweigh further gains somewhere else on the board.

The final main concept to understand is the idea of *Shi* and what it means for strategy and approach to *Wei Qi*. According to a pentagon report on the Chinese military in 2002, “there is no Western equivalent to the concept of “*shi*.” Chinese linguists explain it as “the alignment of forces,” the “propensity of things,” or the “potential born of disposition,” that only a skilled strategist can exploit to ensure victory over a superior force. Similarly, only a sophisticated assessment by an adversary can recognize the potential exploitation of “*shi*.”<sup>7</sup> According to David Lai, *Shi* is a strategy and process of exploiting the strategic configuration of power.<sup>8</sup> *Shi* is not only what the environment is but also the ability to manipulate it and create opportunities to achieve a goal.

---

<sup>7</sup> Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to the Congress on the Military Power of the People’s Republic of China, July 2002* (Department of Defense, 2002), 6.

<sup>8</sup> Lai, “Learning from the Stones,” 1.

This idea is related to the game concept of *Aji*, which in Japanese is “the sense that something that has taste lingers” or in Chinese *Weidao*. Within the game of *Wei Qi* its usage refers to lingering possibilities left in a position. These possibilities are latent and usually cannot be used immediately, but rather may come to life at later points in the game. This is why *Aji* is also often translated as potential. *Shi* is understanding this potential and conducting actions in order to bring it about.

## E. THE ENVIRONMENT OF COMPETITION

*Wei Qi* is an ideal lens for processing the current environment of Great Power Competition with the PRC, as it helps to both simplify actions and helps illuminate understanding of the hybrid threat that exists. It is a recognized fact that China under President Xi is the rising power of the Twenty-First century, as it follows his plan of National Rejuvenation which includes continued modernization, economic and military growth and ever expanding global presence.<sup>9</sup> This development has led to much writing on power transition theory in political science circles with the most prominent being Graham Allison’s *Thucydides Trap* and John Mearsheimer’s *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*.<sup>10</sup> The trap is a situation when a rising power (China) threatens the status quo that benefits the incumbent power (the United States) as was observed by the Greek historian Thucydides between Athens and Sparta. According to the Allison, this competition has historically lead to conflict between the two powers in order to determine the new number one.<sup>11</sup>

Much of power transition theory is dedicated to exploring how war can be avoided in the Sino–U.S. relations. Theorists tend to look at factors such as economic interdependence, nuclear deterrence, and multi-lateral organizations and each country’s

---

<sup>9</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving The People’s Republic of China 2020*, Annual Report to Congress (Washington, D.C.: Pentagon, 2020), <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF>.

<sup>10</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Updated edition. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014).

<sup>11</sup> Graham T. Allison, *Destined for War : Can America and China Escape Thucydides’s Trap?* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017).

participation in them. The threat of collapsing the world's two biggest economies and the damage a full war between the two would do to the rest of the global economy is a relevant deterrent but one that can be overlooked if a party feels its security is at stake. Nuclear deterrence a defining feature of the Cold War that just meant that hot wars were either conducted via proxy or through a competition of influence.<sup>12</sup> Of note, the PRC and the U.S. had come to blows in Korea and Vietnam during this time of nuclear deterrence. So excluding the possibility of a limited war is not entirely accurate. Furthermore, while the CCP may not want to shatter the international environment, it will use it to its advantage to protect their interests and perspective.<sup>13</sup> This would make them reformers vice revolutionaries in the global commons. The power transition literature also explores how each side actively declares rejection of the trap and their individual preference for war avoidance. What the power transition theory does not fully explore is that, despite these limitations on total war, the real battle is within that nebulous grey zone. The grey zone being the area between war and peace, armed conflict and competition across the DIME. The current conflict is a competition for presence, influence and the ability to lead on the world stage.

The hybrid nature of the conflict fits both the ideals and preferences of the CCP. The CCP's core interests is the survival of the party, maintain sovereignty, and ensure economic and societal modernization, or as President Xi labels them National Rejuvenation.<sup>14</sup> In order to achieve this rejuvenation the CCP must continue to expand its economy and help its companies grow their overseas presence so as to maintain the 30-year trend of above-average economic growth. The CCP perceives that the U.S. wants to contain this expansion, and is willing to conduct a Whole-of-Government approach toward its growing position in the world. A revealing document from the CCP perspective is *Unrestricted Warfare: China's Master Plan to Destroy America* written by two PLAN

---

<sup>12</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*, vol. 85 (Cambridge: Council on Foreign Relations, 2005), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511817991>.

<sup>13</sup> D. Shambaugh, *China and the World* (Oxford University Press, 2020), [https://books.google.com/books?id=\\_tjBDwAAQBAJ](https://books.google.com/books?id=_tjBDwAAQBAJ).

<sup>14</sup> Nadège Rolland, "China's Vision for a New World Order," *The National Bureau Of Asian Research*, no. NBR Special Report #83 (January 2020): 68.

military strategist. Unrestricted Warfare argues for the use of what has been described as Lawfare, Economic Warfare, Cyber warfare and even the application of terrorism in a struggle against the United States.<sup>15</sup> With the exception of terrorism, likely due to the U.S. War on Terror which occurred after the publication of this book, these methods have been prevalent in China's behavior. Their island building in the South China Sea and maritime confrontations are all from taking certain positions and interpretations of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Even the CCP's most recent move against Hong Kong and their use of a security law to enforce censorship of pro-democratic movements fall within the ideals of Lawfare. Their Economic Warfare is their most potent weapon, with their debt trap policies, and global infrastructure project the Belt and Road Initiative. Even the current trade war that China has with the U.S. and Australia can be seen as this method. Finally, a defining feature of recent U.S. – Sino relations has been the constant cyber intrusions by netizens who, operating under the aegis of the CCP, have been stealing DOD secrets, plans and civilian intellectual property.<sup>16</sup>

Due to the global nature of this path toward rejuvenation, there is almost a sense that too much is going on and that the CCP is encircling the U.S. and its allies on all fronts. By viewing the CCP's actions through a strategic lens of *Wei Qi*, one can not only help simplify the complex competing relationship with the U.S., but also understand the nuances of its relationship with different nations as it expands. A *Wei Qi* lens will help an observer understand how much investment the CCP is putting into a country, reflecting its potential importance but also understand how effective it is developing influence. A *Wei Qi* lens can help develop an observer's ability to understand what benefits the CCP can develop via its involvement in distant countries and how best to limit this potential. Ultimately, a *Wei Qi* perspective can help an observer understand that the globalized world, combined with China's hybrid approach toward expansion, inherently means that China can operate anywhere and will require a multifaceted approach to counter.

---

<sup>15</sup> Liang Qiao, *Unrestricted Warfare: China's Master Plan to Destroy America* (Panama City, Panama: Pan American Pub, 2002).

<sup>16</sup> Maurer, Tim., *Cyber Mercenaries: The State, Hackers, and Power*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom :: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

**THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK**

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The use of *Wei Qi* as an analytical lens for CCP strategy is not a new idea, but there have been varying emphases on what is useful from the game and how it is applied. Some articles simply state that knowing *Wei Qi* is the same as knowing the CCP's mindset and would be a map of their actions; others contend it has no use.<sup>17</sup> While lessons can be learned from the game, it is a stretch to postulate that the PLA and CCP's war plans and growth of global influence would be a centralized process dictated entirely by a game board. This chapter will review the leading analysis on how *Wei Qi* can be applied, examine the arguments against its use and finally, connect the game to the modern era of Great Power Competition and Power Transition Theory.

### A. *WEI QI* AND ITS APPLICATION TO CHINESE HISTORY AND STRATEGY

One of the first to examine the usefulness and applicability of *Wei Qi* in understanding *CCP* actions and strategies was Scott Boorman, a mathematical sociologist from Yale. His 1969 book, *The Protracted Game: A Wei-Ch'I Interpretation of Maoist Revolutionary Strategy* linked *Wei Qi* stratagems to the Chinese Communist guerilla war from the 1920s to Communist victory and CCP establishment in 1949.<sup>18</sup> Boorman analyzed Mao's guerrilla warfare tactics and strategies demonstrated that they adhered to the thousand-year-old strategies found in *Wei Qi*. Boorman's analysis derived a 17-point model that displays *Wei Qi*'s relevance toward the insurgency of Mao.<sup>19</sup> This model spreads across six major features of strategy: structural characteristics, how to develop patterns of force, strategic objectives, policies to develop territory, building up bases of support, and how to destroy hostile forces. Boorman postulates that this model helps develop the skills necessary to understand three axioms of *CCP* strategy and

---

<sup>17</sup> Michael Posner, "Weiqi: The Game That Holds China's Key to World Domination," *The Globe and Mail*, June 10, 2011, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/munk-debates/weiqi-the-game-that-holds-chinas-key-to-world-domination/article598664/>.

<sup>18</sup> Boorman, *The Protracted Game*. Wei Ch'I is a previous spelling and conversion of Chinese to English. The currently appropriate spelling is Wei Qi.

<sup>19</sup> Boorman, 154–60.

problem solving: the territory oriented concept of Maoist political-military doctrine, the pattern of political-military operations in space and time, and finally, the decisive character of connection and encirclement of forces.<sup>20</sup> This is relevant for this thesis's analysis of *CCP* expansion as it is not a simple military conquest instead, it is a combination of economic, informational and political dominance. While, the concepts of the three axioms still remain relevant in geopolitics, Boorman's article has lost some of its explanatory power in the post-Mao era.

Whereas Boorman connected *Wei Qi* to Maoist guerrilla warfare, David Lai connects *Wei Qi* to the oft-quoted military strategist Sun Tzu and the "*Art of War*." David Lai's 2004 monograph, *Learning from the Stones: A Go Approach to Mastering China's Strategic Concept*, *Shi* is the central work shaping the modern discussion on *Wei Qi* and how it is a "living reflection of Chinese philosophy, culture, strategic thinking, warfare, military tactics, and diplomatic bargaining."<sup>21</sup> Go is the more popular Japanese name for *Wei Qi*, but the gameplay and concepts are the same for both games. Lai connects CCP strategy, *Wei Qi* and the "*Art of War*" through the concept of *Shi*, or the strategic configuration of power. Lai argues that understanding this strategic configuration of power requires a sophisticated assessment of the opponent in order to succeed in warfare. In *Wei Qi*, this concept is known as "reading" or deciphering your opponent's strategy. Lai points out that *Shi* is so integral to historical Chinese military thought that Sun Tzu dedicated an entire chapter to breaking down the concept and its importance to success on the battlefield.<sup>22</sup> Lai goes on to compare U.S. military capability and strategy to that of chess and its preponderance for overwhelming offensive force. This allows Lai to argue that CCP strategy is more influenced by the indirect and subtler methods that are seen in *Wei Qi* and proposed by Sun Tzu. Lai's argument for learning from the stones rests on the understanding that in the modern world the U.S. is the global hegemon and direct military conflict is not the method by

---

<sup>20</sup> Boorman, 167.

<sup>21</sup> Lai, "Learning from the Stones."

<sup>22</sup> Lai, 1-3.



which an adversary would challenge it. It is from a weaker position of power and the U.S. through unconventional methods that China would attempt to counter U.S. strength.

Dr. Henry Kissinger agrees with David Lai's position that there is an element of influence from *Wei Qi* upon the Chinese perspective of geopolitics. In his seminal book, *On China* Kissinger claims that *Wei Qi* is representative of Chinese *Realpolitik* and the teachings of Sun Tzu. According to Kissinger, *Wei Qi* develops the Chinese ideal of how to approach a political-military problem, "stresses subtlety, indirection, and the patient accumulation of relative advantage."<sup>23</sup> This ideal is reinforced by another long time U.S. China analyst Michael Pillsbury and his work *The 100 Year Marathon. China's Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower*. Pillsbury's book is based off his decades of experience in the U.S. government specializing on the CCP and their development from their revolution to the modern day.<sup>24</sup> Pillsbury also states that *Wei Qi* is representative of the traits that are central to his thesis, that the CCP has a long term, reactive plan that is aimed at their single opponent, the United States. These traits being the ability to conducted multi-layered dynamic competition via methodical buildup of forces and capability, using deception and taking advantage of opportunities.<sup>25</sup>

Supporting Lai's approach is Zhongqi Pan from the School of International Relations and Public Affairs of Fudan University, who argues that *Wei Qi* is the game that best reflects the Chinese way of thinking. According to Pan's article, *Guanxi, Weiqi and Chinese Strategic Thinking* the Chinese have a relational way of thinking and approaching problems and *Wei Qi* most accurately reflects this process.<sup>26</sup> Pan, citing multiple psychological and sociological studies, proposes that Chinese perceptions are centered around the concept of Guanxi or that individual objects or subjects must exist

---

<sup>23</sup> Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011), 22–30.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Pillsbury, *The 100 Year Marathon. China's Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower*. (Hudson Institute, 2015).

<sup>25</sup> Pillsbury.

<sup>26</sup> Zhongqi Pan, "Guanxi, Weiqi and Chinese Strategic Thinking," *Chinese Political Science Review* 1, no. 2 (June 1, 2016): 303–21, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41111-016-0015-1>.

within a context that is defined by their various relationships. Guanxi means that the Chinese tend to possess a holistic perception that defines things not by their sameness but by their relations to one another. Pan argues that this is drastically different from U.S. thinking which is more generic and follows categorization based off of similarity. To simplify, Zhonqi puts forward that the Chinese way of thinking is “the logic of relationships” compared to the American “logic of transactions.”<sup>27</sup> This difference in logic therefore leads to different goals in the foreign policy realm, different views on the timeline it takes to achieve a desired effect and the principles of *Wei Qi* best reflect this thought process.

## **B. CAN *WEI QI* BE A HEURISTIC MODEL?**

With the understanding that *Wei Qi* and its concepts reflect aspects of Chinese thought and perception, how does it fair as an applied model? According to Polish global politics researcher Mateusz Hudzikowski, *Wei Qi* fits perfectly within the Game Theory definition of a model to be used in international relations studies.<sup>28</sup> *Wei Qi* fits the theory because it simplifies a complex relationship (international relations) with defined rules, but has enough dynamic variability to allow for the development of competing hypotheses and for studying the different results. *Wei Qi* as a model is useful as it stimulates strategic analysis. which is an inherent requirement in global politics. Specifically, Hudzikowski believes a *Wei Qi* model is best applied in conflict over space and territory, conflict simulation, negotiations, and resolution, as well as in conflicts of assets and interests.<sup>29</sup> All of these describe the current global environment as China has expanded its presence and influence globally.

There are those who argue against the use of a *Wei Qi* model, specifically Go master Richard Bozulich, the author of *The Basics of Go Strategy*. In *Richard Bozulich on Kissinger on China and Go*, a critique posted on the official U.S. Go organization website, Bozulich argues that the proposition of *Wei Qi* as analogous to CCP decision

---

<sup>27</sup> Pan.

<sup>28</sup> Hudzikowski, “The Go Game Model in International Politics Research.”

<sup>29</sup> Hudzikowski, 82–86.

making is too simple of a concept.<sup>30</sup> Bozulich targets Kissinger’s assessment that *Wei Qi* is reflective of Chinese decision making and argues that success in *Wei Qi* are not equal and that success in one does not equal success in another. In that perspective, Bozulich is correct and all previous authors in this review would agree with him that it is not a perfect match. However, he misses the point that a *Wei Qi* model is a useful framework for simplifying a complex problem in line with Game Theory and in helping develop strategic perspective. Bozulich may be unaware of a truth within the military that simple analogies and frameworks help in the development of plans and in personnel training. While the concepts and game play may not be perfectly equal to actions in the real world, the understanding of a grander strategic picture is what is most desired from its application.

### C. HOW DOES *WEI QI* REFLECT GREAT POWER COMPETITION?

The 2018 National Defense Strategy announced that the United States “acknowledges an increasingly complex global security environment, characterized by overt challenges to the free and open international order and the re-emergence of long-term, strategic competition between nations” or great power competition.<sup>31</sup> It specifically names China as a “strategic competitor...whose leveraging military modernization, influence operations, and predatory economics to coerce neighboring countries to reorder the Indo-Pacific region to their advantage” and the preeminent security challenge for the US.<sup>32</sup> This position was reinforced with the annual report to Congress, the *Military and Security Development Involving the PRC 2020*, which looked at the past twenty-year development of the People’s Liberation Army and how it has strategically developed key areas of shipbuilding, land based conventional ballistic and cruise missiles, and integrated air defense systems.<sup>33</sup> The report also states that in

---

<sup>30</sup> Bozulich, Richard., “Richard Bozulich on Kissinger on China and Go,” 2011, [https://www.usgo.org/files/bh\\_library/BozulichonKissinger.pdf](https://www.usgo.org/files/bh_library/BozulichonKissinger.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: Pentagon, 2018), 1–3, <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> Department of Defense, 3.

<sup>33</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, *2020 PRC Report*.

pursuit of its “National Rejuvenation” the CCP will take a Military-Civil Fusion development strategy combining its economic efforts via the Belt and Road Initiative with its security strategies. Security strategies that are now supported by the world largest navy of 350 ships and submarines and have a strategic direction to be a “world class” military able to project power globally.<sup>34</sup>

This expansion of scope beyond China’s traditional region of power toward a global goal supports the perspective of a *Wei Qi* model, as the board represents the world. This global perspective will force the players to develop their different bases or regions of strength to achieve their goals, national rejuvenation or maintenance of the status quo.

This recognition of China’s growing military capability and power combined with their continued economic growth has caused much discussion on the nature of China’s rise and whether the PRC will challenge the United States for hegemonic position. The study of this tension falls within Power Transition Theory. The theory looks at ways that a rising power can overtake and replace a declining hegemonic one and whether it can be peaceful or will always result in violent conflict. Graham Allison has labeled this phenomenon as the “Thucydides Trap”: a pattern in which the two powers are destined to conflict as the rising power challenges the status quo that benefits the declining hegemon.<sup>35</sup> Of the 15 transitions through history that Allison studied, 11 resulted in war; however, this effort was focused on European power transitions and, as David Kang and Xinru Ma point out *Thucydides Didn’t Live in East Asia*.<sup>36</sup> Kang and Ma surmise while the trap is logical, there is a historical record within East Asia of a different type of power transition. Analyzing the transitions at the end of the Ming Dynasty (1600), the Imjin War (1592-1598) and the Ming-Qing Transition (1644-1683) promotes a couple of lessons. First, conflict comes from a power vacuum and not a

---

<sup>34</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense.

<sup>35</sup> Allison, *Destined for War*.

<sup>36</sup> David C. Kang and Xinru Ma, “Power Transitions: Thucydides Didn’t Live in East Asia,” *The Washington Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 137–54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2018.1445905>.

transition. Second, that prestige and interest play a bigger role in decision making compared to Balance of Power theory and the need to bandwagon or balance.<sup>37</sup> Kang and Ma also postulate that within the region, China has already transitioned to the role of regional hegemon, but via economic means vice traditional military conquest.

This difference on the inevitability of conflict is also reflected in the *Clash of Titans* series between Realist John Mearshimer and career diplomat Zbigniew Brzezinski.<sup>38</sup> The two argue over the nature of China's rise, with Mearshimer arguing for his Offensive Realism and the inevitability of regional efforts to contain China increasing the chance for conflict.<sup>39</sup> Brzezinski argues that there are structural differences in the modern world, specifically nuclear deterrence that prevent this conflict. He also postulates that China's actions are motivated by and focused on economic and domestic forces, which benefit from the current international system and status quo.<sup>40</sup> These differences in voices on the nature of China's rise, what are its driving forces and what the desired end state Sino - U.S. relationship may be support the use of a *Wei Qi* model that simplifies the interactions of global expansion and presence.

#### **D. LITERATURE GAPS**

The current literature on *Wei Qi* and its benefits toward developing understanding of CCP strategy has historically been limited toward the PRC's domestic and regional conflicts. The concepts and models were written before the CCP started conducting aggressive actions in the South China Sea, developed its BRI, created the AIIB and achieved the PRC's economic status as the second largest economy in the world. The next step in the conversation is to use the *Wei Qi* model to understand CCP intentions as it expands globally, but to also see how effective its different approaches

---

<sup>37</sup> Kang and Ma, 143–45.

<sup>38</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski and John Mearshimer, "Clash of the Titans," *Foreign Policy* 146 (February 2005): 45–50. Surely the book here is *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*? I would throw in Paul Kennedy for good measure as well.

<sup>39</sup> John J Mearsheimer, "Can China Rise Peacefully?," in *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 2014, 56, [http://www.eastlaw.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Can-China-Rise-Peacefully\\_-\\_The-National-Interest.pdf](http://www.eastlaw.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Can-China-Rise-Peacefully_-_The-National-Interest.pdf).

<sup>40</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski and John Mearshimer, "Clash of the Titans."

are in support of its grand strategy. This application will address a gap that helps analyze CCP strategy not through a lens of fear— as attributed to the Thucydides Trap—but through clarity by focusing on Chinese interests.

## **E. METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES**

This thesis will apply a model or series of questions derived from the gameplay and strategy of *Wei Qi* to two countries: Australia and Djibouti. This application is similar to Admiral McRaven’s process in his work *Special Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare: Theory and Practice* and instead of identifying the level of “Relative Superiority” achieved in an operation I will be examining the level of influence the CCP has in both countries. The benefit of choosing these two nations as case studies is that they provide different perspectives on Chinese international interactions, geography and remove any issues of core interests or sovereignty from the discussion. These two nations also provide a useful understanding of the larger scope of Chinese activity and the global nature of how the strategic competition is evolving. The two cases allow for a clear perspective on CCP global power projection, what methods of influence it uses in different regions and how effective it is at the task.

The questions to be used are derived from the gameplay of *Wei Qi* but also from work conducted by David Lai and his examination of Sun Tzu and the concept of Shi and its relations to the game.<sup>41</sup> The questions are designed to examine the environment that the players are competing in, while narrowing down which options are available to the adversary. Examining the environment and the liberties available help in deciding how a player can react in order to limit the opponent. The *Wei Qi* model is displayed in Table 1 with all of the questions listed in order.

---

<sup>41</sup> Lai, “Learning from the Stones.”

Table 1. *Wei Qi* Model

Where is the case study on the board? In the Game?
What is the amount of and use of Zheng and Qi in the area?
Are these forces becoming overwhelming with irresistible power across all aspects of DIME?
Are these forces developing a favorable situation with great potential to achieve political objectives?
Is China taking and maintaining the initiative; is there a void to fill?
Is the relationship between China and the country a <i>Ko</i> ?
Are these forces becoming overwhelming with irresistible power across all aspects of DIME?

These questions should be able to develop a sense of understanding of the available options to the players, or “reading,” as it is known in *Wei Qi* circles. Each of the questions focuses on the nature of the interests involved and what actions are being conducted.

#### **F. SOURCES**

Answers to these questions will be derived from multiple sources in order to develop the clearest understanding on the relationships between the PRC and each country. The thesis uses news articles covering economic and political developments, government statements and reports from each case study country, the United States and the PRC. Use multi-lateral trade organization data, United Nations information and previous polls and studies on perceptions of Chinese expansion in each country.

#### **G. BREAKING DOWN THE *WEI QI* MODEL**

The first question, “Where are we on the board? In the Game?” is used to help the player focus on the region of the game board or the terrain. In the case studies, this will be the geography of the nation as well as understanding the interests of the opponent. Breaking down how far the nation is from mainland China and its main sphere of influence in East Asia provides scale and focus on the interests involved. Understanding the terrain will help examine what the lines of communication are between the two nations and how that effects the timing and pressure of their relationship. Understanding where the nation is in the game

helps understand the limiting factors but also is related to the timeline of the game. In *Wei Qi*, playing along the walls typically occurs in the early to middle part of the game and as the game ends focus shifts toward the center. This also correlates to the amount of stones or moves left in order to claim territory. Hence, the importance of this question is to understand the limiting factors of material and potentially the importance of the relationship.

The second question, “What is the amount of and use of *Zheng* and *Qi* in the area?” is understanding what methods of influence and power China is applying to the case study. *Zheng* as defined by Lai is the regular way of doing things, or in military terms, the regular order of battle.<sup>42</sup> *Qi* is the mobilization or extraordinary use of these forces in order to achieve the desired effect. For the purposes of this study, we will examine *Zheng* as the application of all instruments of national power and their legal use and *Qi* will be the abnormal use of these tools. Abnormal usage would be in line with the concepts of Hybrid Warfare and Chinese Unrestricted Warfare, as it looks at all aspects of a government’s actions across DIME.

The third question, “Are these forces becoming overwhelming with irresistible power across all aspects of DIME?” will look at the effectiveness of these tools. A mixture of government statements, news articles and previous studies it will be used to examine which methods are being applied most effectively and if they are balanced across the DIME spectrum. This question also allows the player to observe the amount of effort its opponent is applying and predict what areas it may attempt to expand upon.

The fourth question, “Are these forces developing a favorable situation with great potential to achieve political objective?” is closely tied to the previous question. This question will examine if the effort described above is allowing the opponent to develop the target country into their exclusive territory or if there is still room for the player to make decisive moves.

---

<sup>42</sup> Lai.



The fifth question is a two parts, “Is China taking and maintaining the initiative? Is there a void to fill?” is designed for the player to be introspective on its moves. By asking if the CCP is filling a void, the player must examine its own framework, gameplay and influence in the case study. This introspection allows the player to understand better their impact on the case study, but also characterizes if there is space for it to make a move. Understanding if it has a framework to build upon or if it must start playing catchup will help the player determine how much effort is required to limit the CCP’s influence. This understanding will also help evaluate if those resources are not better used elsewhere in order to gain an advantage in a different part of the board. This understanding is a key lesson from *Wei Qi*, in that containment of the opponent’s territory doesn’t require playing in every position, but in limiting their overall ownership of the board.

The sixth question, “Is the relationship between China and the country a *Ko*?” is a main feature of *Wei Qi* and helps set the stage for the biggest battles between the two sides. As previously discussed, a *Ko* is of such importance that its loss could mean the collapse of significant territory or threaten the core interests. The best analogy for a *Ko* in the real world is the issue of Taiwan and the concept of sovereignty. As with Taiwan, in a *Ko*, it is a life or death situation. The taking of it is central to one players entire side and it is up to each side to determine how much loss could be sustained in order to win. In a game this could mean multiple stones and in the world this could mean kinetic warfare, the loss of thousands of lives and the disruption of the world’s two most impactful economies.

The seventh and final question is made up of three parts, “What is the Framework that the forces are providing? What strategy is being used? What liberties do the pieces provide?” are questions that should be asked for every move but is also important to understand what winning a case study provides. Examination of the framework that is being laid out by the opponent is a constant to understanding its strategies and to develop the counter strategies to win. This examination of the framework should not be myopic toward the region on the board, but how gaining of this territory leads to larger encirclement and ultimately victory in the game. For the case studies, this will be an examination of those nations as they impact the immediate region of their influence but also what role they can play on a global scale.

In addition to the model being applied, each case study will get a history of the relationship these two nations shared prior to the current time frame of President Xi. This brief history of the relationship will set the base lines for the model as well as help show the recent changes in their individual dynamics. Combining the history and the model will help a player understand the environment they are playing in and help them best decide on how to win the board.

## **H. THE GAME BOARD IMAGINED**

Figure 4 was created to represent how different regions and nations could be imagined on the game board. To start, geographic location is not completely replicated, as the positions on the board are not just physical, but are represented to indicate the level of influence and impact each provides. As such, in the two corners are the United States and the People's Republic of China because they are the strongholds of each player. Other potential corners, are Africa and South America as they are significant large continents made up of multiple countries that can be isolated and turned into separate smaller strongholds. For the purposes of this analysis, the Mediterranean Sea is the center, as it connects multiple regions and is where the BRI terminates. The map's free floating geography is beneficial as some regions, such as Central Asia, are more transitional or can be considered corridors to territory "owned" by each player. This representation also reflects modern political realities, such as having Europe be close to the U.S. corner as the relationship between the two is extremely stable. This same logic is why Southeast Asia and Central Asia are relatively closer to the PRC, as this recognizes the regional hegemonic relationship there. The more dynamic and independent regions like the Middle East and nations like India are in different locations, either along the "walls" or toward the "center" depending on their level of impact on the greater game. This thesis will provide a representation for each case study to help the reader imagine the relationships and locations of the nation under discussion.

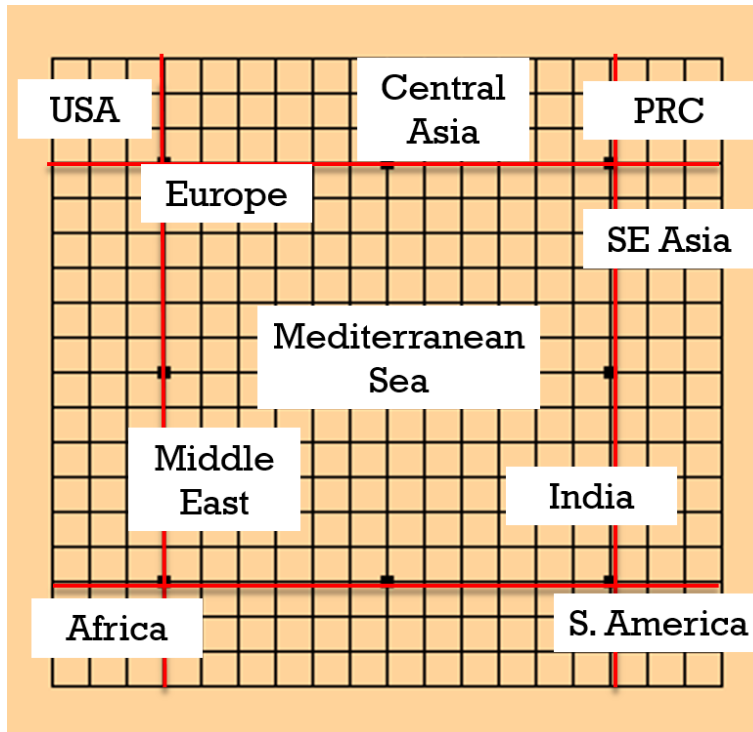


Figure 4. Baseline Game Board Representation

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

### III. AUSTRALIA AND THE WALL

Australia is a unique country in many ways from its geography, topography, biology and its ability to project both globally and regionally. It is at the same time the world's sixth largest country and its smallest continent spanning 7.7 million square kilometers or slightly smaller than the contiguous United States. This large landmass is populated with just 25 million people mostly along the more livable edges concentrated in the East, Southeast and Western portions.<sup>43</sup> This population distribution is due to a mixture of its defining geographical feature the arid, harsh Outback in its center but also due to its colonial and maritime heritage. Besides its defining topography and unique wildlife another feature is the remoteness of the country with the distance from Canberra to Beijing being 9004 kilometers as the crow flies. But surprisingly, the distance from Canberra to Honolulu, is 600 kilometers closer at 8,408. One would imagine that this distance would make it isolated from world events and possibly a relatively quiet player in regional and global events. This however is not the case as Australia is a high-income country, the 8<sup>th</sup> richest economy with a GDP per capita of \$57,395 thanks to a strong service sector and abundant natural resources.<sup>44</sup> Australia is an active member of many global multilateral efforts such as the UN, G20, IMF, WTO and WHO. It is also involved regionally as a founding member of APEC and East Asia Summits, and have been in the ASEAN Plus talks, CPTTP and RCEP. Due to Australia's unique place on the globe and its activism in the region, the *Wei Qi* model should be applied to Australia to help understand not only why China is invested there but also how China's behavior is affecting its ability to exert influence.

---

<sup>43</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Australia - Oceania :: Australia — The World Factbook - Central Intelligence Agency," CIA World Factbook, September 20, 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/as.html>.

<sup>44</sup> Harvard Growth Lab, "The Atlas of Economic Complexity," Academic, The Atlas of Economic Complexity, June 12, 2020, <https://atlas.cid.harvard.edu/explore?country=43&product=undefined&year=2017&tradeDirection=import&productClass=HS&target=Partner&partner=undefined&startYear=1995>.

## A. APPLYING THE *WEI QI* MODEL

### 1. Where Is the Case Study On the Board? In the Game?

Australia's position is along the wall of the board game, Figure 5, because of its ability to provide liberties not only toward the corners but also toward the center of the board. Australia on the board is once again unique because of its geography and relatively equidistance from the two players. Both players have significant influence, agreements and relationships with the country, economics being stronger for China and information/culture, diplomacy and security for the United States. Despite it appearing that Australia has more ties along the DIME spectrum with the United States, China's economic leverage evens the playing field. The distance, however, still makes it hard for any one country to claim it as strong corner for itself, without a significant shift in Chinese-Australian relations or an uptick of U.S.-Australian trade goods. Australia can be considered along the wall, because of its power projection potential into the Pacific, South China Sea, and the Indian Ocean. This is relevant as the Indian Ocean and the Middle East are the next geographic areas before the center of the board, the Mediterranean and Australia's ability to hamper the Sea Lines of Communications (SLOC's) there threaten greater Chinese expansion.

Where we are in the game is another crucial part in understanding what is next possible for China. Positioning along the wall tends to occur in the middle portion of the game, where a player still has hundreds of moves available. This means that China can still push for more territory and influence in this area, especially if it is vital to expanding areas, but also if aggressive actions limit the moves and responses of the opponent (U.S.). This also means that while Australia may be important, there are other grander goals in which the target country could either help or hinder a player's strategy further down the line. This may put a limitation on how aggressive the CCP may behave toward Australia, but it also means that there is room for China to flex in order to create space and maintain influence.

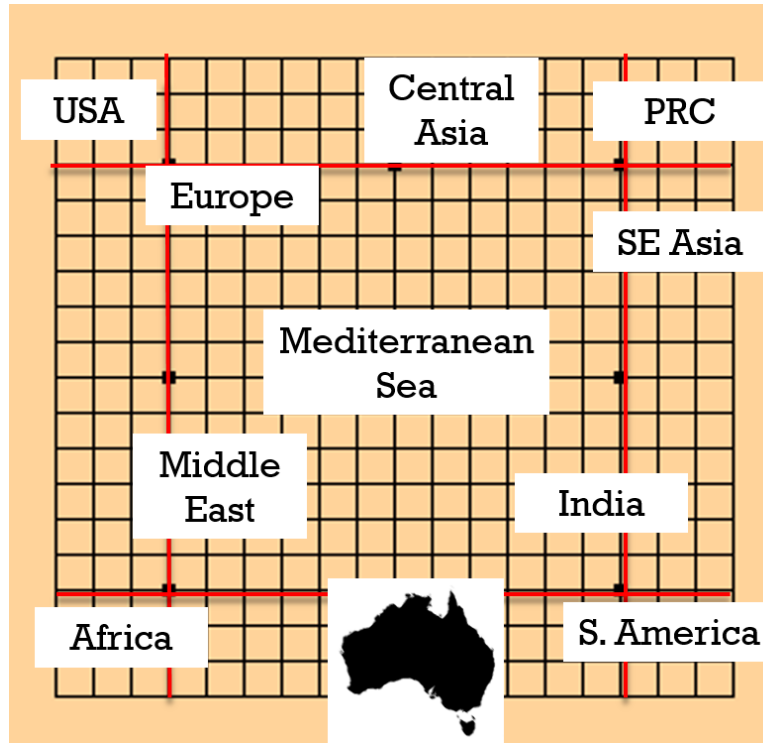


Figure 5. Australian Representation on the Game Board

2. **What Is the Amount of and Use of Zheng and Qi in the Area?**

a. ***Zheng and the Australia-China Relationship***

When considering the normal forces of influence or, *Zheng*, that are being used by China toward Australia, once again distance is relevant to understanding the problem. Even with China’s unlawful expansion into the South China Seas, their military patrols, blue water task groups and even their expanded Anti-Access/Area-Denial capabilities do not approach Australian territory. Australia also has a sense of security due to its signing of the Australia, New Zealand, and the United States Security Treaty (ANZUS) in 1951. ANZUS provides Australia with insulation from Chinese military expansion, or at least fear of any imminent threats to its sovereignty; instead, Australia views the PRC as a threat to regional stability.<sup>45</sup> Australia has participated in every war that the United States has been a part of since World War II. This participation includes two conflicts where China was unofficially

<sup>45</sup> Rory Medcalf, “Australia And China: Understanding the Reality Check,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 73, no. 2 (March 4, 2019): 109–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2018.1538315>.

involved, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. While there has never been any confirmation of direct conflict between Australian and Chinese troops, they have been on opposite sides of a kinetic war. In a sign of solidarity with the United States after the P-3 incident in 2001, Australia sailed three frigates through the Taiwan Strait without prior warning to China.<sup>46</sup> This act that showed that Australia was not afraid to project presence and power north toward China and that when it comes to security, it would side with the United States.

Strategically, Australia's military alliance with the United States is a disadvantage for China in that Australia is the unsinkable aircraft carrier that would help the United States in a war in the Pacific. This isn't hyperbole, as it is one of the main lessons from World War II and was key to the Allies' campaign against Imperial Japan. It was Australia that provided the safe location from which to project the island hopping campaign that led to the rolling back of Japanese forces to the main islands. The modern equivalent is United States' AirSea Battle concept. As Benjamin Scheer of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) points out, Australia is key to this:

Some have pointed out that AirSea Battle depends on U.S. allies for its implementation and so should be seen as a joint allied operational plan. Specifically, Australia can provide ideal strategic depth and safe havens for U.S. military deployments, logistic support, communication and control nodes, and an ideal outpost—and launch pad—to project U.S. power into the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea while remaining secure, beyond the reach of Chinese ballistic and cruise missiles.<sup>47</sup>

Another major signal to China of Australia's military position was the Australian Government's 2009 Defence White Paper *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030*, which allotted funds for an investment of defensive capabilities and growth in regional partnerships against a potential Chinese threat. The paper, written in light of the 2008 global financial crisis, saw a diminishing United States and militarily expanding

---

<sup>46</sup> Jing Dong Yuan, *A Rising Power Looks down under: Chinese Perspectives on Australia* (Australia: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2014), [https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/ad-aspi/import/Rising\\_Power\\_China.pdf?fqYeegRolDhLjbBJOk0usDBYJ4JEcnv](https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/ad-aspi/import/Rising_Power_China.pdf?fqYeegRolDhLjbBJOk0usDBYJ4JEcnv).

<sup>47</sup> Benjamin Schreer, *Planning the Unthinkable War: "airsea Battle" and Its Implications for Australia*, Strategy / Australian Strategic Policy Institute (Barton, A.C.T: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2013).



China forcing the authors to consider all possible threats. With its security guarantor falling, Australia looked to see what threats it potentially would have to independently deal with as the center of gravity of the world shifted toward Asia. The paper's key finding on ways that Australia could threaten China is as follows:

Over the years, Canberra's defence policy has gradually shifted from wholesale dependence on U.S. military protection to the development of its own capacities. The 2009 Defence White Paper's ambitious procurement programs were an indication of the shift. Enhanced capabilities for the Royal Australian Navy can potentially pose serious threats to Chinese interests in three areas. One is its submarine force, which can assist in U.S. efforts to impose a blockade of the Strait of Malacca, China's maritime lifeline; another is the Australian Navy's antisubmarine capability, which can threaten China's nuclear-powered and conventional submarines; a third is its networks of naval facilities that can be used by U.S. forces for naval operations.<sup>48</sup>

While attempting to plan against a potential threat from China in 2030 the paper, also hoped to temper Chinese responses by saying that the threat was unlikely and that its plan was mostly focused on providing capabilities to maintain regional stability. Chinese officials and scholars denounced this, calling it fearmongering and Australia's attempt to become a regional hegemon.<sup>49</sup> The 2013 Defence White Paper followed this up with clearer language, specifically stating that the United States and China were stabilizing the region and didn't appear to be on the path toward war, but Australia was still going to develop the desired capabilities.<sup>50</sup>

Australia's military action outside of its ANZUS alliance is as a regional collective security builder. Australia has increased its defense cooperation and partnerships with its neighbors and others throughout the region in hopes of maintaining a regional peace.<sup>51</sup> For China, this adds another military trip wire, as those who have bilateral defense agreements

---

<sup>48</sup> Schreer, 44.

<sup>49</sup> Yuan, *Chinese Perspective on Australia*, 19–22.

<sup>50</sup> Yuan, *Chinese Perspective on Australia*.

<sup>51</sup> Edward. Luttwak, *The Rise of China vs. the Logic of Strategy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012), 107–24.

with Australia include Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, India and Japan.<sup>52</sup> While not all of these countries have territorial disputes with China, the majority do and all have their own bilateral tensions. This loose network of regional security centered on Australia presents China a problem, as it could be a framework for balancing in the region and a coordinated defense effort along the Sea Lines of Communications from East Asia all the way to the Middle East.

Currently, the main force of national power that China uses against Australia is economic, followed by diplomatic pressures and then informational or cultural. Since normalization of relations between the PRC and the Australian government in 1972, PRC and Australian economic relations have shifted from mutual benefit to economic interdependence.<sup>53</sup> The CCP's multi-decade campaign to grow the PRC's industrial capability, expands its urban centers and become the world's economic engine directly benefitted Australia, as it was one of the core suppliers of natural resources. Since 2007, China has been Australia's single biggest trading partner, which was responsible for Australia's economic growth and continued rising living standards.<sup>54</sup>

For more context, Australia's total 2017 exports were worth U.S. \$227 billion; 33.55% of it went to China, compared to only 3.6% to the United States. This economic differential is also observed when comparing imports to Australia, in which China was 19.54% of the U.S. \$210 billion and the United States was only at 11.63%.<sup>55</sup> Both countries share free trade agreements with Australia, China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA) and the Australia-United States FTA (AUSFTA); however, it is ChAFTA that

---

<sup>52</sup> Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Group, *The Australian-Indonesian Security Agreement - Issues and Implications* (Canberra, Australia: Australian Government, 1996), [https://www.apf.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/rp/RP9596/96rp25](https://www.apf.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/RP9596/96rp25).

<sup>53</sup> Yuan, *Chinese Perspective on Australia*.

<sup>54</sup> East Asian Bureau of Economic Research and China Center for International Economic Exchanges, *Partnership for Change* (ANU Press, 2016), 12–24, <http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.nps.edu/stable/j.ctt1rqc94n>.

<sup>55</sup> Harvard Growth Lab, "Economic Atlas."

produces more trade and economic growth for Australia.<sup>56</sup> According to the Australian government, AUSFTA has more Foreign Direct Investment in stocks and is the mechanism for most of Australia's investment in foreign nations.<sup>57</sup>

China has been Australia's biggest trading partner since 2007.<sup>58</sup> Australia is not China's biggest trading partner, or even one with a favorable trade balance, with Australia buying 2% of Chinese exports, worth U.S. \$44 billion. Comparatively, imports of Australian products to China is more than twice that at 5% or U.S. \$108 billion worth of the total imports annually.<sup>59</sup> Australia is one of the few nations to have a favorable trade surplus with China, as it is a core supplier of natural resources of iron, coal, natural gas and food. Further creating a comparative advantage for Australia is that Chinese steel mills are configured to use the specific type of iron that is found in Australia.<sup>60</sup> President Xi in 2014 described ChAFTA as a Comprehensive Partnership, signaling the importance the relationship holds in China.<sup>61</sup>

While the above describes economic enticement, similar to the soft power principles described by Joseph Nye, the CCP also uses economics as a lever of coercion.<sup>62</sup> China recently has used a mixture of economic demand calibration, anti-dumping investigations and trade embargoes to affect the Australian agricultural sector in response to diplomatic issues. Specially, the Chinese actions followed calls for an investigation into the origins and spread of COVID-19 by the Australian government. China has enacted

---

<sup>56</sup> Trade & Investment Queensland, "China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA)," Government, Trade & Investment Queensland, August 26, 2016, <https://www.tiq.qld.gov.au/export/free-trade-agreements/chafta/>.

<sup>57</sup> Australian Government, *Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement* (Canberra, Australia: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2019), <https://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/in-force/ausfta/Pages/australia-united-states-fta>.

<sup>58</sup> Alicia Nally, "How Worried Should Australia Be over China's Trade Threats?," *ABC News*, May 11, 2020, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-15/australia-china-trade-stoush-over-coronavirus-inquiry/12241640>.

<sup>59</sup> Harvard Growth Lab, "Economic Atlas."

<sup>60</sup> Alicia Nally, "Trade Threats."

<sup>61</sup> "ChAFTA-TIQ."

<sup>62</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, 1st ed. (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

trade embargoes on Australian barley with tariffs at 80.5%, effectively stopping a billion-dollar industry.<sup>63</sup> This method of trade embargo is also being targeted at Australian beef and wine industries, which are worth three billion dollars, causing a panic within Australian farming and winery communities. This aggressive use of embargoes and investigations, while successfully causing a panic within Australia industry, has not achieved the concessions from the government that China desired.

***b. Qi and China's Use of Unusual Methods in Australia***

The limits on military and economic expressions of power mean that *qi*, or unusual and creative use of forces, by China is focused on using informational and diplomatic levers of power against Australia. This is directly out of hybrid warfare doctrine and the use of non-military means of national power in order to compel or achieve a desired political effect. Examples of these non-standard actions include the use of Chinese students as a tool of agitation and financial hostages against Australian institutions. The CCP's use of the ethnic Chinese population within Australia for creating deceptive narratives and undermine the Australian government's authority. Finally, China's aggressive regional behavior has led to diplomatic actions to include subversion of Australia's political system.

The biggest lever of informational/ cultural friction within Australia is the Chinese students attending university. As of 2019, Australia had 200,000 Chinese students attending their universities representing 25% of its student population.<sup>64</sup> This high attendance is beneficial for both countries, as it expands the intellectual capital of China and is a \$6-billion-dollar revenue source for Australia. However, this valuable population has recently become a lever of coercion in the Sino-Australian relationship blending cultural, diplomatic and economic influence. Culturally, the population was seen as a way to expand person-to-person relationships between China and Australia. To further this cultural exchange, Confucius Centers, a CCP sponsored and directed cultural outreach

---

<sup>63</sup> Colin Packham Barrett Jonathan, "Australia Appeals China's Barley Import Tariff as Trade Tensions Worsen," Reuters, August 18, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-australia-barley-china-idUSKCN25E0K2>.

<sup>64</sup> "Australia's Foreign-Student Bubble Has Burst," *The Economist*, May 28, 2020, <https://www.economist.com/asia/2020/05/28/australias-foreign-student-bubble-has-burst>.

program, were established at all universities. According to Li Mei's study, *Intended and Received Frames of China and the Expectation of Media* showed, the effectiveness of the Confucius Centers and the CCP's cultural exchange strategy has been limited.<sup>65</sup> The limitation is in the depth of culture that is presented at the centers, which tend to have demonstrations of music, art and food, but do not delve into the debates that occur within Chinese society.

This limitation is related to another aspect of the Chinese student population, and that is the self-censorship of ideas and free speech instilled in the population.<sup>66</sup> This self-censorship derives from the CCP incentivizing students to report each other for speaking against the government, which then threatens jail time for the offenders and their families. This behavior by the students and CCP diminishes the soft power appeal the Chinese system has with Australia, whose beliefs in freedom of speech and thought are central, especially in an academic environment. Australians respect or at least expect divergent views from the media and academia and a certain level of transparency. This behavior diminishes the appeal of the student's presence, as there have been financial threats compelling university administrations to censor the professors.<sup>67</sup> Australians view Chinese media and overseas efforts to bridge cultural gaps as mere propaganda. This perception is supported by actions such as President Xi Jinping's 2014 visit in Sydney to finalize ChAFTA and raise it to the level of a comprehensive partnership. Reportedly, the thousands of people waving PRC and Australian flag upon his arrival were bused in by the embassy in order to give the appearance of popular investment in the agreement and the prevalence of Chinese influence.<sup>68</sup> Combine a propaganda campaign with the recent

---

<sup>65</sup> Li, Mei, "Intended and Received Frames of China and the Expectation on Media," in *Chinese Television and Soft Power Communication in Australia* (Anthem Press, 2019), 107–11, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvsn3ntq>.

<sup>66</sup> "Australian Universities Are Accused of Trading Free Speech for Cash," *The Economist*, September 19, 2019, <https://www.economist.com/asia/2019/09/19/australian-universities-are-accused-of-trading-free-speech-for-cash>.

<sup>67</sup> *The Economist*.

<sup>68</sup> Natasha Kassam, "Great Expectations: The Unraveling of the Australia-China Relationship," *Brookings* (blog), July 20, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/great-expectations-the-unraveling-of-the-australia-china-relationship/>.

diplomatic disputes and manipulative use of the students, and it is easy to see why China's soft power appeal is rapidly diminishing in Australia.

In the past few years there has been a downward trend in the bi-lateral relationship that can be traced back to two diplomatic issues: China's aggressive actions in the South China Sea and Chinese interference in Australian domestic politics. These two points have been catalysts for Australia's strong responses to Chinese regional behavior, their security influenced economic policies and a shift in the perception of the inherent dangers of the bi-lateral relationship. What has followed these events are a series of political confrontations ranging, from the PRC detainment of Australian journalist and researchers, to the establishment of new laws specifically targeting Chinese interests.

China's island building in the South China Sea and aggressive maritime actions shifted the perception within Australian diplomatic circles of the nature of the threat posed by China.<sup>69</sup> Chinese assertiveness, coercion and military modernization were threatening the regional balance and rules-based order. China was extending its military capabilities and influence closer to Australia proper and its surrounding areas: into the Indian Ocean, the South Pacific and throughout Southeast Asia. These actions stimulated a sense of wariness and discussion within Australian national security circles, which weighed the potential security threat against the economic repercussions of Australian dissent. This balance between security and economic prosperity checked Australian responses toward Chinese aggression. Despite Australian misgivings of Chinese behavior, Australia maintained neutrality on Chinese international claims.

This caution however, was eroded by the revelation of Chinese interference in the Australian political system. Investigative journalists and Australian intelligence revealed that Chinese entities and pro-China Australian billionaires were actively funding political campaigns in order to achieve political favor.<sup>70</sup> The Chinese funding of Senator Sam Dastyari's campaign revealed a worrying dimension of his support for China's South China

---

<sup>69</sup> Medcalf, "Australia And China: Understanding the Reality Check."

<sup>70</sup> Michelle Innis, "Chinese Company's Payment to Lawmaker Sets Off Furor in Australia," *The New York Times*, September 6, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/07/world/australia/sam-dastyari-china-senator-donation.html>.

Sea claims. These activities were in direct violation of the Australia – China 1972 Joint Communiqué of mutual respect and noninterference of internal affairs, undermining the trust in the relationship. The violation of these fundamental interactions led to a new law, the *National Security Legislation Amendment (Espionage and Foreign Interference) Act 2018*,<sup>71</sup> which restricted political funding by foreign interests but also established requirements for more transparency to observe the net of influence that China was casting. This distrust has stopped Australia from signing a *Memorandum of Understanding for China's One Belt and One Road Initiative* and impose restrictions on individual states signing contracts with Chinese state owned enterprises (SOE), all in order to prevent undue influence by a foreign entity.<sup>72</sup>

### **3. Are These Forces Becoming Overwhelming with Irresistible Power Across All Aspects of DIME?**

In the globalized modern world, the PRC's economic power can appear to be an overwhelming force. However, market forces can always help when a bilateral relationship sours. As the PRC continues disruptive regional behavior, or as the downward spiral of bilateral relations continues, Australia has the option to shift its exports to other areas. This could include increasing US-AUS trade or focusing on other regional nations that are growing and replacing China as the world's factory, such as Indonesia, Malaysia and India. Australia has good relations in economics and security with all of these nations. With the bulk of Chinese – Australian trade being within iron ore, tourism and education, Australia has options to diversify and shift its focus.

China is not achieving an overwhelming force in informational or diplomatic means, either. It is in fact creating resistance within Australia, as seen in the 2018 law put in place over foreign influence, interference and espionage, which seeks to stop covert, coercive or corrupting behavior. CCP's continued aggressive action within Australia may

---

<sup>71</sup> Government of Australia, "National Security Legislation Amendment (Espionage and Foreign Interference) Act 2018," Government (Attorney-General's Department, December 19, 2018), au, <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2018C00506/Html/Text>, <http://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2018C00506>.

<sup>72</sup> Jamie Smyth, "Australia to Tighten Foreign Investment Rules amid China Concerns," *Financial Times*, February 1, 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/308ca8d6-06f6-11e8-9650-9c0ad2d7c5b5>.

continue to shift the perception of the public, leading them to view China as a serious security threat.

The CCP's actions are altering the perception of Australia while simultaneously creating issues domestically. Australian merchants are looking at other Asian markets in order to make up for the loss of demand, increasing the available stock to countries like Japan, whose demand was already higher for beef than China's.<sup>73</sup> Domestically, embargoes on food imports, in combination with natural disasters within China such as recent flood damage to farmland are increasing food prices. This lack of food security, combined with President Xi's Clean Plate Policy, a food waste limiting legislation, on a population where beef consumption in China is projected to rise 236% between 2009 and 2050, could signal that the CCP's international behavior is negatively affecting the Chinese population.<sup>74</sup> This combination opens the door to criticism of the party and the CCP's worse fear: a questioning of the party's legitimacy.

Australia's ability to shift its supply to other parts of Asia and globally is a byproduct of another area of the Chinese – Australian economic relationship and that is within multinational trade organizations. More specifically within the Mega Regional Trade Agreements (MRTA) that are changing the financial landscape of the Asian Pacific region and will determine China's economic and leadership future. Australia's roles in these relationships is as a vocal proponent and enforcer of the international norms and challenger to PRC domination of these organizations. Australia is a member of both the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). CPTPP is a free trade agreement that will cover 13.5% of global GDP and 14% of global population and projects a growth of U.S. \$157 billion per year by 2030, but China is not a participant. RCEP is a free trade agreement but one in which China is an active participant, which will cover 24% of the global GDP and 46% of the global population and with a projected increase in global income by U.S. \$286 billion per year by 2030. RCEP will be the largest trading bloc in the

---

<sup>73</sup> Alicia Nally, "Trade Threats."

<sup>74</sup> Kerry Allen, "China's Xi Tells People to Stop Wasting Food," *BBC News*, August 13, 2020, sec. China, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-53761295>.



world, leading to Chinese economic growth by 0.4%, whereas CPTPP is projected to reduce China's GDP by 0.3%.<sup>75</sup> China does not participate in CPTPP because its original form, the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), was as an MRTA designed to counter China. However, the CPTPP is relevant as its regulations for a system like China's require rapid liberalization and economic reforms, and undermine Chinese SOEs. Australia is a leading member of both MRTAs and it has the desire to bring into RCEP, CPTPP provisions, such as 100% liberalization of trade, that would undermine China's growth and power within RCEP. China would like to prevent Australia from bringing these provisions into RCEP but is finding it difficult to change their liberal mindset and undermine their ability to build coalitions.

#### **4. Are These Forces Developing a Favorable Situation with Great Potential to Achieve Political Objective?**

China is not developing a favorable situation within Australia; they are pushing Australia on central ideals of their government and political system, forcing them to respond with balancing behavior. This balancing can be seen in their active voicing of protest and accountability in multiple international forums, including UNCLOS and World Health Organization. Australia is also developing and enhancing its regional bilateral security relations beyond just the United States, to include having defense pacts with all of its neighbors.<sup>76</sup> China is failing to develop soft power via its Confucius Centers and its use of student protests. It is creating tensions not only at senior government levels but also for the 1.2 million ethnic Chinese Australians.<sup>77</sup> The CCP's aggressive actions are potentially turning Australia into a U.S. corner or having stronger ownership of the wall.

---

<sup>75</sup> Frank Ko-Ho Wong, "What the CPTPP and RCEP Mean for China and Asia-Pacific Trade," *China Briefing News*, December 10, 2018, sec. Economy & Trade, <https://www.china-briefing.com/news/cptpp-rcep-impact-china-asia-pacific-trade/>.

<sup>76</sup> Yuan, *Chinese Perspective on Australia*.

<sup>77</sup> Li, Mei, "China Media."

## **5. Is China Taking and Maintaining the Initiative? Is There a Void to Fill?**

The CCP's actions are not taking an initiative but appear to be in response to Australia's resolve and actions on the international stage. China may have perceived that there was a void after the U.S. pulled out the Transpacific Partnership and the Kyoto accords, and started an America First approach under the Trump administration. But the PRC did not account for Australia's individual resolve and a strong identity and willingness to assert their own interest.

## **6. Is the Relationship Between China and the Country a *Ko*?**

It is unclear whether the relationship between Australia and China is a *Ko*. Australia may be a significant middle power capable of exerting power greater than their population and economic size (per Chinese estimates<sup>78</sup>) but in relative power compared to China is far outmatched. Population is one example of this disparity: one Chinese city, such as its wealthiest, Shanghai, has the same number of people as the entirety of Australia and nearly the same GDP.<sup>79</sup> The CCP's recent aggressive behavior toward Australia may be an indication that they are willing to lose a strong position within Australia, and choose to deal with them on regional matters instead.

## **7. What Is the Framework That the Forces Are Providing? What Strategy Is Being Used? What Liberties Do the Pieces Provide?**

Chinese influence within Australia has always been restricted to economic ties and attempting to develop soft power influence. Some Australian analysts theorize the CCP is using this method to try to separate Australia from its close relationship with the United States.<sup>80</sup> In *Wei Qi* terms, this was an attempt to thicken their position along the wall by gaining some control, but mostly by limiting U.S. advancement. However, the cultural and security ties that Australia and the United States share has been reinforced by China's aggressive behavior and make Australia more securely within U.S. controlled territory or

---

<sup>78</sup> Yuan, *Chinese Perspective on Australia*.

<sup>79</sup> Wikipedia, "Shanghai," *Wikipedia*, Shanghai, September 17, 2020, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Shanghai&oldid=978801497>.

<sup>80</sup> Medcalf, "Australia And China: Understanding the Reality Check."

influence. The hybrid, informational and diplomatically focused attempt to stimulate the Chinese diaspora against Australia and use economic incentives has not contained the liberal ideas of the Australian state.

## **B. CONCLUSION: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES**

Due to the negative effects Chinese behavior has had on the Sino-Australian relationship, the recommendation for the U.S. when it comes to Australia is to maintain the relationship and be a better partner than the PRC. This is an easy task to do in the security and cultural realm, however, diplomatically the U.S. should adopt a more supportive role and reassure its ally of its commitments to global and regional stability. Economically, while Australia's economy is strong and does not require an investment on a scale of the Marshall Plan, the U.S. should be aware that if Australia requires a significant shift in its trade relationship with China, it should be prepared to use the international market to ensure Australia's economic survivability.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

#### IV. DJIBOUTI: THE GATEWAY TO THE CENTER

Djibouti is a small nation. At 23,200 square kilometers, it is slightly smaller than the state of New Jersey, with a population of less than a million people, a GDP of \$1.8 billion and no natural resources. What Djibouti possesses is a natural deep water port that is strategically located on the Horn of Africa with access to the Gulf of Aden and the Bab al-Mandeb, which is considered the fourth most important chokepoint in the world.<sup>81</sup> This geo-strategic port and location is the main commodity of the nation, which leases land for foreign nations to develop military bases. This allows Djibouti to develop a synergistic effect of increasing cash flow and provision of security by powerful nations in a dynamic region. Camp Lemonnier has approximately 4,000 U.S. troops deployed there continuously and is augmented by U.S. allies such as France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and Spain providing support to multiple United Nations and national missions in the region.<sup>82</sup> China constructed its first overseas military base in the same location as the United States largest base in Africa, Camp Lemonnier.

The dual presence of U.S. and PLAN military capabilities highlights the importance this location has in the region and why it is a perfect candidate to have the *Wei Qi* model applied. The model will examine the investments made by China within Djibouti, how Djibouti is important to the success of the BRI, its counter-piracy efforts and what impact Chinese presence there will have for CCP power projection. Application of the model will also show the effectiveness of Chinese influence and the way in which the unique environment of Djibouti balances the disparity in economic strengths between the two.

---

<sup>81</sup> Wang Monica, "China's Strategy in Djibouti: Mixing Commercial and Military Interests," *Council on Foreign Relations*, April 13, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/chinas-strategy-djibouti-mixing-commercial-and-military-interests>.

<sup>82</sup> Erica Downs, Jeffrey Becker, and Patrick deGategno, *China's Military Support Facility in Djibouti: The Economic and Security Dimensions of China's First Overseas Base*, AD1038215 (Arlington, VA: Center For Naval Analyses, 2017), <https://apps.dtic.mil/docs/citations/AD1038215>.

## A. APPLYING THE *WEI QI* MODEL

### 1. Where Is the Case Study On the Board? In the Game?

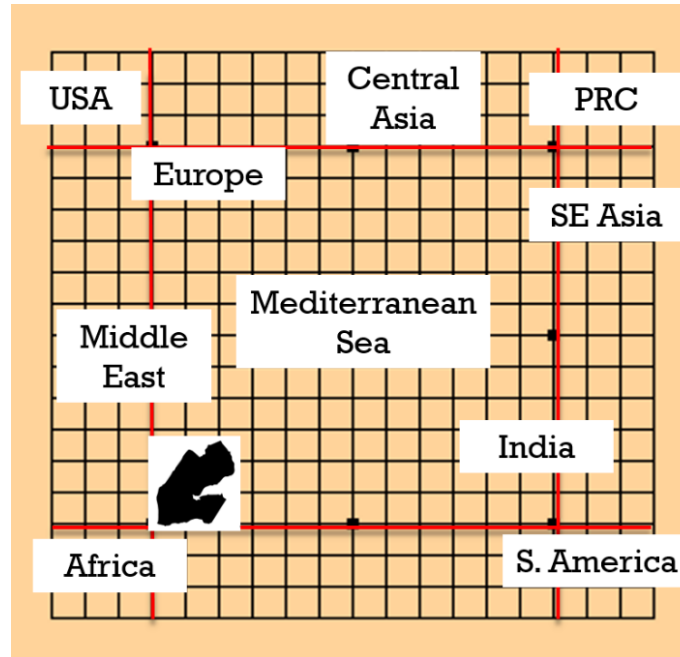


Figure 6. Representation of Djibouti on the Game Board

On the *Wei Qi* board Djibouti is located in the outermost circumference of the center section and can be considered a cornerstone for developing territory in anticipation of the endgame (see Figure 6). The Mediterranean Sea can be imagined as the exact center of the board, living up to its name as the Middle Sea. The Mediterranean as geographical representation of the center makes sense at it is where China's endgame and desired expansion will meet the US's grand strategy and areas of traditional influence (Western Europe).<sup>83</sup> That is to say, the PRC wants to influence and control the natural resources it needs in the Middle East and Africa, but also to maintain access to the markets in Europe. Djibouti's position on the Horn of Africa allows it to provide a key node for the PRC to expand regionally, both economically and militarily. Djibouti's strategic importance is omni-directional: it holds

<sup>83</sup> Mercy A. Kuo, "China in Djibouti: The Power of Ports," *The Diplomat*, March 25, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/03/china-in-djibouti-the-power-of-ports/>.

access to the waterways leading up toward the Suez Canal, has the ability to help support naval presence in the eastern Indian ocean, and is a safe beachhead in order to project into the African continent. This strategic importance is why seven different nations, besides the PRC, have forces in Djibouti to fight piracy, keep the 18-mile-wide Bam al-Mandeb open and conduct operations throughout Africa.<sup>84</sup>

## 2. What Is the Amount of and Use of Zheng and Qi in the Area?

The Chinese *zheng* in Djibouti is represented by its main overseas power: economic investments in infrastructure via the BRI. Uniquely, in Djibouti a continued military presence and development of increased facilities is also a *zheng*. As of 2017, Chinese investments account for U.S. \$1.4 billion, or 40%, of major Djiboutian infrastructure projects.<sup>85</sup> As the Center for Naval Analysis points out, “Chinese state-owned firms built three of Djibouti’s largest—and most potentially transformative—infrastructure projects... Doraleh Multipurpose Port, the Ethiopia-Djibouti Railway and the Ethiopia-Djibouti Water pipeline.”<sup>86</sup> These three projects will double the capacity of goods Djibouti can handle, connect Ethiopia (a resource/ market interest of China) to the sea and overcome a natural resource scarcity that has restricted Djibouti from expansion and development. These Chinese-backed projects are significantly benefiting the lives of everyday Djiboutians by increasing the number of jobs available in the nation, while also cementing PRC presence in the region.<sup>87</sup>

The PLAN has had a near continuous presence in the region since 2009, when they started to participate in counterpiracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden.<sup>88</sup> This commitment to counter-piracy and a growing economic relationship was the catalyst for increasing Chinese facilities in Djibouti; the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs citing the need for logistical

---

<sup>84</sup> Seven nations in Djibouti are France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain, United States and Saudi Arabia

<sup>85</sup> Erica Downs, Jeffrey Becker, and Patrick deGategno, *China in Djibouti*.

<sup>86</sup> Erica Downs, Jeffrey Becker, and Patrick deGategno, iv.

<sup>87</sup> Wang Monica, “China’s Strategy in Djibouti.”

<sup>88</sup> Erica Downs, Jeffrey Becker, and Patrick deGategno, *China’s Military Support Facility in Djibouti: The Economic and Security Dimensions of China’s First Overseas Base*, iii.

support as one of the main reasons for the establishment of China's first overseas military base.<sup>89</sup> Immediately after the base was officially opened on August 1, 2017, the PLAN conducted live fire exercises in the Gulf of Aden.<sup>90</sup> The port facilities and storage areas have been critical logistical hubs for PRC participation not only in UN peacekeeping missions throughout the Horn of Africa but also in the conduction of Joint exercises with Iran and Russia.<sup>91</sup>

The *Qi*, or unusual way in which China is applying force in Djibouti, is in the fine print of its economic agreements on infrastructure and trade. The main bank financing the majority of the Djiboutian infrastructure projects is the state-owned enterprise Export-Import Bank of China, or China Eximbank.<sup>92</sup> China Eximbank is charged by the CCP with funding projects to secure contracts and acquire assets abroad in order to further stimulate the exponential growth of the PRC's economy. This is done partially by the bank requiring additional contracts in Chinese goods and services in order to approve the infrastructure loans. This practice of requiring additional contracts while the bank takes on major portions of the loan is a hallmark of predatory debt practices that PRC state owned enterprises have used to gain the upper hand over economically weaker nations. The best example, and one relevant to Djibouti, is the acquisition of Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka. In this case, the Sri Lankan government continually asked for loans for the construction of a new port, and despite negative evaluations on the prospects of profit, the PRC agreed. When Hambantota Port failed to develop a profit and Sri Lanka defaulted on its loans, the PRC was able to negotiate a 99-year contract on ownership of the port and 15,000 acres of land.<sup>93</sup> Similar behavior has been

---

<sup>89</sup> Peter A Dutton, Isaac B Kardon, and Conor M Kennedy, *Djibouti: China's First Overseas Strategic Strongpoint*, China Maritime Report 6 (Newport, Rhode Island: U.S Naval War College, 2020).

<sup>90</sup> Headley Tyler, "China's Djibouti Base: A One Year Update," *The Diplomat*, December 4, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/12/chinas-djibouti-base-a-one-year-update/>.

<sup>91</sup> Erica Downs, Jeffrey Becker, and Patrick deGategno, *China in Djibouti*; Syed Fazl-e Haider, *The Strategic Implications of Chinese-Iranian-Russian Naval Drills in the Indian Ocean*, vol. 20, China Brief, 2020, <https://jamestown.org/program/the-strategic-implications-of-chinese-iranian-russian-naval-drills-in-the-indian-ocean/>.

<sup>92</sup> Erica Downs, Jeffrey Becker, and Patrick deGategno, *China in Djibouti*, 9–14.

<sup>93</sup> Maria Abi-Habib, "How China Got Sri Lanka to Cough Up a Port (Published 2018)," *The New York Times*, June 25, 2018, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/25/world/asia/china-sri-lanka-port.html>.



observed in Djibouti, specifically on the Ethiopia-Djibouti Railway project. The government of Djibouti was unable to meet its financial requirements in support of this project and lost 10% equity to a Chinese firm as compensation.

### **3. Are These Forces Becoming Overwhelming with Irresistible Power Across All Aspects of DIME?**

Despite the significant investment by the PRC, the development of Chinese influence in Djibouti has not been overwhelming. According to the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA), Djibouti is still hesitant to rely on Chinese investment, calling it a “lender of last resort” limiting the PRC’s economic influence over Djibouti.<sup>94</sup> CNA also assessed that the government of Djibouti prefers to work through western financial services, as they are less likely to attempt a takeover of the facilities.<sup>95</sup> With the predatory lending and the example of Hambantota Port, the government of Djibouti is necessarily cautious in balancing gains and risk of conducting deals with the PRC. Diplomatically, the PRC’s ability to develop the base and secure contracts are the main indicators of their diplomatic relationship. As the relationship is relatively new, there is not much reported on the status of any informational or culture disputes as there appears to only be an economic and security relationship for now.

Militarily, the number of assets the PLAN has based out of the port are insignificant compared to the U.S. presence in the region. With the U.S. practice of maintaining a 1.5 carrier presence in the Fifth Fleet, at any given time, there is in the theater a full Carrier Strike Group with approximately 80 fighter aircraft, five support ships (Destroyers, Cruisers) and an Amphibious Readiness Group with its embarked Marine Expeditionary Unit of 1500 Marines. The PLAN Task Groups, which on average consist of three to four ships, typically an amphibious landing ship, a destroyer and a supply ship, are nearly always outgunned by the U.S. Navy.<sup>96</sup> What can change this imbalance of military force for the PLAN is if it continues to develop its military relationships and interoperability with Iranian and Russian navies.

---

<sup>94</sup> Erica Downs, Jeffrey Becker, and Patrick deGategno, *China in Djibouti*, 5–19.

<sup>95</sup> Erica Downs, Jeffrey Becker, and Patrick deGategno, 5–19.

<sup>96</sup> Erica Downs, Jeffrey Becker, and Patrick deGategno, 33–45.

#### 4. Are These Forces Developing a Favorable Situation with Great Potential to Achieve Political Objective?

Diplomatically and economically, the PRC is laying the groundwork to potentially complicate the U.S. presence in the country, and alter the government of Djibouti's preferences. If the PRC is able to refrain from repeating its actions in Hambantota, the Chinese investments in Djibouti will generate enough prosperity for the locals to potentially shift their preference toward China. China's actions of connecting Ethiopia and its goods to the sea, in conjunction with its UN peacekeeping participation will also help it develop soft power appeal in Djibouti and throughout the region. In *Wei Qi* terms, the Chinese are developing territory through means that provide plenty of liberties and opportunities to expand their influence regionally while taking away opportunities from the U.S.

Militarily, their efforts are minutely achieving a political goal of projecting presence, developing soft power and protecting overseas interests. The PLAN increase in capability is a strategy in line with Corbett vice Mahan, in that it is creating a space to develop a force large enough to conduct its desired mission.<sup>97</sup> In the short term, the Chinese foreign minister has announced that its desired mission is the protection of trade in the region.<sup>98</sup> In the long term, and in accordance with Pillsbury's belief that the CCP has a marathon-like plan to replace the United States as the global hegemon. The CCP announcing its objective to serve as the protector of international trade allows it to become a creator of international norms and have the naval capability to project power ashore globally.<sup>99</sup> Another potential political goal, and one that Andrew Latham argues is most prevalent is that the CCP is hoping to offshore balance.<sup>100</sup> Offshore balancing is a realist approach that China as a risen power, is developing its military capability in Djibouti in order to force a balance of power against the United States outside of the South China Sea. This ability to shift the geography of the conflict provides the

---

<sup>97</sup> Andrew Latham, "Mahan, Corbett, and China's Maritime Grand Strategy," *The Diplomat*, August 24, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/08/mahan-corbett-and-chinas-maritime-grand-strategy/>.

<sup>98</sup> Headley Tyler, "China's Djibouti Base."

<sup>99</sup> Michael Pillsbury, *100 Year Marathon*.

<sup>100</sup> Andrew Latham, "Offshore Balancing: A Grand Strategy for the China Dream," *The Diplomat*, July 24, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/07/offshore-balancing-a-grand-strategy-for-the-china-dream/>.

PRC with the advantages of removing the concentration of threats off of its coast, but also provides a reason for increasing capability in areas of interest for the PRC.

**5. Is China Taking and Maintaining the Initiative? Is There a Void to Fill?**

While the PRC is following western examples of a foreign base in Djibouti, it is taking the initiative by focusing its efforts on required infrastructure projects that are designed to improve the life of Djiboutians.<sup>101</sup> The trifecta of railway, port and water pipeline projects should increase trade and the quality of life of the locals. The PRC is filling a void that the government itself was not able to develop, and one that the U.S. and its allies have not actively pursued. Installment of a permanent Chinese presence in Djibouti is also taking the initiative, as it is critical in providing a non-US controlled line of communication via the BRI.

**6. Is the Relationship Between China and the Country a *Ko*?**

Chinese investment and its increased military capability have not developed the relationship to the importance of a *ko*, but continued progression may mean a shift in the future. If aggressive debt policies and control measures on the port facility and infrastructure projects continue, it could be the tipping point for a turning Djibouti into a virtual Chinese colony. If the PRC were to acquire the port of Djibouti, similar to Hambantota, it potentially could attempt to remove the U.S. from the nation through legal or political means. This is unlikely; however, Djibouti's importance as a bastion of Chinese power projection in both the Middle East and Africa will only continue to increase as China looks further abroad.

**7. What Is the Framework That the Forces Are Providing? What Strategy Is Being Used? What Liberties Do the Pieces Provide?**

The investment in Djibouti by the PRC is similar to the *Wei Qi* strategy of a ladder, in which a string of stones is arrayed across a large swath of area in order to build upon each other and develop a large territory. Djibouti is a core node in the Maritime Silk Road, see Figure 7, as it protects the connection between Europe and China via the Bam al-Mandeb.

---

<sup>101</sup> Erica Downs, Jeffrey Becker, and Patrick deGategno, *China in Djibouti*.

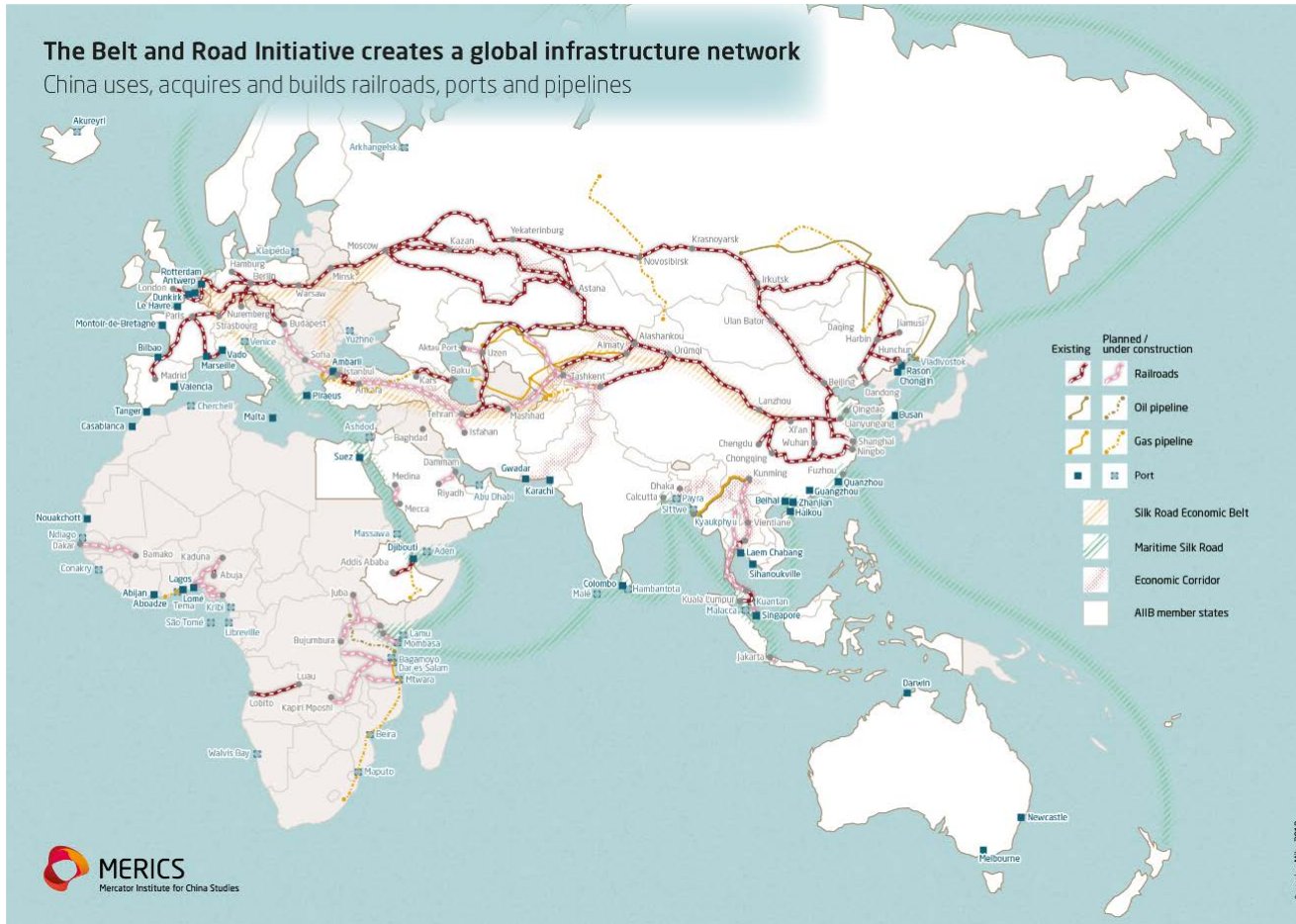


Figure 7. BRI Network November 2020<sup>102</sup>

<sup>102</sup> MERICS, *Mapping the Belt and Road Initiative: This Is Where We Stand*, November 11, 2020, <https://merics.org/en/analysis/mapping-belt-and-road-initiative-where-we-stand>.

The liberties provided by basing out of Djibouti include providing the PLAN the ability to project force in order to help China protect its interests in the Middle East and support the New Silk Road as it passes through Iran and flows through Gwadar, Pakistan. Djibouti also provides the PLA with the ability to project power throughout Africa, as evidenced by its involvement in UN missions in Sudan and South Sudan. This can mean an expansion of its peacekeeping operations, its counterterrorism operations, non-combat evacuation operations, and increase its ability to collect intelligence throughout the region.

## **B. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The investments and military presence in Djibouti provide the CCP and its military, the PLA, the ability to project influence on three continents from a single location. The *Wei Qi* model implies that this move is significantly building liberties for the PRC and its desire to protect its interests overseas. However, it is only conducting the same actions as the United States, whose proximity limits the extent on which the PRC can develop territory. The CCP's SOE behavior of financing with strings attached limits the amount of trust the Djiboutian government will have with them. This shaky trust provides opportunity for the United States to limit the territory gained by the PRC, by investing and further developing the military relationship with Djibouti. As with the CNA's recommendation, the way ahead for the United States to undermine PRC gains is to support foreign direct investment, increase military exercises and training, increase professional military education of Djiboutian officers (such as sending them to NPS), increase port visits, and increase arms sales and weapons transfers.<sup>103</sup> The United States has a strong position in Djibouti, and while recent Chinese investments help build favor for them, the U.S. only needs to redirect its attention and finances to Djiboutian interests to nullify Chinese gains.

---

<sup>103</sup> Erica Downs, Jeffrey Becker, and Patrick deGategno, *China in Djibouti*, viii.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

## V. CONCLUSION

### A. INTERPRETATION OF THE MODEL

*Wei Qi* may not be an exact mirror of CCP grand strategy due to the complexities of the real world, but the ancient board game is a useful heuristic device for understanding the scope and major contours of PRC regional expansionism. This thesis developed a model based on the concepts of *shi* and *Wei Qi* gameplay that when applied to the nations of Australia and Djibouti presented the following findings.

Australia and Djibouti are strategically relevant for the PRC and its desire to achieve its national rejuvenation. Australian natural resources, top tier universities and wealthy market are all necessary for the PRC to continue its economic rise. For the PRC, success in Australia is a roadmap of success in other democratic, ethnic European markets. Djibouti strategically, is an important lynchpin for protection of PRC interests in three continents and success of President Xi's Belt and Road Initiative. Djibouti provides the PRC a secure port and access to African resources and market, the Suez and Europe, while also linking the PRC with its allies and customers in the Middle East.

In both cases, despite significant financial investments, the PRC's ability to exert influence is limited due to an element of distrust caused by PRC behavior. In Australia, this distrust is directly linked to PRC interference in Australian domestic politics via corrupting official, CCP domestic policies and aggressive international behavior. The CCP's is further undermining its ability when it uses economic punishments against Australia when it adheres to its liberal democratic principles and criticizes them on the international stage. In Djibouti, a nation whose commodity and economic prosperity is linked to its geo-strategic position is distrustful of the aggressive, debt trap contracts that come with Chinese business dealings. The disparity between building infrastructure and building trust will continue to restrict the ability of the PRC to develop successful soft power.

The model revealed that in both cases the United States already possessed a significant position and relationship with each nation. This pre-positioning means that the

United States has the advantage in each location to outperform the PRC in soft power gains. In both, the proverbial “shoot themselves in the foot” can be applied to PRC actions, hence the United States can take advantage of this by investing money, material and most importantly time in strengthening relationships with each nation. For Australia, the shared history and close cultural ties can be bolstered by providing more economic opportunities. For Djibouti, the United States should focus on the interests of the small nation and in developing not just infrastructure but all means available in order to enrich the lives and security of everyday Djiboutian.

The *Wei Qi* model further reveals that despite the limits it faces, the CCP will still continue to invest time and energy in these locations due to their overall gain and support to Chinese overseas interest. The model reveals that in each location, the PRC has not created a corner or sphere of influence immune to United State influence, but instead these are pockets of competition that have greater impact on the global Great Power Competition.

## **B. *WEI QI* MODEL AND FUTURE ANALYSIS**

This thesis found that the application of *Wei Qi* as a model for understanding strategic thought does possess benefits for an analyst or military decision maker. The game, as it was designed to, forces a player to look at events going on not only in their immediate context, but for the gains it provides in the future. This effect is not unique to *Wei Qi* but it is strongly reinforced by its gameplay of singular movements, that cannot be taken back or moved. This is similar to the real world in that actions have consequences and real permanent ones at that.

The benefits derived from this heuristic device are ones that should be incorporated throughout the military and our planning process. As such, it is recommended that this game be introduced and encouraged among the military as a method of developing lateral thinking, the ability to see problems on a bigger scale and finally, to solve unique problems simultaneously. Further research on the topic of *Wei Qi* and its relation to Chinese strategy should not be on developing a one-for-one transfer model, but in developing the ability to read a situation and understand its complexities.



## LIST OF REFERENCES

- Abi-Habib, Maria. "How China Got Sri Lanka to Cough Up a Port (Published 2018)." *The New York Times*, June 25, 2018, sec. World. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/25/world/asia/china-sri-lanka-port.html>.
- Alicia Nally. "How Worried Should Australia Be over China's Trade Threats?" *ABC News*, May 11, 2020. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-15/australia-china-trade-stoush-over-coronavirus-inquiry/12241640>.
- Allison, Graham T. *Destined for War : Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017.
- Andrew Latham. "Mahan, Corbett, and China's Maritime Grand Strategy." *The Diplomat*, August 24, 2020. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/08/mahan-corbett-and-chinas-maritime-grand-strategy/>.
- . "Offshore Balancing: A Grand Strategy for the China Dream." *The Diplomat*, July 24, 2020. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/07/offshore-balancing-a-grand-strategy-for-the-china-dream/>.
- Australian Government. *Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement*. Canberra, Australia: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2019. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/in-force/ausfta/Pages/australia-united-states-fta>.
- Barrett, Colin Packham, Jonathan. "Australia Appeals China's Barley Import Tariff as Trade Tensions Worsen." *Reuters*, August 18, 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-australia-barley-china-idUSKCN25E0K2>.
- Boorman, Scott A. *The Protracted Game; a Wei-Ch'i Interpretation of Maoist Revolutionary Strategy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- Bozulich, Richard. "Richard Bozulich on Kissinger on China and Go," 2011. [https://www.usgo.org/files/bh\\_library/BozulichonKissinger.pdf](https://www.usgo.org/files/bh_library/BozulichonKissinger.pdf).
- Central Intelligence Agency. "Australia - Oceania :: Australia — The World Factbook - Central Intelligence Agency." CIA World Factbook, September 20, 2020. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/as.html>.
- Department of Defense. *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy*. Washington, D.C.: Pentagon, 2018. <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>.

- Dutton, Peter A, Isaac B Kardon, and Conor M Kennedy. *Djibouti: China's First Overseas Strategic Strongpoint*. China Maritime Report 6. Newport, Rhode Island: U.S Naval War College, 2020.
- East Asian Bureau of Economic Research, and China Center for International Economic Exchanges. *Partnership for Change*. ANU Press, 2016.  
<http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.nps.edu/stable/j.ctt1rqc94n>.
- Erica Downs, Jeffrey Becker, and Patrick deGateño. *China's Military Support Facility in Djibouti: The Economic and Security Dimensions of China's First Overseas Base*. AD1038215. Arlington, VA: Center For Naval Analyses, 2017.  
<https://apps.dtic.mil/docs/citations/AD1038215>.
- Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Group. *The Australian-Indonesian Security Agreement - Issues and Implications*. Canberra, Australia: Australian Government, 1996. [https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/rp/RP9596/96rp25](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/RP9596/96rp25).
- Frank Ko-Ho Wong. "What the CPTPP and RCEP Mean for China and Asia-Pacific Trade." *China Briefing News*, December 10, 2018, sec. Economy & Trade.  
<https://www.china-briefing.com/news/cptpp-rcep-impact-china-asia-pacific-trade/>.
- Government of Australia. "National Security Legislation Amendment (Espionage and Foreign Interference) Act 2018." Government. Attorney-General's Department, December 19, 2018. Au. <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2018C00506/Html/Text>, <http://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2018C00506>.
- Harvard Growth Lab. "The Atlas of Economic Complexity." Academic. The Atlas of Economic Complexity, June 12, 2020. <https://atlas.cid.harvard.edu/explore?country=43&product=undefined&year=2017&tradeDirection=import&productClass=HS&target=Partner&partner=undefined&startYear=1995>.
- Headley Tyler. "China's Djibouti Base: A One Year Update." *The Diplomat*, December 4, 2018. <https://thediplomat.com/2018/12/chinas-djibouti-base-a-one-year-update/>.
- Hudzikowski, Mateusz. "The Go Game Model in International Politics Research." *Strategic Impact* 49, no. 4 (2013): 79–91.
- Kang, David C., and Xinru Ma. "Power Transitions: Thucydides Didn't Live in East Asia." *The Washington Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 137–54.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2018.1445905>.
- Kassam, Natasha. "Great Expectations: The Unraveling of the Australia-China Relationship." *Brookings* (blog), July 20, 2020. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/great-expectations-the-unraveling-of-the-australia-china-relationship/>.

- Kerry Allen. "China's Xi Tells People to Stop Wasting Food." *BBC News*, August 13, 2020, sec. China. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-53761295>.
- Kissinger, Henry. *On China*. New York: Penguin Press, 2011.
- Kuo, Mercy A. "China in Djibouti: The Power of Ports." *The Diplomat*, March 25, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/03/china-in-djibouti-the-power-of-ports/>.
- Lai, David. "Learning from the Stones: A Go Approach to Mastering China's Strategic Concept, Shi:" Fort Belvoir, VA: Defense Technical Information Center, May 1, 2004. <https://doi.org/10.21236/ADA423419>.
- Li, Mei. "Intended and Received Frames of China and the Expectation on Media." In *Chinese Television and Soft Power Communication in Australia*, Ch 4. Anthem Press, 2019. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvsn3ntq>.
- Luttwak, Edward. *The Rise of China vs. the Logic of Strategy*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Maurer, Tim. *Cyber Mercenaries : The State, Hackers, and Power* . Cambridge, United Kingdom :: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- Mearsheimer, John J. "Can China Rise Peacefully?" In *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 56, 2014. [http://www.eastlaw.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Can-China-Rise-Peacefully\\_-\\_The-National-Interest.pdf](http://www.eastlaw.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Can-China-Rise-Peacefully_-_The-National-Interest.pdf).
- Mearsheimer, John J. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. Updated edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014.
- Medcalf, Rory. "Australia And China: Understanding the Reality Check." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 73, no. 2 (March 4, 2019): 109–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2018.1538315>.
- MERICS. "Mapping the Belt and Road Initiative: This Is Where We Stand." November 11, 2020. <https://merics.org/en/analysis/mapping-belt-and-road-initiative-where-we-stand>.
- Michael Pillsbury. *The 100 Year Marathon. China's Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower*. Hudson Institute, 2015.
- Michael Posner. "Weiqi: The Game That Holds China's Key to World Domination." *The Globe and Mail*, June 10, 2011. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/munk-debates/weiqi-the-game-that-holds-chinas-key-to-world-domination/article598664/>.

- Michelle Innis. "Chinese Company's Payment to Lawmaker Sets Off Furor in Australia." *The New York Times*, September 6, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/07/world/australia/sam-dastyari-china-senator-donation.html>.
- Nye, Joseph S. *Soft Power : The Means to Success in World Politics*. 1st ed. New York: Public Affairs, 2004.
- Office of the Secretary of Defense. *Military and Security Developments Involving The People's Republic of China 2020*. Annual Report to Congress. Washington, D.C.: Pentagon, 2020. <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF>.
- Pan, Zhongqi. "Guanxi, Weiqi and Chinese Strategic Thinking." *Chinese Political Science Review* 1, no. 2 (June 1, 2016): 303–21. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41111-016-0015-1>.
- Qiao, Liang. *Unrestricted Warfare: China's Master Plan to Destroy America*. Panama City, Panama: Pan American Pub, 2002.
- Rolland, Nadège. "China's Vision for a New World Order." *The National Bureau Of Asian Research*, no. NBR Special Report #83 (January 2020): 68.
- Schreer, Benjamin. *Planning the Unthinkable War: "airsea Battle" and Its Implications for Australia*. Strategy / Australian Strategic Policy Institute. Barton, A.C.T: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2013.
- Secretary of Defense,. *Annual Report to the Congress on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China, July 2002*. Department of Defense, 2002.
- Shambaugh, D. *China and the World*. Oxford University Press, 2020. [https://books.google.com/books?id=\\_tjBDwAAQBAJ](https://books.google.com/books?id=_tjBDwAAQBAJ).
- Smyth, Jamie. "Australia to Tighten Foreign Investment Rules amid China Concerns." *Financial Times*, February 1, 2018. <https://www.ft.com/content/308ca8d6-06f6-11e8-9650-9c0ad2d7c5b5>.
- Sun Tzu. "The Art of War." Oxford University Press, 1963.
- Syed Fazl-e Haider. *The Strategic Implications of Chinese-Iranian-Russian Naval Drills in the Indian Ocean*. Vol. 20. China Brief, 2020. <https://jamestown.org/program/the-strategic-implications-of-chinese-iranian-russian-naval-drills-in-the-indian-ocean/>.
- The Economist. "Australian Universities Are Accused of Trading Free Speech for Cash." *The Economist*, September 19, 2019. <https://www.economist.com/asia/2019/09/19/australian-universities-are-accused-of-trading-free-speech-for-cash>.

- . “Australia’s Foreign-Student Bubble Has Burst.” *The Economist*, May 28, 2020. <https://www.economist.com/asia/2020/05/28/australias-foreign-student-bubble-has-burst>.
- Trade & Investment Queensland. “China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA).” Government. Trade & Investment Queensland, August 26, 2016. <https://www.tiq.qld.gov.au/export/free-trade-agreements/chafta/>.
- Wang Monica. “China’s Strategy in Djibouti: Mixing Commercial and Military Interests.” *Council on Foreign Relations*, April 13, 2018. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/chinas-strategy-djibouti-mixing-commercial-and-military-interests>.
- Westad, Odd Arne. *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*. Vol. 85. Cambridge: Council on Foreign Relations, 2005. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511817991>.
- Wikipedia. “Shanghai.” *Wikipedia*, Shanghai, September 17, 2020. <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Shanghai&oldid=978801497>.
- Yuan, Jing Dong. *A Rising Power Looks down under: Chinese Perspectives on Australia*. Australia: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2014. [https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/ad-aspi/import/Rising\\_Power\\_China.pdf?fqYeegRolDhLjbBJOk0usDBYJ4JEcnv](https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/ad-aspi/import/Rising_Power_China.pdf?fqYeegRolDhLjbBJOk0usDBYJ4JEcnv).
- Zbigniew Brzezinski, and John Mearshimer. “Clash of the Titans.” *Foreign Policy* 146 (February 2005): 45–50.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

## INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST

1. Defense Technical Information Center  
Ft. Belvoir, Virginia
2. Dudley Knox Library  
Naval Postgraduate School  
Monterey, California