

THE DRAGON'S RISE FROM THE SEA

A Monograph

by

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ABSTRACT

THE DRAGON'S RISE FROM THE SEA, by MAJ Marlon Ringo, 55 pages.

This monograph provides an understanding of China's actions in the South China Sea. China's rise is a product of its economy, and most importantly for US operational planners, the modernization of its military. This study posits that history plays a key role in shaping Chinese policies and actions in the South China Sea. The prevailing event in Chinese history that informs the reasoning behind recent aggressive behavior is the Chinese perception of a "century of humiliation," from 1839-1949. China believes it was subjected to a loss of territory, excessive indemnities, and a threat to its cultural identity as a result of its sovereignty being impinged. As a result, the current regime in China has reflected on its past as a guide for future relations regionally and internationally. The Chinese Communist Party has adopted a policy congruent with assuring its neighbors that its "rise" is peaceful and beneficial for the region. Conversely, the People's Liberation Army Navy has taken a more assertive stance in the region by aggressively confronting regional neighbors over the contested South China Sea. The aggressive behavior perpetrated by the People's Liberation Army Navy, poses a significant problem for US operational planners as several countries adjacent to the South China Sea have a formal defense treaty or an agreement for mutual defense. Although an approach to the problem requires significant diplomatic measures, US operational planners have several military options that come with some degree of associated risk.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACRONYMS	vii
ILLUSTRATIONS	viii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
China's Assertive Diplomacy.....	2
China's Growing Maritime Force.....	4
Modernization	4
Defense Diplomacy	6
Maritime Re-organization	7
China's Territorial Claims and Disputes	7
Exclusive Economic Zones	7
Sea Lines of Communication	10
Chinese Sovereignty.....	10
LITERARY REVIEW	13
Introduction.....	13
Overarching Themes.....	14
China's Rise and its Assertiveness	14
China's Core Interest and Nationalism.....	14
Military Incidents	16
China, the Good Neighbor.....	19
Changing Rhetoric.....	19
Joint Development.....	20
Missing Theory in Literature	22
Century of Humiliation.....	22
CHINESE HISTORY AND CULTURE.....	23
Chinese Preeminence.....	23
Confucius	25
Colonialism	26
Opium Wars.....	28
Boxer Rebellion	30
Rise of Communism	33
CHINESE MOTIVATIONS AND PROJECTIONS.....	34
Spratly Islands.....	34
Identity	36
Economics and Mahan.....	37
OPERATIONAL APPROACH.....	39

Diplomacy	40
Populations.....	41
Military	42
CONCLUSION	44
BIBLIOGRAPHY	46

ACRONYMS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
IHS	Information Handling Services
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
SCS	South China Sea
SLOC	Sea Lines of Communication
US	United States

ILLUSTRATIONS

	Page
Figure 1. Economic Exclusion Zones and China's 9-line map	9

INTRODUCTION

Operational planners are generally concerned with the current state of affairs, the desired outcome or end state, and the approach to achieve said end state. Typically, the current state, characterized with obstacles or problems must be addressed by operational planners before success is attained. The Administration of Barack Obama expressed its end state for the Asia Pacific region in the fall of 2011 as a stabilized region, within the context of rising nations, enabled by multinational forums in effecting conflict resolution, promoting economic prosperity, and ensuring governments are inclusive and respectful of human rights.¹ Subsequently, the United States (US), in accordance with its efforts to rebalance to the Asia-Pacific, is increasing its regional engagement to ensure China's rise is "peaceful." Conjointly, the increased US engagement is to reassure regional actors that China's rise does not become a destabilizer to "the world's most economically dynamic region" or besmirch the "integrity of the international system and norms it propagates."² However, within the context of the Asia-Pacific region exists inherent problems obstructing operation planners in their aim of achieving the prescribed goals: the People's Republic of China's emerging economy, second largest globally, and increasing military power empowered by modernization and a budget increase of 12 percent.³ Complicating the rebalance towards the region is China's increasingly assertive diplomacy, its strengthened maritime forces, and its claims on disputed maritime territory on its periphery. Understandably, China's immediate concern is its periphery and the influence of external actors within which serves as the source of China's recent assertive stance diplomatically.

¹Susan V. Lawrence, *U.S.-China Relations: An Overview of Policy Issues* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, August 2013), <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41108.pdf> (accessed October 1, 2013).

²Ibid.

³Edward Wong, "China Announces 12.2% Increase in Military Budget," *The New York Times*, March 5, 2014.

China's Assertive Diplomacy

China of late has been demonstrating its forceful diplomacy in its interactions globally but has increased its assertiveness regionally with intensity. Regionally, China has become a behemoth due to its increasing economic and diplomatic influence. According to the International Monetary Fund, China ranks second globally in Gross Domestic Product.⁴ In light of these factors, China has adopted a foreign policy that opposes the economic growth, military prowess and diplomatic influence of rival countries in the region.⁵ This opposition has manifested in Chinese resistance to Japanese and Indian efforts in becoming influential members of international organizations like permanent membership on the United Nations Security Council.⁶ Furthermore, China has used its position in various multilateral multinational forums to obstruct engagement between economic and military regional rivals, namely Vietnam and Philippines, and the United States. Mainly, China chooses this course of action because it realizes it can exert greater power regionally by intimidating its neighbors on a bilateral basis. China views the consolidation of regional powers, in conjunction with US involvement, as a threat to its regional hegemony.⁷

Globally, China has taken a position that favors a multi-polar global arena that relies on close bilateral ties.⁸ The Chinese belief, predicated by a history of successful trade relations during the dynastic periods, is that a world absent of a hegemon ensures peace, stability, and harmony, which allows active participation in international relations especially in economic

⁴International Monetary Fund, "Global Downturn Contributes to China Slowdown," <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/survey/so/2012/car072412a.htm> (accessed August 23, 2013).

⁵Information Handling Services (IHS) Jane's, "External Affairs, China," under Country Risk, <https://janes.ihs.com.lumen.cgsc.carl.com/CustomPages/Janes/JMSAHome.aspx?Category=SECURITYCOUNTRYRISK&Tab=SECURITYCOUNTRYRISK&Country=China> (accessed September 4, 2013).

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

affairs.⁹ China's diplomacy globally focuses less on ideology because China recognizes the obstructions it may cause in international relations. Instead, China observes non-interference in a nation-state's internal affairs and targets developing nations by offering economic investment regardless of their politics.¹⁰ China's proposition to developing countries is as follows: unconditional economic aid in investments and loans, respect for sovereignty, opposition to a unipolar international structure, and advocacy in international forums like the United Nations despite having controversial positions or policies. Furthermore, China's economic power has improved its ability to provide loans to developing countries; the *Financial Times* reported that in 2010 China lent more money to the developing world than was lent by the World Bank in total.¹¹ Ultimately, this has led to China cultivating relationships with nations that are either neutral or in many cases diametrically opposed to the United States and its policies.¹² Consequently, the United States is increasingly finding itself at odds with a growing range of Chinese interests escalating the chances of potential disagreements and conflicts.¹³ The growing rivalry can manifest itself into two spheres of influence, one American and the other Chinese, with the balance of power shifting decisively to China's favor.¹⁴ Similar to the Cold War era, this situation has arguably resulted in an arms race¹⁵ as China has increased its defense expenditures by double-

⁹Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 487.

¹⁰IHS Jane's.

¹¹Martin Jacques, *When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 480.

¹²IHS Jane's.

¹³Jacques, 463.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 486.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 474.

digit percentages in the last 31 years despite a global decline in defense spending and worldwide economic austerity.¹⁶

China's Growing Maritime Force

Modernization

Due to the size of the sea domain in the Asia Pacific region, another concern for military planners to address is the Chinese maritime force and its steps toward modernization. Although, the People's Liberation Army, the People's Liberation Army Air Force, and the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) collectively experienced modernization efforts and increased defense spending by 10.7 percent in 2013, this study will primarily focus on the PLAN.¹⁷ Modernization within the PLAN has sought reformations in its doctrine, organization, and training with the ultimate aim of developing a professional force.¹⁸ Furthermore, the PLAN is attempting to modernize its force by improving its weapons technology and capabilities in order to broaden its mission spectrum.¹⁹ The PLAN ascended overwhelmingly in national security importance because of three key strategic objectives: to support China's position towards Taiwan, anti-access—anti-denial of adversaries, and the protection of China's Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC).²⁰ The current naval strategy for China, termed distant sea defense, encapsulates previous strategies of coastal defense but incorporates a power projection element that extends past the first island chain, which includes Taiwan and the Ryuku Islands of Japan.²¹ The proposed extension pushes past coastal waters out to Guam to what China classifies as the

¹⁶IHS Jane's.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Department of the Navy, *The People's Liberation Army Navy: A Modern Navy with Chinese Characteristics* (Suitland: Government Printing Office, August 2009), 1.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., 5.

second island chain. The PLAN's ability to project power centers on the idea that Chinese interests abroad, regardless of its proximity to the mainland, remain protected. A primary catalyst for PLAN modernization is preventing US intervention in a conflict with Taiwan. China realizes the available combat power within the US arsenal and the potential threat the US Navy poses to its navy. Consequently, China procured weapons platforms to deter, delay, or degrade US military power with special emphasis on the waters surrounding Taiwan.²² As a result, China increased its arsenal of submarines, surface ships, missile patrol craft, maritime strike aircraft, and land-based systems that fire advanced anti-ship cruise missiles.²³ Furthermore, the PLAN is developing its first anti-ship ballistic missile to defeat US carrier strike groups.²⁴ According to former US Defense Secretary Robert Gates, the anti-ship missiles and parity in numbers of submarines in the region will force the Pentagon to rethink the way it deploys aircraft carriers.²⁵

China has also taken ancillary actions to improve its maritime capability as well. In the spirit of modernization, China has begun shifting towards joint operations, which it views as a necessity in modern warfare. The PLAN's training and doctrine illustrates this shift best. In the past, the Chinese military viewed joint operations as various components of its military operating towards a common goal despite a separation in time and space.²⁶ The PLAN is attempting to overcome this challenge by conducting increasingly complex and realistic training exercises by integrating with the People's Liberation Army and People's Liberation Army Air Force.²⁷ The training exercises also focus on deployments in unfamiliar seas in order to enhance navigational skill, tactical war fighting skill, and improve the force's ability to deal with the inherent rigors of

²²Ibid., 8.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Jacques, 473.

²⁶Department of the Navy, 40.

²⁷Ibid., 34.

long duration deployments.²⁸ In addition to training exercises, the PLAN implements opposing forces in an effort to move away from “scripted” exercises and train its leaders to think critically in complex environments.²⁹ However, China’s increasing naval capacity in conjunction with its large-scale and protracted naval exercises has expanded its area of interest into the East and South China Seas (SCS) potentially instigating conflicts with regional or global actors.³⁰ Outside of exercises, the PLAN expanded its use of submarines. The PLAN consistently deploys its submarines to the Philippine Sea and Eastern Pacific to familiarize them with potential navigation routes for wartime purposes.

Defense Diplomacy

The PLAN’s frequency of operating “jointly” while simultaneously building its proficiency has given China confidence to participate more in bilateral and multilateral exercises totaling five between 2005 and 2009, working with countries such as Russia, Singapore, and Pakistan.³¹ China utilizes a three-pronged approach to diplomacy in the areas of energy, trade and defense. Moreover, China finds it is most influential in using its navy and maritime paramilitary force in conducting arms transfers and military diplomacy rather than relying on formal diplomatic engagements. The PLAN sent elements of its force to numerous places to include Russia, Europe, India, Latin America, Southeast Asia, Australia, and North Korea.³² China’s defense diplomacy uses the transfer of weapons, military exchanges, and joint training exercises instead of formal diplomacy to increase its influence internationally.³³

²⁸Ibid., 36.

²⁹Ibid., 35.

³⁰Ibid., 38.

³¹Ibid., 40.

³²IHS Jane’s.

³³Ibid.

Maritime Re-organization

Regionally, China has increased the use of its maritime paramilitary forces to exert its military power. Moreover, these forces are the primary means for establishing and maintaining China's claims on disputed territory.³⁴ China's maritime paramilitary force is made up of four distinct entities to include the maritime surveillance force, coastguard force, fisheries force, and anti-smuggling force.³⁵ Currently, China is in the process of reorganizing them by consolidating them under the State Oceanic Administration. Arguably, the consolidation of power of China's maritime paramilitary force has multiple benefits like allowing the agency more authority while granting China with a stronger maritime enforcement capability.³⁶ Additionally, coordination is significantly improved due to the efficiency of the maritime re-organization. Furthermore, the intensification of activity in the region can deter external actors from establishing drilling and survey projects as it successfully deterred ONGC Videsh, a Vietnamese company, by severing cables from its seismic vessel of the Gulf of Tonkin in May 2012.³⁷ Confrontations in the region are not just restricted to economic rivalry over SLOCs and natural resources and have the potential to escalate to military conflicts.

China's Territorial Claims and Disputes

Exclusive Economic Zones

China's claim to territorial waters and land present another difficult problem for US military planners. China sees its claims in both the East China Sea and SCS as instrumental in maintaining its sovereignty and territorial integrity.³⁸ The claims are rooted in history beginning

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Lawrence.

in 1947 when the Nationalist Party under Chiang Kai-shek declared the seas sovereign because of the exploits of Genghis Khan in the early 13th century. In 1949, Mao Zedong's Chinese Communist Party (CCP) adopted the claims following the conclusion of the revolution. As a result, the claims have been an integral part of the communist regime since its inception. Post revolution, China began reinserting itself into the international arena but realized its identity was not definitive and began reaffirming its territorial claims based on history. China's geopolitical efforts to crystalize its identity and consolidate power has disrupted the balance of power in the region and caused several issues. The first related issue deals with the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), which extends from a country's territorial sea (12 nautical miles from the coast) to 200 nautical miles from its coast (see figure 1).³⁹ Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) treaty, which China recognizes and the United States does not, states are permitted to regulate foreign military activities within their EEZs.⁴⁰ The United States uses the waters for surveillance missions on Chinese military activities, underwater surveys to facilitate submarine navigation, and to conduct joint military exercises with Thailand, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore despite China's protest.⁴¹ Consequently, the opposing views related to this treaty have resulted in several incidents between US and Chinese military ships and aircraft in 2001 and 2009.⁴²

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.



Figure 1. Economic Exclusion Zones and China's 9-line map

Source: Sam Bateman, "Regime Building in the South China Sea: Current Situation and Outlook," *Australian Journal of Maritime and Ocean Affairs* 3, no. 1 (2011): 29.

Although, the EEZs pose a direct issue for the United States in the region there are several indirect issues that affect the United States as well. In 2004, the Chinese president, Hu Jintao expanded the mission of the PLAN to encompass safeguarding China's expanding interests and ensuring world peace by increasing its role in enabling international security primarily through anti-piracy activities.⁴³ Essentially, Hu Jintao envisioned China playing a greater role in international affairs and security especially since China's interests extended past Taiwan and greatly depended on open SLOCs.⁴⁴ Accordingly, with the expansion of its responsibilities, the PLAN focused its efforts on protecting the SLOCs vital to China's economic survival.⁴⁵

⁴³Department of the Navy, 9.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

Sea Lines of Communication

The SLOCs allow China to conduct foreign trade of imports and exports, accounting for over ninety percent by volume and over eighty percent by value in total.⁴⁶ China's growing economy requires a vast amount of raw materials and oil to remain afloat. China's domestic oil production is insufficient to supply its growing economy and military modernization efforts, which require a projected increase of two million barrels of oil per day, every five years.⁴⁷ China is now a net importer of oil products importing nearly half its crude oil, which will increase to seventy percent by 2035 provided current trends continue.⁴⁸ Moreover, most of China's energy imports and raw materials travel through various straits from Africa and the Middle East. Disruption in the waterborne supply chain could be dangerous to the stability of the CCP one-party system.⁴⁹ The current stability experienced by the CCP relies on its propensity to promise prosperity for its citizens due to its economic vitality. The economy and the ancillary concerns that ensure its success, like access to adjacent seas, has enabled the CCP to tap into feelings of nationalism and divert attention from the internal social and political issues. Therefore, the necessity of the PLAN's mission to maintain freedom of maneuver along its SLOC becomes glaringly clear.

Chinese Sovereignty

The CCP's hard stance towards sovereignty manifested itself out of the perceived "century of humiliation" suffered by the Chinese people under imperialistic rule and intimidation discussed in detail in a subsequent section. This perception has led China, since the end of the Qing dynasty (1644-1912), to become averse to acts akin to imperialism thereby adopting a

⁴⁶Ibid., 10.

⁴⁷Ibid., 11.

⁴⁸Jacques, 433.

⁴⁹Department of the Navy, 11.

military policy centered on defense and a foreign policy of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other nations relying on multinational organizations and dialogue rather than unilateral actions.⁵⁰ Moreover, China has restricted military use of force only when its sovereignty and territorial claims are threatened, to maintain a buffer zone to prevent foreign intervention, and to supplement diplomatic threats.⁵¹

China's idea of sovereignty differs greatly than most western nations, to include the United States. The first disparity arises in China's flexible manner in which sovereignty is exercised. For instance, when Great Britain returned Hong Kong to Chinese control, most aspects of its society and government remained intact.⁵² This is predicated on the Chinese ideology of the civilization-state, which allows for the existence of differences within and among its many provinces.⁵³ On the contrary, western nations view sovereignty within their borders and territories as one nation one system, or in other words, homogeneous.⁵⁴ Another dissimilarity between Chinese and western views toward autonomy lie in maritime sovereignty. Considered a nascent principle, maritime sovereignty gained prominence after World War II when western nations, led by the United States, adopted the idea.⁵⁵ Essentially, the idea centers on exercising sovereignty over its territorial waters.⁵⁶ Consequently, following the US's lead, various South-East Asian countries likely felt emboldened and staked claims on the disputed and uninhabited Spratly and

⁵⁰IHS Jane's.

⁵¹David Graff and Robin Higham, eds., *A Military History of China* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 267.

⁵²Jacques, 378.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid., 376.

⁵⁶Ibid.

Paracel islands.⁵⁷ However, the Chinese approach to maritime sovereignty in the region center on “historic claims” which state the islands were an integral part of its southern sea border with habitation dating to the Tang and Song dynasties.⁵⁸ Again, these historical claims are based on territory and surrounding waters conquered by Genghis Khan and the assertion that he was Chinese, subsequently categorizing the territory he conquered as Chinese sovereign territory. The overlapping EEZs, the multitude of SLOC choke points via the straits, and the dispute over sovereign territory caused the Chinese government to increase its naval presence in the region because it was a “core interest.” The surge included more nuclear submarines in the area operating from a new underground naval base on Hainan Island.⁵⁹ Actions similar to these have increased over time and caused regional states to try to “internationalize” the issue by taking it before international forums like Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the United Nations.⁶⁰ The United States has desperately tried to internationalize the issue too because it maintains several formal and informal security agreements with countries in the region and does not want to risk getting into a conflict with China directly or indirectly. Notwithstanding, most of the formal defense treaty relations, between the United States and the Philippines for example, were signed prior to the region’s current influx of sovereignty and claim disputes. Currently, the United States has formal defense treaties with Japan, South Korea, Philippines, and Thailand, of which three are China’s rival claimants to disputed territory.⁶¹ The US also maintains informal relationships with several strategic partners in the region to include Taiwan. Although the United States no longer has a treaties with Taiwan, it is still covered under the *Taiwan Relations Act*

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid., 377.

⁵⁹Ibid., 371.

⁶⁰Lawrence.

⁶¹Bruce Vaughn, *U.S. Strategic and Defense Relationships in the Asia-Pacific Region* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, January 2007), <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33821.pdf> (accessed October 1, 2013).

which stipulates continued support to Taiwan in defense against the People's Republic of China and neither confirms or denies direct US military involvement in the event of a People's Republic of China attack.⁶²

LITERARY REVIEW

Introduction

Debates in international relations concerning the SCS have contemplated China's role respective to other claimant states in the region. Central to the debates is the "nine-dashed line map" submitted in 2009 by China, to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) in response to a joint submission, by Malaysia and Vietnam, which based their claims on their continental shelves effectively extending their "legal" territory in accordance with CLCS law (see figure 1).⁶³ China has protested Vietnam's and Malaysia's submission on the grounds of sovereignty over the respective islands and adjacent waters claimed in the SCS. China's nine-dashed line map encompasses the EEZs of Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, and the Philippines, which adds to the complexity of the issue.⁶⁴ China first introduced the nine-dashed map in the 1930s in response to France's occupation of islands and reefs in the SCS.⁶⁵ The map is an evolution of previous maps beginning with France's occupation of the Spratlys, to the expulsion of the Kuomintang government by the CCP and its subsequent claims to islands in the region.⁶⁶ Despite China's resolve in asserting its claim in the SCS on historical foundations, its vagueness surrounding the line's origin and perforation has added a layer of confusion and invalidity to the

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Melda Malek, "A Legal Assessment of China's Historic Claims in the South China Sea," *Australian Journal of Maritime and Ocean Affairs* 5, no. 1 (2013): 28.

⁶⁴Sam Bateman, "Regime Building in the South China Sea: Current Situation and Outlook," *Australian Journal of Maritime and Ocean Affairs* 3, no. 1 (2011): 29.

⁶⁵Malek, 29.

⁶⁶Ibid., 30.

argument.⁶⁷ Furthermore, the opaqueness within the People’s Republic of China has complicated the issue, adding another layer of confusion. Some scholars argue that between 1989 and 1998, during Jiang Zemin’s rise within the CCP hierarchy, a power struggle was occurring and it was unclear who was making policy decisions.⁶⁸ Uncertainty surrounded the amount of control Jiang could exert on the PLAN since he sought its support vehemently.⁶⁹ Arguably, this complex situation led to the formation of the SCS falling under the administration of three different Chinese agencies: the marine office in Hainan Island, the PLAN, and the Foreign Ministry.⁷⁰ Within this context of the nine-dashed map and opaqueness in Chinese decision-making institutions, several schools of thought have emerged in literary works regarding China’s policy in the SCS. These schools of thought represent two key disparate themes of growing Chinese assertiveness and Chinese promotion of being a “good neighbor.” However, the plethora of literature devoted to this topic has lacked sufficient discussion on the topic of the “century of humiliation” and how it relates to Chinese actions in the SCS. In spite of China’s attempt at propagandizing neighborly intentions, most writings on the subject of the SCS are inundated with skirmishes between China and other claimants revealing an increase of aggressive behavior by China.

Overarching Themes

China’s Rise and its Assertiveness

China’s Core Interest and Nationalism

According to British journalist and Asian academic Martin Jacques, in his book, *When China Rules the World*, China’s rise and its perception of a declining America has led to its

⁶⁷Ibid., 34.

⁶⁸Ang Guan, “The South China Sea Dispute Revisited,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 54, no. 2 (2000): 206.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid.

assertiveness in the SCS and claims to sovereignty over the region.⁷¹ Furthermore, the emergence of assertiveness, he states, has led some Chinese government officials, particularly those in the military, to unofficially term the SCS island dispute as a “core interest” which places it in a justification for war category analogous with Taiwan.⁷² China has three “core interests,” which the military sees as its sole responsibility to protect. The first is preserving the Communist system, the second is ensuring economic prosperity, and the third is maintaining Chinese sovereignty.⁷³ As a result, the term “core interest” has inspired nationalistic ideals, among the majority of the populace, towards disputes over sovereignty and has complicated the matter by including the Spratly and Paracel Islands within the purview of protection through military means.⁷⁴ The term “core interest” has permeated most readings on the subject of the SCS in expressing China’s narrative because internal to China a debate has aroused to determine the official policy for international relations. The converse to “core interest” is “indisputable sovereignty” which will be discussed later. Irrespective of its political leaders, who officially sanctioned softer rhetoric in the international arena, the Chinese military views the issue as a core interest likely due to rising public opinion in favor of more assertive measures in acquiring land and maintaining sovereignty.⁷⁵ In fact, a recent poll suggests that seventy-three percent of Chinese citizens view the issue of sovereignty over the islands as a core interest.⁷⁶ The survey illustrates the nationalistic fervor present in Chinese society today with respect to sovereignty issues in the SCS.

⁷¹Jacques, 370.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Shen Hongfang, “South China Issue in China-ASEAN Relations: An Alternative Approach to Ease the Tension,” *International Journal of China Studies* 2, no. 3 (December 2011): 594.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid., 593.

⁷⁶Ibid., 592.

Military Incidents

The military, backed by a populace of nationalists, feel vindicated and free from retribution when defending China's interests in the SCS. In other words, the domestic politics within China is having a direct effect on international relations and policy decisions. As a result, the military sees its sole responsibility as defending the homeland, which has witnessed a drastic increase in the number and frequency of incidents with claimant nations over the past few years.⁷⁷ The increase is a by-product of increased Chinese activity and presence and consequently western literature on the incidents depicts China as the aggressor. Most of the incidents concerning the Spratly and Paracel Islands involve China, Vietnam, and the Philippines. Despite Vietnam and the Philippines attempt to coordinate efforts by internationalizing the issue, China has been adamant to resolve the issue bilaterally as it puts China in a relative position of advantage and power. Ang Cheng Guan's article, "The South China Sea Dispute Revisited," featured in the *Australian Journal of International Affairs* illustrates China's preference to act from a position of advantage.⁷⁸ Guan posits a thesis of Chinese behavior exhibiting a pattern of capitalizing on opportunities in exerting its jurisdiction over its SCS claims.⁷⁹ Similar to several other articles, Guan highlights disputes in 1974, 1988, 1995, and 1999 to argue his thesis. In 1974 and 1988, Guan claims that the Chinese used the domestic turmoil in the United States and the Soviet Union respectively as an opportunity to further its SCS claims by physically seizing territory in the Spratly and Paracel Islands. In the 1974 dispute, the Chinese postulated that the United States was too focused on the Watergate scandal and redeployment from Vietnam that it decided to seize the West Paracels, which the Vietnamese occupied and still vehemently deplore to this day.⁸⁰ The

⁷⁷Ibid., 593.

⁷⁸Ang Guan's article, "The South China Sea Dispute Revisited" was featured in the *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 54, no. 2 (2000).

⁷⁹Guan, 202.

⁸⁰Ibid.

Chinese conducted the seizure free from fear of US intervention recognizing the opportunity presented by Congress in refusing President Richard Nixon's request to commit US troops in response under the auspices of the War Powers Act.⁸¹ The 1988 dispute, characterized as Chinese aggression in several articles, occurred during President Mikhail Gorbachev's famous Vladivostok speech in which he alluded to the Soviet Union focusing inward to deal with domestic issues.⁸² Gorbachev announced his plan to redeploy troops from Afghanistan, his desire to improve its relations with China, the need for China and Vietnam to normalize their relations, and the necessity for Cambodia to solve its issues internally.⁸³ In light of this announcement, China no longer feared Soviet intervention, despite the Soviet Union's funding of the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia, and used its navy to occupy four reefs in the Western Spratlys, which were claimed by Vietnam.⁸⁴ Although the reefs are difficult to occupy since most of the rocks are above sea level only at low tide, most are ideal for observation posts. However, many claimants utilize stilts in order to build larger structures.

Another incident typically used to illustrate Chinese aggressiveness in the SCS is the widely referred to Mischief Reef dispute from 1995 to 1999. This dispute, predicated on China's ability to conduct expeditionary warfare due to recent naval modernization efforts, extended far beyond the Paracel Islands and involved an ASEAN member for the first time.⁸⁵ In addition, this dispute witnessed several belligerent overtures by China, such as declaring suzerainty over the entire SCS, physically occupying the reef, bringing the Philippines into the dispute, and

⁸¹Ibid., 203.

⁸²Ibid., 204.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid., 205.

publishing a revised map to the international community depicting its territorial waters extending into the Natuna Island territorial waters in southwest SCS.⁸⁶

Writings that are more recent herald an era of increasing incidents with China, and the PLAN specifically, as the aggressor. The incidents are trending towards commercial ventures as the PLAN has been targeting fishing ships and energy exploration vessels of claimant nations. Case in point, in March 2013 a taskforce of four Chinese warships occupied the James Shoal, at the furthest reaches of the Chinese nine-dashed line claim, and pledged to maintain national sovereignty.⁸⁷ This event occurred nearly concurrently with Chinese naval ships firing flares on a Vietnamese fishing ship near the Parcel Islands.⁸⁸ These recent incidents signal several key traits in China's belligerence.

The first trait is China's willingness to expand its presence farther south to the limits of the nine-dashed line; the second is demonstrating its amphibious capability to take disputed land by force, and lastly a proclivity to hostility towards civilians of Southeast Asian claimant nations.⁸⁹ The Mischief Reef dispute and subsequent incidents began involving ASEAN members and as a result, China's fear of internationalizing the issue came to fruition. Although many question why China would take this action, further examination highlights the incessant contradictions between government-sanctioned narratives and military actions further exacerbated by the opaqueness of the CCP decision-making apparatus. Resultantly, this dispute created a "small cottage industry whose function was to predict growing regional insecurity and China as a great power threat."⁹⁰ As this section revealed, there is a preponderance of literature to support

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Kor Beng, "China's Navy Flexes Muscles in South China Sea," *The Straits Times*, March 28, 2013.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Guan, 205.

the mainstream view of Chinese antagonism. However, there exists a minority, primarily in Chinese society, that holds an opposing view.

China, the Good Neighbor

Changing Rhetoric

Contrary to popular belief, some writers and political scientists refrain from branding China's rise as hostile and contributing to regional insecurity. In *On China*, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, accurately describes the meta-agents in China's complex government and their relations within Chinese society based on his experiences. Kissinger goes further and describes the factors at play within those meta-agents and their motivations for wanting to maintain peace and harmony in the region. Arguably, Kissinger is more optimistic than most writers in the "good neighbor" school of thought and bases this premise on China's mutual understanding of its interconnectedness with myriad regional actors, the most important being the United States. This was exemplified in Kissinger's discussion with President Jiang Zemin, when the Chinese president acknowledged that the United States and China needed each other because they were too big to be dominated, unlikely to be transformed, and unable to be isolated from one another.⁹¹ Kissinger goes on further to discuss the prudence and care China's political leaders took in crafting themes and messages to the international community of peace, stability and common prosperity during President Hu Jintao's term in office.⁹² Moreover, it was during Hu's tenure, that the terms "peaceful rise" and "harmonious world" emerged as the monikers that espoused the greatness of ancient China, avoided conflict, and sought moral claims to a harmonious world as opposed to territorial domination.⁹³ Eventually, the Chinese government

⁹¹Kissinger, 487.

⁹²Ibid., 500.

⁹³Ibid.

modified the phrase “peaceful rise” to “peaceful development” because the term “rise” was thought to be too threatening to regional actors and the US specifically.⁹⁴

Another example of China’s effort to soften its rhetoric, despite what may seem as belligerent actions by an independent PLAN, in order to reduce the chance of misunderstanding was China’s response to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s remarks reference the disputes in the SCS. In July 2010, she made a statement that the United States had “a national interest in freedom of navigation” in the SCS.⁹⁵ China perceived the statement as an affront to its stature in the region and initially responded that the SCS was a “core interest.”⁹⁶ Almost immediately, China, in an attempt to change its narrative, said the entire SCS was a matter of “indisputable sovereignty” in the aim of solidifying its “good neighbor” diplomacy.⁹⁷ Arguably, the CCP’s misunderstanding of western culture may have skewed their thinking in believing the word choice was less unpalatable. Kissinger’s book and similar articles have expressed China’s rhetoric towards “peaceful development” and “indisputable sovereignty” as an information operation signifying a fundamental difference from colonial expansion and instead focuses on a “win-win” outcome based on shared interests.⁹⁸

Joint Development

Most articles highlighting China’s win-win argument among regional actors focus on mutual benefit through economic cooperation. In 2011, the region produced 2.5 million barrels of oil per day however; however current reserves are declining and failing to meet the region’s

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Bateman, 26.

⁹⁶Hongfang, 594.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Ibid., 591.

energy needs.⁹⁹ Generally, littoral states rely on external sources of hydrocarbon supply from the Middle East and Africa. As a result, China and various claimant states endeavor to find a peaceful resolution through several multinational forums, like ASEAN, for acquiring the estimated seven billion barrels per day of untapped oil deposits in disputed areas, which puts the Spratly Islands at the crux.¹⁰⁰ Regional actors aspire to elevate the SCS issue to international levels like the United Nations General Assembly, which is contrary to Chinese desires. China, as many articles attest, desires a peaceful outcome and resolution through bilateral relations. Unsuccessfully, China reluctantly agreed to multilateral discussions and in 2011 agreed to a revived ASEAN-China Joint Working Group to Implement the Declaration on Conduct of Parties (DOC). The DOC stipulates signatories refrain from using force to settle sovereignty disputes and contains a code of conduct for ensuring freedom of navigation and over-flight; however, evidence of China's adherence to said code of conduct remains scant making it extremely difficult for regional actors to trust Chinese intentions of a "peaceful development."¹⁰¹ Furthermore, according to Zewei Yang's article, "The Freedom of Navigation in the South China Sea: An Ideal or Reality?," he asserted that China is not preventing freedom of navigation in the SCS solely because international laws prevents impedance under UNCLOS, of which China is a signatory. Likewise, Yang says that China understands and is in adherence with UNCLOS Articles 17 and 58 which mandates that ships have the right to navigate freely in territorial waters and EEZs respectively.¹⁰² He goes on to say that, China recognizes the importance of the SCS as a major waterway and will continue to do its duty in ensuring freedom of navigation irrespective of its claims of sovereignty and maritime

⁹⁹Ibid., 590.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Zewei Yang, "The Freedom of Navigation in the South China Sea: An Ideal or a Reality?," *Beijing Law Review* 3 (2012): 139.

¹⁰²Ibid., 138.

rights in the region which it sees as a separate issue.¹⁰³ The issue of sovereignty arises once a nation tries to claim said waters or territory for sovereignty aspirations. Most writers who contend that China is aspiring to be a “good neighbor” in the region portrayed China as one that cautiously examines its rhetoric, and recognizes its role in guaranteeing freedom of navigation. Within this context, China, despite its reluctance for multilateralism and the intervention of extra-regional actors, must contend with the current situation. Accordingly, Kissinger sees a future where China, to include regional actors, and the United States develop a relationship of “co-evolution.” This concept is based on the parties involved doing their best to attend to national interest, cooperate when possible, all while minimizing conflict.¹⁰⁴ Essentially, finding and building on areas of like interest while limiting the effects of differences in order to achieve regional harmony. Debatably, China has not experienced regional harmony since before the century of humiliation.

Missing Theory in Literature

Century of Humiliation

Most articles and books focused on the SCS dispute have failed to address the true motivation behind China’s stance, assertive or not, as a product of its history. China’s history takes a sharp turn when the CCP in conjunction with the KMT defeated the Japanese, subsequently defeating and expelling the KMT. Ultimately, Mao and the CCP secured governmental power enabling them to construct the narrative of a resurgent China made possible by peasants and workers united by a common ideology thereby legitimizing the communist regime. Martin Jacques comes closest in, *When China Rules*, where he postulated that there are several narratives, existing in Chinese civilization. The first centers on isolationism and keeping external actors out; the second represents China’s expansionary desire to acquire “lost territories”

¹⁰³Ibid., 139.

¹⁰⁴Kissinger, 526.

and annex new territory; and the third correlates with the second in that it desires to convert those in conquered territory to adopt Chinese civilization.¹⁰⁵ Although, Martin Jacques discussed the effect of the “century of humiliation” on the Chinese psyche, he focuses too much on the racial and cultural aspect of superiority.¹⁰⁶ This study focuses on the second narrative of China’s aspirations, to regain “lost territory.” The second narrative, predicated on China’s position as a superpower during the Han (206BC-220AD), Tang (618AD-907AD), and Qing dynasties fosters pride in the Chinese psyche while simultaneously bolstering a newfound sense of entitlement.¹⁰⁷ This sense of entitlement existed prior to the period of humiliation of intrusive colonialism at the hands of eastern and western imperialist and deserves further study.

CHINESE HISTORY AND CULTURE

Chinese Preeminence

Understanding the period of humiliation is important today, as the United States rebalances its efforts to the Asian Pacific. It provides insight into the Chinese psyche, highlighting preferences and potential motivations for actions in the current SCS conflict. Prior to the period of humiliation, China was preeminent in East Asia from 1046 BC, with the advent of the Zhou dynasty (1046BC-256BC). Confucius¹⁰⁸ based his writings on the Western Zhou dynasty (1046BC-771BC) which he perceived as the golden age of harmony.¹⁰⁹ However, most historians prefer to analyze China’s preeminence beginning in 221BC, during the Qin dynasty, because this was the first successful attempt by an emperor in consolidating warring states into

¹⁰⁵Jacques, 527.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 338.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 339.

¹⁰⁸Confucius’ actual name is Kong Qiu. He was also known as Master Kong (Kongzi) and lived from 551BC to 479BC.

¹⁰⁹Jeffrey Wasserstrom, *China in the 21st Century: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3.

not only the largest Chinese territory to date but into some semblance of an empire.¹¹⁰ China's dominance in the region was predicated on centuries of dynastic cycles that saw China cultural sphere stretching over vast amounts of territory from Siberia, to present day Vietnam, to the ice-capped peaks of the Himalayans.¹¹¹ In addition, partly because of the natural borders of mountains, deserts, and oceans, Chinese civilization was virtually isolated from other countries or civilizations comparable in size and sophistication, which propagated an internal model, that China was a world unto itself.¹¹² However, China possessed a robust and technologically advanced navy during the early 15th century led by Zheng He, which allowed China's growing economy to trade based on the tributary system where it exchanged trade benefits for suzerainty. In fact, China saw itself not just as "a great civilization" but as the epitome of civilization itself, surrounded by lesser cultures, as the "Middle Kingdom" or center of the world which was China.¹¹³ Consequently, China viewed the countries on its periphery as satellites separated not by political or territorial demarcations but rather differences in culture.¹¹⁴ Cultures, China asserted, that benefited from Chinese culture and therefore should pay "tribute" which enabled it to become the most productive economy producing a greater share of total world Gross Domestic Product than any Western society.¹¹⁵ However, China's preeminence was not without turmoil. Throughout China's dynastic history, a cyclical pattern emerges oscillating from unification to conflict and dissolution to reunification of states. The most prominent epoch representing China in a state of chaos was the Warring States period (403BC-221BC) or Eastern Zhou dynasty, a sub era of the Zhou dynasty.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 19.

¹¹¹Kissinger, 7.

¹¹²Ibid., 8.

¹¹³Ibid., 10.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 11.

Confucius

The Chinese philosopher Confucius lived during the end of the Zhou dynasty and witnessed the disintegration of its political structure during the Warring States period. Growing up, he saw his purpose in life as a transmitter of older values and traditions with the aim of restoring social and political harmony.¹¹⁶ He directed his efforts at changing the moral character of the ruling class and literate elite by focusing on the three virtues of education, ritual, and relationships.¹¹⁷ Confucius asserted that education was critical because a study of classical history would imprint the actions of virtuous people of the past and eventually change the behavior in the student.¹¹⁸ Additionally, ritual was important because Confucius believed it to be the physical acting out of past behavior that he deemed was of a purer age.¹¹⁹ The crux, however, of Confucian thought was the belief in relationships and their hierarchical nature. Confucius valued the clear distinctions hierarchy played in relationships especially since roles and responsibilities are clear.¹²⁰ Confucius viewed this principle, which was lacking in society and government, as a major reason for unrest at the time. Confucius maintained that by “knowing thy place,” where the superior protected the inferior and the inferior in turn was obedient to the superior, social order would be maintained and the state would prosper.¹²¹ Despite its early successes, Confucianism experienced a decline after the fall of the Han dynasty (206BC-220AD) due to Buddhism and Daoism gaining popularity.¹²² In the Song dynasty (950AD-1279AD), Confucianism saw a

¹¹⁶Joseph Adler, “Confucianism in China Today,” Kenyon College, April 14, 2011, <http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Adler/Writings/Confucianism%20Today.pdf> (accessed February 25, 2014), 1.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸Wasserstrom, 2.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹Ibid., 3.

¹²²Adler, 4.

rebirth, leading to widespread acceptance as an integral part of official government ideology.¹²³ As a result of the politicization of Confucian thought, it became the foundation for the examination system which was the primary means for upward social mobility.¹²⁴ The problem aroused however in the partial interpretations of Confucian thought because it was used solely for attaining government jobs, while disregarding the morale aspect, leading to highly conservative policies that mandated absolute obedience to elders and strict subjection of women to men.¹²⁵ The conservative policies, advocated by the Chinese dynasties of the last half of the 19th century, created an isolated nation opposed to Western culture, wrought by corruption as a byproduct of the examination system. This in part led to the eventual dissolution of the Chinese dynastic empire, the bedrock of Chinese dynastic rule over the “Middle Kingdom.” With the termination of the dynastic period and subsequent founding of the Republic of China, many Chinese perceived Confucianism as being responsible for the country’s decline and acquiescence to Western domination consequently disassociating it from Chinese government and society writ large until a resurgence of nationalism later in the 20th century.

Colonialism

Chinese humiliation resulted from Western colonialism, or more accurately, imperialism, as historian John Hobson termed the phenomenon. Hobson’s overarching thesis about the motivations behind colonialism stem from overproduction and surplus capital, which could not find profitable investments at home forcing Western countries to seek investments abroad ultimately creating a political policy that led to expansion.¹²⁶ Hobson and Vladimir Lenin (1870-

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴Ibid., 5.

¹²⁵Ibid.

¹²⁶William Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism 1894-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 1.

1924) had similar ideas about imperialism but Lenin went a step further and explained imperialism within a Marxist context asserting that imperialism,

[W]as the inevitable product of capitalism in its monopoly stage. As industry raised the production of goods to a point at which the domestic markets could no longer absorb them, capitalism ceased to be dynamic. Competition was replaced by monopolies and cartels, which served to maintain profit margins within protected markets. One result was surplus capital. To use it to raise the standard of living of the masses would have reduced profits. Hence it seemed more beneficial to Western capitalists to export it to areas where profits remained high because capital was scarce, labour cheap, and the cost of raw materials was low. These conditions could best be ensured when the territories concerned were subject to political direction, that is to say, in colonies, protectorates, and spheres of influence. Political domination also made it possible to secure the basic requirements for investment: the development of railways and ports; financial stability; law and order.¹²⁷

Expounding on the economic impetus of imperialism, the historian William Langer asserted that imperialism was the manifestation of economic competition and protection of markets and investments.¹²⁸ As a result, Western societies would use its various forms of imperialistic power, usually military, to remedy situations abroad that hindered economic aims “whether directly by opposition or indirectly by disorder.”¹²⁹ However, imperialism does not occur as a result of pure economic purposes but finds emergence from nationalistic fervor, political ambition, and pure military lust for conquest.¹³⁰ Many of the colonial powers, such as Britain, Germany, France and Japan during China’s century of humiliation had various reasons for wanting to expand their influence beyond their borders and into China’s. China possessed an overabundance of resources easily accessible by a robust network of waterways and boasted of an economy that was 30 percent of the world’s gross domestic product, exceeding the gross domestic product’s of Eastern Europe, the United States and Europe combined.¹³¹ Within the contexts of internal issues of

¹²⁷Ibid., 2.

¹²⁸Ibid., 3.

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰Ibid., 5.

¹³¹Kissinger, 12.

conservatism through Confucianism and isolationism and the external factor of Western colonialism, China failed to protect itself from imperialistic encroachment and preserve its virtues of sovereignty, culture, and resources. The “century of humiliation”, wrought with chastening defeat at the hands of foreign entities, challenged these virtues.

Opium Wars

Although China underwent several dynastic cycles, each with its own individuality, there were several commonalities among them. Most dynasties and their subjects viewed themselves as having a sophisticated culture, symbolic of the Middle Kingdom itself, compared to the barbaric cultures in its periphery and in the West thus the overwhelming tendency was to rule by tribute and remain isolated, respectively.¹³² At the onset of the century of humiliation, China had its first confrontational experience with Britain, during the late 18th century, when the Qing emperor slighted King George III by refusing to establish trade relations with the growing nation-state seeking investment opportunities and resources for its surplus in capital during the ongoing industrial revolution.¹³³ This however, did not last long as British merchants eventually made their way into Chinese ports with the selling of opium. Opium, which the British East India Company grew and sold in earnest, shifted the uneven balance in trade deficits that previously favored China to Britain. The imbalance, before the injection of opium, existed from the inability of British merchants to provide commodities desirable to the Chinese.¹³⁴ The situation grew increasingly dire for the current emperor, Daoguang, because government reports were illuminating the damage being done to the economy. As a result of the 4 to 12 million Chinese

¹³²The tribute system was nineteenth century China’s form of foreign trade, which required visitors from non-Chinese or “barbaric” civilizations to perform the kow-tow ritual of kneeling to show subservience to the emperor in exchange for limited trade concessions.

¹³³Adler, 5.

¹³⁴Thomas Shoffner, “The Dragon’s Intentions: How China’s Past Is a Prologue for the Future” (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 2012), 18.

addicts purchasing over 30,000 chests of opium, a massive outflow of silver was draining from the Chinese economy.¹³⁵ Additionally, the British Parliament's dissolution of the East India Company's monopoly in the region opened trade for other European countries causing a rise in opium sales. Within this context however, there was a global shortage in silver and countries were less likely to buy Chinese goods in specie, which drove the prices of copper, used by peasants as everyday currency, relatively high and further aggravating the existing domestic tensions of inequality.¹³⁶ Subsequently, Emperor Daoguang appointed an imperial commissioner, Lin Zexu, to enforce a decree that the opium trading must cease.¹³⁷ Lin took several approaches to ending the buying and selling of opium with the Chinese. The approaches he implemented included the education of virtues, moral persuasion, the use of informants, and leveraging British merchants and government officials, with reason, coercion, and confiscation.¹³⁸ The situation culminated when Lin confiscated three million pounds of raw opium and disposed of it in the Gulf of Canton, triggering, a military response by the East India Company of 16 warships, four armed steamers, 28 transports, and 4,000 troops.¹³⁹ Despite the Chinese blockading the waterways to Canton, fortifying coastal positions and modest modernization of its navy, the British blockaded Canton from all trade and seized Victoria Island and the harbor cities of Xiamen, Ningbo, Zhoushan, and Shanghai.¹⁴⁰ Additionally, the British controlled China's main river, the Yangzi River, and vast canal routes effectively cutting communication and causing the

¹³⁵Phillip Allingham, "England and China: The Opium Wars, 1839-60," The VictorianWeb <http://www.victorianweb.org/history/empire/opiumwars/opiumwars1.html> (accessed February 27, 2014).

¹³⁶Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1991), 149.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, 150.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, 151.

¹³⁹*Ibid.*, 152.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 157.

Qing government to capitulate and sue for peace.¹⁴¹ The British were in a position of relative advantage and the resulting treaty was a testament to their domination. The Treaty of Nanjing stipulated that the British would have unhindered access to major harbor cities, sovereignty over Victoria Island, receive an indemnity of 21 million US dollars, as well as other concessions that gave Britons advantages in society, such as extraterritoriality, and trade.¹⁴² The humiliation did not end there as the other European nations took their cue and made concessions of their own through similar successive treaties. After the normalization of relations, opium trading did not cease although it did decrease, and the foreign presence grew into autonomous settlements among the treaty ports, challenging Chinese sovereignty and its concept of the Mandate of Heaven central to Chinese identity and culture.¹⁴³

Boxer Rebellion

Forty-three years after the signing of the Treaty of Nanjing, anti-foreign sentiment began gaining momentum, especially in the south, as the French and British began forcibly expanding their access to territory and influence. The treaties forced on China by Britain and France essentially allowed full access to more treaty ports granting increased penetration to mainland China for business and religious missionary purposes. Most of all, legations were established in the once isolated city of Peking (Beijing).¹⁴⁴ Consequently, China, negotiating from a position of weakness, reluctantly granted rights to foreign nations allowing them to build railways, attain mining concessions, and gain access to routes for trading stations.¹⁴⁵ The traders' ability to gain

¹⁴¹Ibid.

¹⁴²Ibid., 160. Extraterritoriality essentially exempted foreign nationals from the jurisdiction of local law.

¹⁴³Shoffner, 20.

¹⁴⁴Office of the Historian, "The Opening to China Part II: the Second Opium War, the United States, and the Treaty of Tianjin, 1857-1859," U.S. Department of State, <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1830-1860/china-2> (accessed April 11, 2014).

¹⁴⁵Peter Harrington, *Peking 1900: The Boxer Rebellion* (New York: Osprey, 2001), 8.

easier access to the interior created unforeseen consequences such as the influx of missionaries, which most Chinese felt was an affront to their way of life by foreigners, just forty years after the Opium Wars ended.¹⁴⁶ Compounding the situation was Japanese expansion into Korea during the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the shameful defeat at the hands of a Japanese army and navy that was western trained, modeled, and equipped.¹⁴⁷ Suffering from defeat, Chinese veterans returned to unemployment, homelessness, and poverty instigated by war, only to find solace in membership among secret societies with an anti-foreign zeal.¹⁴⁸ Over the next five years, China experienced successive Western encroachments which included Germany, Russia, Britain and France seizing several ports, construction of railroads, churches, and telegraph lines, and the establishment of mines. All of this executed without the input and explicit approval of Qing officials.¹⁴⁹ By this time, anti-foreign sentiment was on the rise and tensions were high as diplomats and ambassadors feared for their safety within the Legation Quarter in Peking (Beijing).¹⁵⁰ The foreign nationals subsequently sent for help, but not before the Boxers inflicted atrocities upon Chinese Christian converts and Christian missionaries.¹⁵¹ The turning point occurred with the death of the German Minister, Baron von Ketteler, who essentially acted in the capacity of German ambassador to China. In retaliation, the German government led a combined force of 20,000 soldiers from eight different nations (Austria-Hungary, United States, Italy, Russia, Japan, France, Germany, and Britain) to Peking in order to relieve the forces already there

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., 9.

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., 11.

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

¹⁵¹The Boxers were a group of men in various secret societies who practiced martial arts and believed they were “invincible” because of their reverence towards spirits from Chinese folklore. They emerged as a response to rising number of western Christian missionaries and Chinese converts. Furthermore, extreme floods followed by a severe drought caused membership to increase among poor farmers and affected workers.

and suppress the insurgency.¹⁵² The insurgency was primarily comprised of Boxers, termed by Westerners from their habit of pumping their fists in the air, who were members of the secret societies that emerged from the Sino-Japanese War years earlier. The Boxer's main discontent came from foreign infiltration and a revulsion to Christianity, which they believe caused the "ills that had befallen the country, including a drought that was causing widespread misery."¹⁵³ The Boxers would also view the Qing government as an adversary before eventually combining forces. The Qing were ethnically Manchu while most Chinese were of Han descent, a statement bound more on culture than on genetic fact. The Qing Empress Cixi, who ruled as regent for her son, wavered in support before she too saw the Boxers as the lesser of two evils and foreigners as a distraction from domestic troubles. Ultimately, the siege at Peking would end after 55 days followed by foreign soldiers carrying out campaigns of retribution and members of the Qing royal family fleeing the city.¹⁵⁴ The aftermath of the Boxer Rebellion was the Boxer Protocol treaty, which stipulated that the Qing Empire pay a substantial indemnity payment, for loss of life and property, of 450 taels.¹⁵⁵ However, this was perceived as extremely humiliating as the Qing's annual income was only 250 taels and there was no reciprocal form of compensation for Chinese loss of life or property. Other dispensations included the demeaning erection of monuments for foreign dead, a moratorium of arms imports, and the executions of Boxer supporters.¹⁵⁶ Despite the atrocities and the perceived war on Chinese culture by Christians during the Boxer Rebellion and the encroachment on sovereign Chinese territory during the Opium Wars, China experienced

¹⁵²Shoffner, 24.

¹⁵³Wasserstrom, 31.

¹⁵⁴Ibid.

¹⁵⁵Shoffner, 25. A tael was a form of Chinese currency during the 19th Century.

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

an upswing in nationalism, which led to the termination of the dynastic period and the dawning of the CCP.

Rise of Communism

The CCP's emergence in China was the result of growing dissatisfaction of the working and peasant classes with the fledgling Kuomintang (KMT) or Nationalist Party led by Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi). Despite leading the nationalist movement in China during the first half of the 20th century, his administration of the country was characterized as corrupt, ineffective, and rampant with inflation.¹⁵⁷ Moreover, his obsession with labeling the CCP as the main threat to China diverted his attention from addressing foreign influence and imperialism, which many Chinese believed were the true threats.¹⁵⁸ In addition, the majority of the population suffered from extreme poverty promulgating a reformist movement within China.¹⁵⁹ Hence, the reformers, primarily made up of workers and peasants, believed social reform was vital and consistent with socialism in eradicating poverty, exploitation, gender inequality, and feudalism, all seen as consequences of imperialism.¹⁶⁰ Additionally, reformers believed that in conjunction with social reform, national unity and independence from foreign influence were necessary before China could emerge from a century of humiliation as a regional power. As a result, Vladimir Lenin and later Joseph Stalin realized the significance of a potential communist neighbor in China and emboldened CCP members to include the People's Liberation Army with support and equipment despite initially supporting the Nationalists.¹⁶¹ Many communist Chinese, to include the Soviet leadership, rationalized that a unified China based on the institution of nationalism would lead to

¹⁵⁷Wasserstrom, 47-48.

¹⁵⁸Ibid.

¹⁵⁹Anna Cienciala, "Chapter 9: The Chinese Revolution and Chinese Communism to 1949," <http://acienciala.faculty.ku.edu/communistnationssince1917/ch9.html> (accessed March 13, 2014).

¹⁶⁰Ibid.

¹⁶¹Ibid.

the fall of imperialism or “the highest stage of capitalism.”¹⁶² Thus, communism became synonymous with nationalism. Arguably, the CCP defeated the KMT in several decisive battles seizing key cities because of the unrestrained support provided by the Soviets during the final stages of the Chinese Civil War. Nevertheless, once the CCP ascended to power, the government immediately began embracing Chinese history in order to tap into feelings of “national unity” and maintain regime legitimacy.”¹⁶³ This fact is extremely important to understand because identifying the preferences, whether nationalistic, traditionalist, conservative, or liberal, of the various actors in Chinese society provides insight in potential motivations. Understanding Chinese preferences and motivations assist those in political, diplomatic, information, and military arenas in forecasting the behavior of their Chinese counterparts in the realm of international relations. This reality resonates now more than ever with the advent of the South China Sea conflict.

CHINESE MOTIVATIONS AND PROJECTIONS

Spratly Islands

The Chinese elite and government at large have an affinity for adopting and at times revising history to achieve certain ends in diplomatic and foreign policy issues like the territorial disputes in the SCS.¹⁶⁴ In fact, the current claim on the Spratly Islands in the SCS is based on Yuan dynasty (1279AD-138AD) and Qing dynasty expansionism that began with the exploits led by the Mongol conqueror Genghis Khan in the early 1200s.¹⁶⁵ The Chinese assert that under the Yuan dynasty China experienced its greatest expansion under Genghis Khan because when he

¹⁶²Ibid.

¹⁶³Mohan Malik, “Historical Fiction: China’s South China Sea Claims,” *World Affairs* (May-June 2013), <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/historical-fiction-china%E2%80%99s-south-china-sea-claims> (accessed March 13, 2014).

¹⁶⁴Ibid.

¹⁶⁵Ibid.

conquered China proper, China became a part of the already existing and vast Mongol empire.¹⁶⁶ Revisionists claim that not only was Khan “Chinese” but also so were the ethnic Mongols, Tibetans, and Manchus and correlating territories encompassed within his reign.¹⁶⁷ This historic claim has fed more palpable modern-day claims like Chiang Kai-shek’s nationalist government’s eleven-dash line map, issued in 1947, which encapsulates the Spratly Islands and various other islands in the SCS as a means of increasing its buffer space with surrounding competitors.¹⁶⁸ However, after the CCP expelled the KMT from mainland China, they adopted the claim for themselves in 1949 and revised it to a nine-line map, excluding the Gulf of Tonkin.¹⁶⁹ The claim later gained traction in 1951 when the Chinese premier Zhou Enlai issued a statement during treaty negotiations with Japan that the Spratly Islands were Chinese sovereign territory.¹⁷⁰ The issue however, arises in the fact that international law, like UNCLOS, only recognizes “historic water” in specific cases like bays that have been under national jurisdiction and not open waters like oceans and other vast bodies of water.¹⁷¹ Despite the apparent disparity in views between the international community and China in its historic claims, the Chinese elite continues to capitalize on Sino-centrism by using history as a form of statecraft to mobilize the masses towards nationalism and to gain acceptance in pushing its borders outwards in an attempt to protect the core.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁶Ibid.

¹⁶⁷Ibid.

¹⁶⁸Ibid.

¹⁶⁹Ibid.

¹⁷⁰Ibid.

¹⁷¹Ibid.

¹⁷²Ibid.

Identity

Key to determining how China conducts itself in international relations, and specifically in the SCS, is evaluating its identity, which is an amalgamation of its traditions, attitudes, and habits of mind.¹⁷³ China's identity or internal model is complex because of the multitude of actors therein. However, for the purposes of this study the main actors under scrutiny are the elite characterized by the communist party leaders, the PLAN leadership, and the population who are increasingly becoming more nationalistic. The elite and PLAN leadership have taken Chinese history and identity and made it malleable and therefore useable in order to further their gains internationally as well as regionally which has made China's narrative inconsistent with its actions in the SCS. As mentioned above, the official state narrative is one of "peaceful development" which was initiated under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping and promulgated with economic and social reforms.¹⁷⁴ In order to solidify its proclamation of peaceful development in the region despite its impending rise, the elite espoused the ancient expeditions of Zheng He during the early 15th century in which his legendary "treasure fleet" travelled throughout Southeast and South Asia not to conquer territory, with his technologically superior fleet, but to promote trade and diplomacy.¹⁷⁵ Furthermore, his peaceful encounters with trading partners are glorified as an exhibition of a strong China, in relation to its neighbors, practicing "peaceful benevolence" to its much weaker neighbors.¹⁷⁶ Nevertheless, Zheng He's exploits have an internal purpose as well. The elites, to move the populace from being land-centric, are using Zheng He as a vehicle to orient them to more sea-centric and far-shore objectives and goals.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³Toshi Yoshihara and James Holmes, *Red Star Over the Pacific: China's Rise and the Challenge to U.S. Maritime Strategy* (University Park: Naval Institute Press, 2013), 176.

¹⁷⁴Adler, 9.

¹⁷⁵Yoshihara and Holmes, 181.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., 185.

¹⁷⁷Ibid., 182.

Those objectives and goals foment support for the communist regime by “sustaining the nation’s impressive economic performance to provide the blessings of economic development” by securing the sea-lanes vital to its economy.¹⁷⁸ The sea-lanes, the regime realized, must remain unrestrained for both its exports and imports because it is a predominately manufacturing economy and has become a net oil importer since 1993.¹⁷⁹ However, the PLAN and its leadership have hijacked this ideological movement, based on its historical identity, and used it to justify both their goals for modernizing the PLAN and belligerent actions in the SCS.

Economics and Mahan

The PLAN, in seeking to use the regime’s rationale for ensuring and maintaining commerce, has aligned itself with the principles and concepts theorized by the American Alfred Mahan (1840-1914). Most nations use their navies to ensure commercial success and “establish the conditions that make commerce on the sea possible.”¹⁸⁰ To accomplish this, sea power had to be attained through “secure commerce, by political measures conducive to military or naval strength.”¹⁸¹ This idea of sea power, postulated by Mahan and embraced implicitly by the PLAN leadership, was to guarantee access to ports, geographical choke points, and SLOCs. Only through unfettered access could there be commerce and with commerce came the means to generate wealth and national power, essentially a win-win for all parties in Chinese society.¹⁸² Despite the status quo of US sea power safeguarding access in the region, the PLAN realized its vulnerability if the US decided to limit or deny its access as a retaliatory measure or due to a US

¹⁷⁸Ibid., 173.

¹⁷⁹Ibid., 181.

¹⁸⁰Seth Cropsey and Arthur Milikh, “Mahan’s Naval Strategy: China Learned It. Will America Forget It?,” *World Affairs* (March April 2012), <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/mahan%E2%80%99s-naval-strategy-china-learned-it-will-america-forget-it> (accessed March 13, 2014).

¹⁸¹Yoshihara and Holmes, 181.

¹⁸²Ibid., 22.

policy change.¹⁸³ Furthermore, with recent budgetary constraints imposed by the US Congress, the United States has begun reducing its military and naval expenditures decreasing its ability to effectively maintain commerce along SLOCs.¹⁸⁴ As a result, the PLAN has decided to take measures into its own hands and embodied the Mahanian concept of overbearing sea power.¹⁸⁵ Mahan postulated that overbearing sea power was the use of warships and naval weaponry to take command of the sea by,

[D]riving the enemy's flag from it, or allows it to appear only as a fugitive; and which, by controlling the great common, closes the highways by which commerce moves to and from the enemy's shores.¹⁸⁶

To achieve this end, Mahan developed his three "pillars" of production, merchant and naval shipping, and overseas markets and bases.¹⁸⁷ It is evident in Mahan's "pillars," he prized commerce over the more military aspects of sea power; however he does concentrate and weigh efforts towards naval power.¹⁸⁸ The two pillars of naval fleet and basing correlate with the PLAN's efforts to modernize its fleet and expand the southern border of China by seizing shoals and islands in the SCS. The accomplishments the PLAN has made in modernizing its fleet are in alignment with Mahan's insistence of building a large navy in order to attain command of the sea.¹⁸⁹ However, the PLAN's continuing efforts to guarantee access while simultaneously denying access to regional actors requires further analysis through the lens of Mahanian theory. China is ensuring access by securing its maritime periphery or "near seas" and once sufficiently

¹⁸³Ibid.

¹⁸⁴Ibid., 33.

¹⁸⁵Ibid., 22.

¹⁸⁶Ibid.

¹⁸⁷Ibid.

¹⁸⁸Ibid.

¹⁸⁹Ibid., 51.

attained will begin to expand beyond its periphery, like the Spratly Islands.¹⁹⁰ In concert with Mahanian theory, the CCP wants to subtly acquire “territories useful for commerce, territorial management, or as a preparation for the possibility of determined commercial competition.”¹⁹¹ The political elite in China prefer the indirect and passive method of acquiring territory because like Mahan they understand that war at sea with current or potential trading partner was detrimental to commerce and bad for business especially with the present condition of globalization.¹⁹² Unfortunately, advocates for a stronger PLAN have taken Mahan’s principles out of context and used them to stoke feelings of nationalism and increase its budget, which may lead to a major confrontation with another sea power.¹⁹³ Advocates like General Liu Yuan and Major General Luo Yuan, emboldened by nationalists, have gone against the regime’s call for restraint and endorsed the use of force to wage a war to seize territory claimed by China.¹⁹⁴ The current crisis in the SCS is a result of the audacious actions by the PLAN to seize territory in order to develop naval facilities and supporting bases in preparation for lethal and non-lethal actions against military and commercial adversaries respectively.¹⁹⁵

OPERATIONAL APPROACH

Operational planners, in the context of an emerging China, must craft an operational approach for the SCS that delicately deals with an opaque regime that seemingly acquiesces an increasingly belligerent PLAN. Furthermore, the operational approach operational planners devise must address the current administration’s goals for the region. The Obama administration

¹⁹⁰Ibid., 24.

¹⁹¹Cropsey and Milikh.

¹⁹²Yoshihara and Holmes, 29.

¹⁹³Ibid., 51.

¹⁹⁴Joseph Nye, “Our Pacific Predicament,” *The American Interest*, <http://www.the-american-interest.com/articles/2013/02/12/our-pacific-predicament/> (accessed March 13, 2014).

¹⁹⁵Cropsey and Milikh.

desires a SCS strategy that achieves long-term security and stability based on regional actors abiding by international laws and norms, freedom of navigation along SLOCs, and the strengthening, or establishment if needed, of international organizations for conflict resolution based on multilateral dialogue.¹⁹⁶ Therefore, a holistic operational approach needs components that effectively address the trinity of the government, populace, and military posited by Carl von Clausewitz over a century and a half ago. The meta-agent of China, undoubtedly complex, becomes more manageable when analyzing through this Clausewitzian lens. The operational approach this study proposes considers the complex operational environment and encompasses several options that are not mutually exclusive allowing execution in tandem, concurrently, or integrated. Additionally, the options consider the inherent risk, a critical factor among many military commanders and diplomats.

Diplomacy

One option relies solely on diplomatic efforts and dialogue within the bounds of an international organization, such as the officially recognized ASEAN. This option is predicated on increased US involvement in the region and participation as one of ASEAN's dialogue partners. Furthermore, this option rests on the United States, acting as a regional leader, resolving claimant disputes between the Philippines, Vietnam, and Malaysia.¹⁹⁷ Successful resolution, which is more likely absent a domineering China, has several implications. Consequently, a resolution would allow ASEAN to speak with one voice to China in future dialogues while subsequently providing a legal precedent for maritime international law.¹⁹⁸ In addition, US success in reconciling the disputes between a conglomeration of the Philippines, Vietnam, and Malaysia would reestablish

¹⁹⁶Michael McDevitt, "The South China Sea and U.S. Policy Options," *American Foreign Policy Interests* 35 no. 4 (2013): 183.

¹⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 184.

¹⁹⁸*Ibid.*

US leadership. The United States leveraging from a much stronger position, can highlight the frailties and incongruence with UNCLOS in China's SCS "historical claim" to the international community.¹⁹⁹ Conceivably, this will cause the CCP to relook its policy towards sovereignty in the SCS amid new international pressure. Despite being diplomatically and information intensive, this option does not pose a significant threat to US forces. However, if the United States is not successful in resolving the tripartite dispute between the Philippines, Vietnam, and Malaysia, the legitimacy of ASEAN as a viable and worthwhile regional organization could falter as well as the reputation of the United States.

Populations

The recent and planned US actions in the SCS are perceived by the Chinese populace as brazenly interventionist with aims to contain and emasculate Chinese influence in the region.²⁰⁰ Operational planners possess minimal capacity to effect a change in this perception, especially in competition with state-run media outlets like *Xinhua*. Therefore, a narrative that dispels falsehoods about US intentions for the "rebalance" or the highly controversial Air-Sea Battle concept must be enduring, pliable for multiple audiences in Chinese society, and precursory in order to gain and maintain an advantage over contesting narratives. The narrative needs to highlight that the rebalance is not solely a military reaction to a threatening China. In addition, the narrative should focus on opportunities like the shared outcome for regional economic prosperity endowed by secure SLOCs. The shared security concerns provide several opportunities for increased bilateral engagements between the US and China that could ease tensions and promote security cooperation. A significant risk resides in contradictory actions to the proposed narrative. Military actions can occur arguably with increasing intensity, however, a narrative that explains

¹⁹⁹Ibid., 185.

²⁰⁰Ely Ratner, "Rebalancing to Asia with an Insecure China," *The Washington Quarterly* (Spring 2013): 22.

the intent as solely furthering security concerns should precede them. Failure to do so could damage US integrity and increase suspicion of military motivations in the SCS.

Military

Consequently, US planners desiring to link security narratives with actions have several feasible and sustainable options that can also be mutually acceptable to the Chinese. Understanding China's interests for security in the region, planners can monopolize on this opportunity by increasing military to military engagements through exercises and combined anti-piracy missions. Increased interaction in this fashion alleviates major concerns within the Chinese polity. The first concern is the trepidation that the United States is seeking a hegemonic status in the SCS. However, the reassurances that combined exercises provide (increased transparency, improved communications, and cultural understanding) counter these hegemonic fears. The second concern based on the fear that the United States would be unable to sustain SLOC security because of a decreasing military budget finds a resolution in anti-piracy activities. The United States' commitment to freedom of navigation has been an enduring pursuit as a bedrock of US maritime objectives. Therefore, it is hard to imagine the United States conceding security based on austere budgets. Freedom of navigation in the SCS ensures regional stability as interruption could impede 600 metric million tons of cargo totaling losses of \$3 billion per year for regional countries.²⁰¹ For that reason, the United States is unlikely to allow an interruption which arguably manifested itself in the shift of capabilities and resources from the Middle East to the Asia-Pacific region. However, the risk to other theaters is likely to present salient security concerns, which the United States must mitigate with coordinated efforts with its maritime partners. Outside of these proposed options, planners should avoid actions that seem unilateral or belligerent. Currently, the

²⁰¹John Noer, "Maritime Economic Interests and the Sea Lines of Communication Through the South China Sea: The Value of Trade in Southeast Asia," Center for Naval Analyses Library, <https://www.cna.org/research/1996/maritime-economic-interests-sea-lines> (accessed April 1, 2014).

US Navy has two Carrier Strike Groups and two Amphibious Ready Groups operating in the US 7th Fleet and 3rd Fleet Areas of Responsibility.²⁰² An increased presence, with another Carrier Strike Group or Amphibious Ready Group in the Pacific or SCS specifically could inadvertently increase tensions especially if they are perceived by China as loitering with no real security purpose (i.e., combined military exercise, combating piracy, or transiting through). Another action planners must refrain from engaging in is amphibious training exercises under the guise of partner training. Increased US Marine presence in Southeast Asia and Australia, a likely outcome due to ongoing negotiations with partner nations for both permanent and temporary basing rights, has the potential to escalate tensions with China if the United States is perceived as training with a claimant nation in preparation for seizing disputed territory. Lastly, with popular sentiment forecasting China establishing another Air Defense Identification Zone in the SCS, US planners should not allow China to control the narrative. It is imperative that the explanation to the international community illustrates China's unilateral actions in establishing an Air Defense Identification Zone over the SCS will only escalate tensions. Moreover, the argument should advance that these tensions can only be resolved by a negotiated solution through an international organization between concerned countries. Therefore, US operational planners inundating the SCS airspace with surveillance platforms, vice surface and sub-surface surveillance platforms, will only exacerbate the situation and potentially expedite China's efforts in establishing a SCS Air Defense Identification Zone. Ultimately, planners have very limited military options that lack significant risk to escalating US-China relations, however if the actions are preceded by correlating narrative and increase bilateral interaction the outcome of a stable, prosperous, multi-polar region is attainable.

²⁰²STRATFOR, "U.S. Naval Update Map: April 3, 2014," <http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/us-naval-update-map-april-3-2014> (accessed April 3, 2014).

CONCLUSION

In summary, this study attempts to answer the conceptual question of what to think with respect to the conflict in the SCS in order to help operational planners understand the strategic context surrounding the dispute. The ultimate aim is to provide a useful tool for forecasting Chinese behavior despite the opaqueness of the decision-making process in the CCP and PLAN. The analysis primarily focused on the Chinese psyche and the impact the “century of humiliation” plays in shaping Chinese operations in the SCS. Although the literature used sparingly referred to the century of humiliation, it became apparent that history plays a major role in the actions taken by the Chinese in the SCS. Hence, the origin of the CCP’s SCS territorial claim from the KMT whose claim was founded on the ancient exploits of Genghis Kahn. Furthermore, the recent resurgence occurring in China can be attributed to the desire to return to its epoch of dominance as the cultural center of Asia during the Zhou dynasty.

Confucianism, more of an ideology than a religion, lost its prominence in Chinese society during Mao’s Cultural Revolution but regained momentum with the ascension of Deng Xiaoping to power and the subsequent economic and social reforms. Most of the reforms manifested themselves into policy. The policies fostered the elites’ desire for “peaceful development” and cooperation amongst its neighbors. In fact, diplomacy took a pacifist and defensive approach reminiscent of Zheng He’s peaceful expeditions during the early 15th century.²⁰³ The regime’s narrative is that long-term success depends on “peaceful, maritime commercial relations.”²⁰⁴ Despite this being the narrative endorsed by the Chinese government, it is increasing counteracted by aggressive actions of the PLAN in the SCS.

The PLAN, like the CCP, has used history to its advantage as well. However, history has been used to incite nationalism among the populace, which the PLAN sees as its base for support

²⁰³Yoshihara and Holmes, 171.

²⁰⁴Ibid., 186.

in taking aggressive action in the SCS in seizing claimed territory. The PLAN's assertiveness manifested themselves out of the teachings of Mahan and the emphasis he placed on securing SLOCs for commerce. The PLAN took Mahan's two pillars of strengthening the navy and acquiring territory for the purposes of forward bases to justify their actions despite the fact that Mahan held the importance of commerce through peaceful relations in greater esteem. The PLAN's future existence depends on the continued vivacity of the Chinese economy and therefore must secure its SLOCs in the SCS by its own volition irrespective of the status quo established by US sea power. Although, the PLAN's motivations and therefore means are divergent from the CCP's, opportunities for successful US policies exist because the overall Chinese end state is the legitimacy of the regime based on economic prosperity. Knowing the motivations, preferences, and end state of the CCP and PLAN in particular will assist US planners in improving their prospects of responding appropriately in Sino-American relations in the SCS.

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