THE RISE OF CHINA AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE NATIONAL INTEREST OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

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LEGON
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that, apart from the sources cited in this work which are duly acknowledged, this study is the result of an original research conducted under the supervision of Dr Boni Yao Gebe and that this research has not been presented either in part or in whole for any other purpose.

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(Student)

Date Date
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Acquasie Family for their unflinching support.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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<tr>
<td>A2/AD</td>
<td>Anti-Access and Area-Denial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADIZ</td>
<td>Air Defense Identification Zone</td>
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<td>ADMM</td>
<td>ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting</td>
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<td>APEC</td>
<td>Asia Pacific Economic Community</td>
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<td>ARF</td>
<td>ASEAN Regional Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASBM</td>
<td>Anti-Ship Ballistic Missile</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of South East Asian Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCP</td>
<td>Chinese Communist Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPC</td>
<td>Country of Particular Concern</td>
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<tr>
<td>DPRK</td>
<td>Democratic People’s Republic of Korea</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECS</td>
<td>East China Sea</td>
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<tr>
<td>EEZ</td>
<td>Exclusive Economic Zone</td>
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<tr>
<td>FDI</td>
<td>Foreign Direct Investment</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>KWP</td>
<td>Korean Workers Party</td>
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<td>NPT</td>
<td>Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLA</td>
<td>People’s Liberation Army</td>
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<td>PLAN</td>
<td>People’s Liberation Army Navy</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRC</td>
<td>Peoples Republic of China</td>
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<td>ROC</td>
<td>Republic of China/Taiwan</td>
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<tr>
<td>RCEP</td>
<td>Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership</td>
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<tr>
<td>ROK</td>
<td>Republic of Korea/South Korea</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCS</td>
<td>South China Sea</td>
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<td>SIPRI</td>
<td>Stockholm International Peace Research Institute</td>
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<td>SLOC</td>
<td>Sea Lanes of Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>TPP</td>
<td>Trans Pacific Partnership</td>
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<td>TRA</td>
<td>Taiwan Relations Act</td>
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<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<td>WMD</td>
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ABSTRACT

After 30 years of rapid economic growth, China’s economy is currently the second largest in the world after the United States. With economic success, China has developed significant global strategic clout. It is also engaged in an ambitious military modernization drive, including efforts to develop extended range power projection capabilities. Given these developments, the rise of China is having significant impact on global politics. Nowhere is this evident than within the Asia Pacific Region, where China and the US have longstanding interests. This remarkable transformation has aroused deep – rooted suspicion that China’s newly acquired capabilities and influence would challenge US interests in the Asia Pacific region. This dissertation examines this assertion, by first, identifying some of the national interests of the US in the Asia Pacific region. Secondly by analyzing the implications of the rise of China on US interests in the Asia Pacific region. It concludes by pointing out that China’s rise will negatively affect US interests in the Asia Pacific region, making Sino-America confrontation in the Asia Pacific region increasingly inevitable. Finally, it recommends that greater transparency in military spending, effective confidence building measures and intensification of negotiations between the US and China would help mitigate the possibility of conflict.
CHAPTER ONE
RESEARCH DESIGN

1.0 Background to the Research Problem

The rise of China from a poor, stagnant country to a major economic power within a time span of only 28 years is usually christened by scholars as one of the greatest economic accomplishments in contemporary times.\(^1\) Since 1979 when economic reforms began under the auspices of Deng Xiaoping, China’s real gross domestic product (GDP) has grown at an average annual rate of nearly 10 percent. Statistics available indicate that to date about 500 million people in China have been raised out of abject poverty. China has emerged as a major global economic powerhouse. According to Morrison, China is currently the world’s largest manufacturer, exporter of merchandise and foreign exchange holder.\(^2\) Blazej also notes that these economic achievements, coupled with progress in science and technology, have also motivated China to embark on a comprehensive transformation of its military.\(^3\) The testing of its stealth aircraft J20, the recent showcasing of its first aircraft carrier, and the startling revelation of the Song Class submarine during the US Naval exercise signify a significant growth in its military capability. According to the Pentagon’s 2012 report to Congress on military and security developments involving China, “China’s official military budget rose to an average of 11.8% annually in inflation-adjusted terms over the period from 2000 to 2011. In 2014, the Chinese government official defense spending stood at 808.23 billion Yuan ($131.57 billion), a 12.2% increase from the previous year making it the second highest military spender after the US.”\(^4\) China according to Teather, is now the second largest economy in the world and a major military power in the Asia Pacific Region.\(^5\)

As a state's capabilities expand significantly, its leaders have a tendency to define their interests more broadly and to seek a greater amount of influence over what is happening
around them. Emerging powers seek not only to protect their frontiers but to reach out beyond them, taking measures to ensure access to markets, resources, and transportation routes; to protect their citizens abroad, support their friends and allies, and propagate their values and generally, to have what they deem to be their legitimate say in the affairs of their region and of the broader world.

Nowhere is the rise of China felt more than within the Asia Pacific region. This is a region in which the United States and China relate directly to one another. The United States has been deeply engaged in the Asia-Pacific region for more than two centuries, and has enduring interests in the region. Significant among them are the preservation of free navigation in the South China Sea, denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, peaceful resolution of Taiwan’s status, maintenance of economic openness, maintaining a balance of power in Asia pacific favorable to the United States, promoting American political, religious, and other values in Asia and the peaceful resolution of maritime disputes.⁶

As the dominant power (US) in the Asia Pacific region in the post-1945 period, the rise of China presents a plethora of expectations about how the US interests in the Asia Pacific region will be affected by an increasingly powerful China.⁷

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Over the past few years, there has been heated debate among scholars and political leaders over the potential challenge that China’s rise poses to the international system. While some are optimistic about the emergence of China, others remain pessimistic. In his article *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, John Mearsheimer points out that if China’s economy continues expanding at a rapid rate, it will surpass the US as the largest economy and would
use its wealth to modernize its military in pursuit of regional hegemony with considerable potential for armed confrontation. Former President of China Hu Jintao on the other hand has described the rise of China as “peaceful” (heping jueqi). He pointed out that the rise of China will be instrumental in enhancing global security, promoting peaceful trade and addressing transnational challenges.

Yet, no study has probed the rise of China and its implications for the US in the context of divergent or complementary national interests in the Asia Pacific region. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to explore how the rise of China would affect US interests in the Asia Pacific region. Insight gained from this study would be useful in ascertaining whether the relationship between the US and China would be confrontational or otherwise in the Asia Pacific region.

1.3 Research Question

i. What constitutes the interests of the United States of America and China in the Asia Pacific Region?

ii. What are the implications of China’s rise for the interests of the United States of America in the Asia Pacific Region?

iii. Are there conflicting national interests between China and the United States in the Asia Pacific Region?

iv. Is conflict between the United States of America and China inevitable in the Asia Pacific Region?
1.4 Objectives of the Research

The general objective of the study is to find out how China’s meteoric rise will affect US interests in the Asia Pacific Region. However, the specific objectives of the research are as follows:

i. To identify the national interests of the United States of America and China in the Asia Pacific Region;

ii. To identify the implications of China’s rise on the national interests United States of America in the Asia Pacific Region;

iii. To examine whether there are conflicting national interests in the Asia Pacific Region between China and the United States of America;

iv. To ascertain whether conflict between the United States of America and China inevitable in the Asia Pacific Region?

1.5 Rationale of the Study

China and the United States are the two most powerful states in the world, and the relationship between these two countries is clearly important for international security and development. The nature of this bilateral tie has far reaching ramifications for the international system. If the relationship between these two economic giants is confrontational, then the whole 21st century will be borne by confrontation. It is hoped that the findings of this study will be valuable to policymakers as well as the academia as a whole. It will also serve as valuable information for further research.
1.6 Scope of the Study

The study basically focuses on how the rapid rise of China over the past three decades will affect US interests in the Asia Pacific region.

1.7 Hypothesis

The rise of China will negatively affect US national interests in the Asia Pacific Region.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

The concept of national interest is used as the framework for this study. Several scholars have attempted to define the concept. According to William Bloom “the national interest is that which can be perceived as being part of national identity and thus, is capable of triggering national mass mobilization to defend or enhance it.”\(^\text{10}\) Joseph Frankel also asserts that “the national interest constitutes the purpose for national action, whether in domestic or foreign policy.”\(^\text{11}\) Daniel Papp defines national interest as “a constant set of national objectives than a changing approximation of what the leaders of a particular or other significant individuals or groups within a country view as important.”\(^\text{12}\) In other words, the national interest is considered as concrete values or objectives to be attained by the state to enhance its status or place in the interstate system. Yan, in his book *Zhongguo Guojia Liyi Fenxi (An Analysis of China’s National Interests)*, defines national interest as the “common material and spiritual need of all the people of a nation state. In material terms, a nation needs security and development. In spiritual terms, a nation needs respect and recognition from the international community.”\(^\text{13}\)
Hans Morgenthau, observed that a country’s foreign policy should be motivated by her national interest rather than utopian and dangerous moralistic, legalistic, and ideological reasons. Morgenthau equates the national interest with the pursuit of power in the realm of international relations. In his opinion, a country’s national interest can be reduced to the protection of the country’s territorial integrity and the defense of the country’s political and cultural identity against encroachment by other nation-states. Morgenthau described these protections as a “necessary element” of national interest. In addition to these necessary elements, he also observed that there are other elements of national interest. These include the personal idiosyncrasy of leaders, public opinion, sectional interest and partisan politics.

According to Stephen Krasner, for any particular issue to be considered a country’s national interest, it must meet three basic standards. These standards include the fact that the issue must seek to serve general societal goal. Secondly, the policy should be a long-term policy that will meet the aspirations of posterity, but not only for short term benefit. Lastly, the policy must seek to put national security and economic development as its paramount objective.

This concept has been criticized severally. It is perceived as an abstract construct, highly ambiguous and only serves the interests of the ruling elite. In the history of international politics, evidence abounds of leaders who have taken their countries into unjust and unnecessary wars in the name of national interest. George W. Bush of America, Saddam Hussein of Iraq and Adolf Hitler of Germany all took their countries to war in the name of national interest. Elmer Plischke described the concept of national interest as “elusive” as it is very difficult to identify what really constitutes national interest. Rosenau argues that the concept of national interest is rooted in values, and therefore is very difficult to employ as a
potent tool for thorough analysis. Therefore, Politicians discuss their ambitions in terms of national interest and are inclined to claim that their goals are the national interest. When policy makers take decisions in relation to other states, be it that they are entering into an alliance, going to war, joining a regional grouping or enforcing economic sanctions on other states, they claim the actions to be in the national interest of the respective countries. A country’s foreign policy is driven by a set of principles and objectives that the state intend to actualize in the course of her relation with other countries.

Rising states tend to pursue extensive national interests by taking actions to ensure access to new markets sources, resources, transportation routes; to protect their citizens abroad, support their allies, and disseminate their values and generally, to have what they deem to be their legitimate say in the affairs of their region and the world at large. Such undertakings tend to foment conflict.

1.9 Literature Review

In his article “China’s Unpeaceful Rise” John J. Mearsheimer assessed the emergence of China and its implications for international security, and stated clearly that the rise of China will not be peaceful. He observed that as China’s economy continues its impressive record over the next few decades, China and the United States are bound to engage in an extreme security contest with significant potential for armed confrontations.

He used the theory of offensive realism to explain the future of Sino – America relations noting that the ideal situation for every great power is to become the only regional hegemon. He added that not only do states abhor rising hegemons but work to prevent the emergence of rising hegemons. Mearsheimer pointed out that four great powers tried to become hegemons in the 20th century. These are imperial Germany (1900-1918), imperial Japan (1931-1945),
Nazi Germany (1933-1945) and Soviet Union (1945-1989). In each of these attempts the United States played a key role in defeating those aspiring hegemons.

In essence he asserted that the United States will react to the emergence of China the same way it behaved towards previous aspiring hegemons. He hinted that the US does not accept peer competitors and it is, therefore, determined to remain the world’s only regional hegemon. Mearsheimer expressed pessimism about China’s rise as it can precipitate intense rivalry with the US. He noted that China and the United States are destined to be adversaries as China’s power grows.

Mearsheimer amplifies the prospects for conflict with regards to the future of Sino-America relations. He fails to recognize the fact that there are also some significant shared interests between China and the United States of America such as denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Also, the prediction of a dooms day scenario in Sino- America relations is mainly based on historical evidence of the relationship between rising powers and dominant powers. Again, he did not use the concept of national interest as a standard for analyzing what the rise of China portends for the United States of America. The concept of national interest however is very important in this discourse, because it is a catalyst that drives foreign policy of states. This article is relevant to the research because it affirms the fact that China and the United States are likely to engage in intense strategic competition with considerable potential for war.

In his article “Does China’s Rise Threaten the United States?” Jinghao Zhou argues that China’s rise has far reaching impact on every facet of Western societies. He noted that power transitions usually come with international conflicts as emerging powers desire to get more
authority in the global system, while declining powers are anxious of losing their dominant position. Therefore, conflict between an emerging power and a declining power is inevitable.

He maintains that China’s economic rise does not necessarily pose any threat to the United States, however, the collapse of China’s political system would inevitably disturb the global peace, particularly for the developed countries. He pointed out that in order to make any judgment whether China's rapid rise threatens the United States, it is essential to scrutinize the fundamental arguments pertaining to the China threat theory.

The first argument he advanced is that the U.S. economy surpasses the Chinese economy by some margin and it will need a long time to overtake the United States. Thus, he claims that there is no solid basis to the assertion that China's economic development threatens Western societies. Secondly, he pointed out that China is actually rising within the Western-oriented system which is the product of prescient U.S. leadership and the finest social and political structure in the world, so it is very strong and complicated to defeat it. He added that the western-oriented model is important to China, since it has already started to facilitate China's development. Hence, it is in China’s interest to work with this system instead of striving to defeat it. Thirdly, he noted that China is not strong enough to challenge U.S. military power. China spends only one-eighth of the U.S. military budget. Although China has nuclear-weapons, the Chinese army is still badly equipped. Fourthly, he asserts that in order for the Communist Party of China (CCP) to survive in the twenty-first century, China must make peace with the international society and develop a harmonious society at home. Fifthly, he observes there are many common interests between China and the United States, and that in order to avoid a disastrous war between China and the United States, it is very important to build up a relationship of trust between the two countries. He advised that the United States
should not block China from becoming a powerful country, but to understand China and learn to live with a rising China.

Although he mentioned that China and the United States of America have common interests, his analysis of the threat that China poses to the United States of America is not based on divergent national interests between the two countries but on the China threat theory. This research seeks to fill that gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the implications of the rise of China on the national interests of the US in the Asia Pacific region as a basis for forecasting what portends for the future in terms of international security.

Zheng Bijian in his article “China’s “Peaceful Rise” to Great Power Status”21 examines China’s rise and its implication for international security. He noted that China has charted a new strategic course that befits its national conditions, while complying with the tides of history. Zheng recounted how some emerging powers in modern history have exploited other countries resources through invasion, colonization and even large scale wars of aggression. He also maintains that China’s rise has been driven by resources acquired through peaceful means.

Zheng noted that in pursuit of the goal of rising in peace, Chinese leadership has strived to improve China’s rapport with all nations of the world. In his analysis, he pointed out that China will not follow the trail of Germany leading up to the First World War and the example of Germany and Japan culminating into the Second World War, when countries viciously squandered resources in pursuit of hegemony. He added that China will not follow the path of great powers which competed for global supremacy during the Cold War. Instead, China sought to rise above ideological differences to struggle for peace, development and collaboration with all countries of the world.
Zheng observed that China’s peaceful emergence will further unlock its economy offering a vast market for other countries in the world. This, he noted, will provide improved opportunities rather than posing a danger to the international system. He also maintains that China does not aspire to be a hegemon in the international system. Rather, China advocates for a new international political and economic order that could be accomplished through steady reforms and democratization of international relations. He concluded by stating that China’s development is hinged on world peace, and that is what its development will buttress.

Although, he argues that China’s rise will not be disruptive compared to past rising powers, the focus of his analysis was how China’s economic rise will foster global order, however, he fails to address the implications of China’s military rise or modernization which in itself could disrupt the world order.

In his article “Peaceful Rise: China's Modernization Trajectory” Cui Liru argues that China intends to realize its national development and modernization through a peaceful path by integrating as well as participating in the existing international system. He added that China will not pursue its modernization through violence in a zero-sum game like Germany or Japan during the Second World War, but through a peaceful course born of a win-win strategy for common prosperity by integrating into or accepting and participating in the existing international system. He observed that China’s peaceful rise over the past three decades has yielded tremendous achievements. He added that China has metamorphosed into the world’s most significant emerging economy by building up a market economy, providing its citizens with moderate prosperity.
Cui has narrowed his focus to the economic rise of China and has blatantly ignored the corresponding military modernization it is engendering. He thus did not do a holistic appraisal of the rise of China.

John Ikenberry in his article “The Rise of China and the Future of the West. Can the Liberal System Survive?” analyses the rise of China and its implication on the liberal system led by the United States. He described the rise of China as undisputedly the great drama of the 21st Century. To him, realists hold the view that as China becomes more powerful and the US position erodes, China will utilize its growing power to remake international rules and institutions to go with its interest. The declining hegemon (US) will begin to see China as a budding security threat. The resultant effect will be tension, distrust, and conflict.

He, however, maintains that the US/China power transition can be different from those of the earlier period because the international order that China faced is primarily different from those (international order) that past rising states encountered. To him, the western order has been successful because of three major defining characteristics that sets it apart from past world orders.

First, he noted that the Western order is built around a set of laws and norms of nondiscrimination and market liberalism, which creates the ambience for rising states to pursue their expanding economic and political aspirations within it. This, he noted, contrasted with the imperial systems of the past. Secondly, the character of the leadership of the western order is coalition – based, contrasting markedly with past orders which tend to be controlled by a single state. The stakeholders of the contemporary Western order include a combination of powers arrayed around the United States, which is an important distinction from past
exclusionary orders. Thirdly, he noted that the western order has all-encompassing rules and institutions which are broadly endorsed.

Ikenberry recounts that after the World War II, the US did not simply institute itself as the superpower but it created universal institutions that promoted the participation and incorporation of both traditional major powers and newly self-governing countries.

He concluded that although the global position of the US may be weakening, the international system the US created will be dominant in the 21st century in the face of China’s ascendency. In his assessment, he noted that not all power transitions in the past have led to the overturn of world order, citing the case of the United Kingdom and the United States of America in the early period of the twentieth century. However, he did not explain the reasons behind the peaceful power transition between the United States and the United Kingdom. Whether or not it was because of shared interests, was not mentioned. This article contrary to most publications provides a vivid picture on how China’s rising influence will not affect the liberal system created by the US.

In his article “The United States and the Rise of China: Implications for the Long Haul” Robert Art analyses the implications of the rise of China on the United States of America and argues that the rise of China will not be different from the ones that occurred in the past hundred years, involving political tension and conflict. He observed that in times gone by, dominant powers have not enthusiastically given up their spot as being number one in the international system to emerging powers. Again, he posits that rising powers have always demanded the fruits to which they believe are akin to their growing power, adding that there is no reason to expect that things will be exceptional with regard to China and the United
States of America. He further argues that political tension is not all that hold for the future of US/China relationship, but there are also some significant shared interests and hence, basis for collaboration in both the medium and the longer term. Following an appraisal of the interests of the United States of America in East Asia, the author pointed out that China and the United States of America share broad agreement on various interests although they do not agree on the means to attain them. This article is relevant to this research because it situates the argument of the emergence of China and its implications for the United States of America within the realm of national interest.

Siri Sung in her article “The Sino - American Rivalry and the Future of the Asia Pacific Trade Architecture” examined how the rise of China and the subsequent US reengagement affect the Asia Pacific trade architecture. She observed that the region is characterized by lack of supranational institutions for trade creating opportunity for power politics between the US and China. She argues that the US is pushing for the Transpacific Partnership (TPP) as its cornerstone of its trade initiatives whilst China on the other hand is developing the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) as the framework for Asia Pacific trade.

She observes that the Chinese and American strategies on regional trade are incompatible and in competition. Siri points out that the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership employs standards more acceptable to China’s economic development while the Transpacific Partnership (TPP) utilizes high standards of liberalization. The current integration process in the Asia Pacific region unlike Europe are presented as two competing and even mutually incompatible.

She argues that China has problems with the standards on environment, labour and state owned enterprises of the TPP initiative. She noted that China cannot join the TPP without
reforming its state owned enterprises. She observes that China perceives the TPP initiative as an intentional check on Chinese influence by creating Chinese excluded trade block in the Asia Pacific region.

She observes that the TPP has both economical and geopolitical significance for the US. She noted that in terms of geopolitics the TPP is part of America’s reengagement with the Asia Pacific region and constrain the influence of China in the region. Economically, the TPP is part of US trade policy towards the region. She concludes by noting that the US is not ready to offer its influence in the Asia Pacific region to China. This article provides a clear picture of the confrontation between China and the US and therefore relevant to this study.

In his article “Why a Rising China is not Disrupting World Order” Bruce Gilley examined how the rise of China contrary to most predictions will not disrupt world order. He traced China’s rising power and subsequently describe the lack of disruptive influence on the international system. In his estimation he categorized China’s rise into three main spheres namely material capabilities, organizational capabilities and normative capabilities and noted that China is rising in all fronts.

Gilley pointed out three major spheres of international relations namely trade, security and rights and juxtaposed it with the rise of China. In all the three spheres noted clearly that the rise of China has not affected the international order. In the sphere of trade he observed that China’s rise has been non – disruptive in general due to the status quo foreign policy pursued by China. He pointed out that China has worked within the framework rather than act to antagonize it. He noted that China – US bilateral economic relations and its role is Asia economic regionalism has generally been non- disruptive.
In the field of rights he mentioned that China rise has not made any notable dent in the strong liberal orientation of international law and institutions relating to democracy, human rights and governance. He asserts that the “Beijing Consensus” has not in any way disrupted the “Washington Consensus” noting that the UN is still intact with its western dominance.

On the Security arena, he noted that there is little evidence of force build up or other compensatory or anticipatory moves indicative of an arms race owing to China’s rise giving credence to the fact that China’s has been non-disruptive. He shed light on contemporary international relation theories namely realism, liberalism, constructivism and how they can be employed to examine the peaceful rise of China.

He concludes that China’s rise is peaceful because of mutually reinforcing and subjectively constructed confluence of foreign policy outputs and systematic factors. He admits that while China’s rise is not disruptive, there is always the possibility of change. This article provides an optimistic view on the rise of China and its implications for the world order. Gilley however, failed to outline some of the conflicting national interests of China and US and how it will endanger international security.

1.10 Sources of Data

Data from secondary sources are employed for this study. Data from secondary sources were gathered from journal articles, books, reports etc. Online sites are also consulted. The LECIAD and Balme libraries are also extensively utilized.

1.11 Research Methodology

The Qualitative method is used for this investigation. The choice to use qualitative approach is to conduct an exploratory, interpretative and descriptive study of the research topic.
1.12 Arrangement of Chapters

The study is organized into four chapters and the content of each chapter is highlighted below:

i. Chapter One constitutes the Research Design;

ii. Chapter Two provides the characteristics of the Asia Pacific region and the national interests of the US and China in the region;

iii. Chapter Three describes the rise of China and its implications for US national interests and the possibility of a China/US conflict;

iv. Chapter Four provides the summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
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CHAPTER TWO

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION AND US AND CHINA NATIONAL INTERESTS

2.0 Introduction

This chapter seeks to identify the characteristics of the Asia Pacific Region and the national interests of the United State of America and China in the Asia Pacific Region.

2.1 Characteristics of the Asia Pacific Region

The concept of Asia Pacific dates back to the 1960s and 1970s. It was a geographical orientation, promoted by countries such as the United States, Japan, and Australia as a way of connecting East Asia to the wider Pacific region.

The Asia-Pacific Region has turned into a key frontier of global politics. Extending from the Indian subcontinent to the western shores of the Americas, the region spans two oceans namely the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean.¹ It includes East Asia and the Western powers of the Pacific (the United States, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand). East Asia can be divided into Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia. Northeast Asia covers China (including Hong Kong), Taiwan (claimed by China), Japan, South Korea (Republic of Korea, or ROK), North Korea (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, or DPRK), Russia, and Mongolia. Southeast Asia comprises Brunei, Burma (known officially as Myanmar), Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.²
This region is a vital for the global economy. It generated an amalgamated GDP of $38.8 trillion constituting 56 percent of world economic output in 2013. The region also represents more than half of the total U.S. trade, and contains the world’s most active trade and energy routes. These routes include the Strait of Malacca, Sunda Strait and the Straits of Lombok and Makassar where energy resources from the Middle East to the Asia Pacific utilise. The
world’s largest militaries and half of the world’s population are situated in this region.\(^4\) According to De Swielande, the Asia-Pacific region currently is the fulcrum of world affairs and incorporates the majority of great powers and most nuclear powers. \(^5\) The most striking characteristic of the Asia-Pacific is precisely its member nations’ relentless pursuit of wealth and struggle for their economic development. Their efforts over the decades have led to a gradual shift of geostrategic power in the world and an increasing influence of this region as well.\(^6\)

Over the last two decades, the Asia-Pacific region has sustained high economic growth rates over and above those in different regions, and has, as a result, come to be known as the powerhouse of the global economy. According to the International Monetary Fund, in 2011, The Asia-Pacific region commanded close to a quarter of the world’s annual gross domestic product (GDP) while regional GDP rose by 4.8 percent in 2013.\(^7\) Indeed, with infrastructure, including aggressive national economic development policies, well-facilitated centers of industrial production, efficient means of transportation, abundant supply of labor, operational and, more importantly, intellectual and engineering strategies well set in place, the Asia-Pacific region has been one of the most attractive destinations for foreign direct investment, trade, manufacture etc. The Asia-Pacific region is poised to become the economic powerhouse of the unfolding Pacific Century.\(^8\) In terms of economic systems, Countries within the Asia Pacific Region are predominantly liberalists in nature with varying degree of government involvement. These include the United States, Japan, and South Korea. The main example of an unreformed communist command economy is North Korea.

The Political dynamics within Asian states range from vibrant multi-party democracies to some of the world’s most closed and repressive regimes. During the Cold War the Asia
Pacific witnessed several wars, leaving in its trail colossal damage to human security significant among them being the Korean and Vietnam wars. The Asia Pacific Region has however been relatively stable since the end of the Cold War, although, the region is also characterized by marked tensions, especially the North Korean nuclear crisis, the Indian–Pakistani conflict and the South China Sea and Taiwan disputes. These tensions continue to provoke extensive international apprehension. Overarching these issues is the question of a gradual systemic change, as the rise of China impinges upon the influence of the United States, the current dominant power in the region. The involvement of US and China in specific areas of potential conflict, especially the Korean Peninsula and Taiwan, and also in terms of ongoing structural changes in the balance of power, the security of the Asia-Pacific region thus rests in large part upon these two countries.

2.1.0 National Interests of the United States of America in the Asia Pacific Region

National interests are the foundation of foreign policy. This was underscored by former President of the US J.F. Kennedy when he stated that “every nation determines its policies in terms of its own interests.” The United States interest in safeguarding Asia-Pacific security is neither new nor transient. The United States has been deeply engaged in the Asia-Pacific region for more than two centuries, and the United States has powerful, enduring interests in the region. The US has fought three major wars in East Asia over the past century, with enormous losses in blood and treasure. Approximately, 400,000 US citizens excluding military personnel and dependents live, work and study in the region. US businesses conduct more than $500 million in trade annually with East Asian Countries and have invested more than $150 billion throughout the region.
After the Cold War, the US became the sole superpower and its interests spread all over the world. The Asia-Pacific remains a region of central importance for US foreign policy. In this vital region, core US geopolitical, security and economic interests intersect. In recent years, U.S. interests in the region have deepened and widened. Although denied victories in limited wars in Korea and Vietnam, successive U.S. administrations have pursued a lengthening roster of economic, diplomatic, and military interests in the Asia-Pacific region.

Against this cursory backdrop, the Obama administration has declared its determination to make the United States as pivotal to the economic and political life of the region as it is to the security. Cronin notes that, the United States is placing a priority on the comprehensive engagement of the Asia-Pacific region. Since 2011 the Obama administration has taken a series of steps to expand and intensify the already significant role of the United States in the Asia-Pacific region highlighting region as a geostrategic priority for the United States. As a matter of fact United States has had powerful national interests in the Asia-Pacific region since Second World War. These interests include the Preservation of free navigation in the South China Sea, Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, Peaceful resolution of Taiwan’s status, Maintenance of economic openness, Maintaining a balance of power in Asia pacific favorable to the United States, Promoting American political, religious, and other values in Asia, Peaceful resolution of maritime disputes.

2.1.1 Preservation of Freedom of Navigation in the South China Sea

Freedom of navigation is a principle of customary practice in international law that, stipulates ships flying the flag of any sovereign state shall not suffer interference from other states apart from the exceptions provided for in international law. This right is now also codified as article 87(1) a of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.
Global mobility is very essential for the US national security and survival. According to the national security strategy 2015 the United States of America has an enduring interest in freedom of navigation and overflight.\textsuperscript{20} In July 2010, then Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, explicitly declared a U.S. “national interest” in the South China Sea (SCS). The US State Department defines that national interest as being in “the maintenance of peace and stability, respect for international law, freedom of navigation, and unimpeded lawful commerce” \textsuperscript{21} in the sea. At a February 5, 2014, hearing before the subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Russel testified that since the end of the Second World War, a maritime regime based on international law that promotes freedom of navigation and lawful uses of the sea has facilitated Asia’s impressive economic growth. He added that, the US has a national interest among other things in the freedom of navigation and overflight in the East China and South China Seas.\textsuperscript{22} The right of vessels to travel freely in international waters, engage in innocent and transit passage, and have access to ports is an essential element of national security. Every year, more than 60,000 ships pass through the South China Sea transporting 50 percent of the world’s crude oil, 66 percent of its gas and 33 percent of world trade. The US Pacific Fleet with 180 ships, 1,500 airplanes and 125,000 soldiers, operates from the Pacific coast of the US to the Indian Ocean; with some 50-60 of its ships in transit in this area every day. This is critically important to Washington since the transport of armed forces and goods to and from the Middle East often utilizes these routes.\textsuperscript{23}

The United States is a trading nation, and since the Second World War, it has been the provider of that collective good to the world. For both commercial and strategic reasons, the US is very concerned about China eventually moving to prevent freedom of commercial navigation through the South China Sea, because it contains crucial sea lanes of
communication (SLOCs) through which Middle East oil and other vital resources flow, not only to China, but to Japan, Korea, and other states in the region. Preservation of America's maritime supremacy in East Asia is essential to keeping the South China Sea (SLOCs) open. Most shipping from the Middle East to the Pacific must pass through three straits in the region namely the Strait of Malacca, Sunda Strait and the Straits of Lombok and Makassar. Each year, $5.3 trillion of trade passes through the South China Sea; U.S. trade accounts for $1.2 trillion of this total. Should a crisis occur, the diversion of cargo ships to other routes would harm regional economies as a result of an increase in insurance rates and longer transit.

The United States, therefore, opposes the restrictive interpretations of the law of the sea. As President Reagan stated on March 10, 1983 “The United States will exercise and assert its navigation and overflight rights and freedoms on a world-wide basis in a manner that is consistent with the balance of interests reflected in the Convention. The United States will not, however, acquiesce in unilateral acts of other States designed to restrict the rights and freedoms of the international community in navigation and overflight and other related high seas uses.”

The US freedom of navigation programme, instituted in 1979, is designed to check excessive maritime claims. Freedom of the high seas is essential to the United States, and China's emergence as a maritime power in Southeast Asia is one reason why the United States has shelved prior plans to reduce its military presence in the region.
2.1.2 Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula

The colossal destructive potential of nuclear weapons gives them unique status in US foreign policy. As President Dwight Eisenhower said “nuclear weapons pose the only real threat that could destroy the United States. Removing that possibility, or reducing the danger to the strictest minimum, is an opportunity that will make a powerful contribution to a safer America and a safer world.”²⁸ There is a consent within the US national security apparatus that the greatest source of direct danger to US national interests originates from the proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons and their delivery systems by aggressive states and non-state actors.²⁹ Prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons is therefore one key objective of US foreign policy.

The gravest threat in the Asia Pacific region with regards to the proliferation of nuclear weapons is North Korea’s nuclear program. North Korea’s nuclear arsenal, its pursuit of more advanced missile technology, and the possibility that it could transfer nuclear weapons or materials to others states or non-state actors poses significant dangers to the United States and its allies in the region and beyond.³⁰ Between 1998 and 2013, North Korea detonated nuclear explosive devices, tested ballistic missiles, and developed a uranium enrichment program for the purpose of nuclear weapons proliferation. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) has emerged as the most potent source of instability in the region, with repercussions that reach globally.³¹ North Korea stated it possessed missiles capable of striking the United States and its allies.”³² Successive U.S. administrations have struggled, largely unsuccessfully, to address this dangerous situation. The Obama administration will be the fifth to try its hand at denuclearizing North Korea. The efforts, dating back to the Reagan administration’s attempts to persuade North Korea to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the 1989-1993 Bush administration’s successful efforts to persuade North
Korea to allow International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors to examine the operating records of the Yongbyon facility through the Clinton administration’s Agreed Framework process, have been bilateral as well as multilateral in nature. In particular, the Six Party Talks consisting of China, Japan, North Korea, Russia, South Korea, and the United States have failed to bring about North Korea’s denuclearization. Although a very difficult task the US believes non-proliferation and denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is a worthwhile course.

2.1.3 Peaceful Resolution of the Taiwan Issue

Preserving peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait is a principal American interest, and fostering more productive cross-Strait relations and the reduction of tensions between Taiwan and the Mainland is the chief means of achieving that goal. Although, China lost control of Taiwan during the Chinese Civil War more than six decades ago, China still considers Taiwan to be part of its homeland, and unification remains a key political goal for Beijing. China has made it clear that it will use force if Taiwan makes moves towards independence, and much of China's conventional military buildup has been devoted to increasing its capacity to coerce Taiwan and reducing the United States' ability to interfere.

In 1979, the US established formal diplomatic ties with China (PRC), which automatically invalidated the Mutual Defense Treaty between the USA and Taiwan. However, the US Congress passed Taiwan Relations Act the same year, which is to ensure that no use of force is allowed to change the status of the island nation. The TRA clearly states that it is the guiding principle of the United States government to make available to Taiwan such weapons as may be required for its security and an adequate defensive capability, and that the quality
and quantity of these weapons will be decided by the President and the Congress after discussions with U.S. military authorities.\textsuperscript{36}

Although, the United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait is but one China and Taiwan is a part of China in the Shanghai Communiqué. It reaffirms its interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves.\textsuperscript{37} American strategists advance three reasons why the United States should defend Taiwan: strategic; reputational; and ideological. Strategically, Taiwan must be defended to protect the trade routes in the South China Sea. The reputational argument is that unless the United States defends Taiwan from China, other states will lose confidence in America’s security guarantees and acquiesce in China’s regional hegemony. The ideological argument is that the United States cannot afford to stand on the sidelines while a fellow democracy is conquered by an authoritarian great power.\textsuperscript{38} As a critical concern, the United States has interests in the ties or tension across the Taiwan Strait, which affects international security (with potential U.S. intervention).\textsuperscript{39}

\textbf{2.1.4 Maintenance of Economic Openness and Access to Regional Markets}

One major U.S interest in Asia pacific is to preserve economic openness in the region. Promotion of free trade and open markets are key pillars for stability and security in the Asia-Pacific and for long-term American prosperity.\textsuperscript{40} This was echoed by president Obama in 2011 when he remarked that “As the fastest-growing region in the world, no market is more important to our economic future than the Asia Pacific a region where our exports already support five million American jobs.”\textsuperscript{41}
The Asia-Pacific region produces 60 per cent of the world’s GDP and represents half of world trade. The Asia Pacific Region now constitutes the most important region economically to the United States. In 2009, the United States sent 16 percent of its exports to, and received 28 percent of its imports from, the Asia Pacific region. America's trade with East Asia benefits the United States in innumerable ways, though there remains much controversy over its trading deficit with the region, especially with China and Japan, and with the loss of manufacturing jobs to China. Significant amongst them is its contribution to American prosperity and to the peace and prosperity of the region. Thus economic openness between the United States and the Asia Pacific region is a strong and continuing interest for the United States.

This is why completing negotiations on and implementing the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) an ambitious high-standard free trade agreement that would encompass 12 countries and, if successful, over 40 percent of global GDP. The Trans-Pacific Partnership can form the basis of an inclusive, open trading system, in which all countries in the region have an equal opportunity to join. The Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) which is spearheaded by the US in the Asia Pacific region would facilitate U.S. access to rising Asian markets and build a common interest between Asia-Pacific states. Although, China is presently not a party to the TPP it has been welcome to join the negotiations, if it undertook certain internal reforms. For the rapidly globalizing US economy, the Asia Pacific is a region of vast opportunity and daunting challenge. To prosper in the future, to create high paying jobs in the United States America needs to export and invest abroad. Without greater access to the Asia Pacific market, that ambition will be frustrated.
2.1.5 Maintaining a Favorable Balance of Power to the United States in Asia Pacific Region

Since its victory over the Soviet Union, the United States has emerged as the hegemonic power in the international system. It is the dominant military, economic and political power in the global system, and this applies regionally to East Asia.\(^{50}\) In the Asia-Pacific, the principal concern of the United States is to preserve the status quo to maintain its dominant position of power. China is seen as the state most likely to challenge the U.S. position.\(^{51}\) Thus maintaining a balance of power to thwart the rise of any hegemon or group of powers that would impede U.S. political and economic access to the region is vital. As part of the Shanghai Communiqué the United States of America and the People's Republic of China emphasize that neither should pursue hegemony in the Asia Pacific region or in any other region of the world and each is opposed to efforts by any other country or group of countries to establish such hegemony. \(^{52}\)

During the early part of the Cold War, the United States chose to maintain the balance of power by establishing security alliances with Japan and South Korea and also by keeping forward bases in Asia. Subsequently, Richard Nixon’s historic handshake with Mao Zedong in 1972 in an opening designed to reinforce the balance by employing a newly assertive, nuclear-armed China to countervail Soviet power in the Asia-Pacific region.\(^{53}\)

Today, the United States would not want any single state in Asia to dominate the Asian continent or any region there. As part of its hedging strategy against China, it is reinforcing its existing military relationships and building new allies or partners, including roping in states that can serve as potential balancers in Asia.\(^{54}\) It is true that the United States views with unease China’s axiomatic aspirations to dominate Asia, an objective that stand in the
face of U.S. security and commercial interests and to the superior objective for a balance in power in Asia.  

Most of the world’s people, resources and economic activity are located particularly Eurasia. In reaction to this basic element, U.S. policy makers for a number of decades have chosen to prevent the emergence of a regional hegemon in one part of Eurasia or another, on the justification that such a hegemon could confront core U.S. interests by denying the United States access to important resources and economic activity in part of Eurasia. Thus, American policy makers have a deep-rooted interest in preventing another great power from achieving regional hegemony in Asia.

2.1.6 Promoting American Political, Religious, and other Values in Asia

According to the US National Security Strategy 2015 Defending democracy and human rights represent an enduring interest of the US. This position is also underscored by former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton when she mentioned that:

But even more than our military might or the size of our economy, our most potent asset as a nation is the power of our values -- in particular, our steadfast support for democracy and human rights. This speaks to our deepest national character and is at the heart of our foreign policy, including our strategic turn to the Asia-Pacific region.  

For successive U.S. administrations, this has been an enduring element in policy, with notable successes in the Philippines, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and Taiwan. Promotion of democracy is one of the three US security goals outlined in the national security for a new century. Promoting democracy does more than foster US ideal it advances US interest because a larger pool of democracies benefits the entire community of nations. Support for the growth of democratic institutions and processes in Asia will remain a key US security interest. Admiral Charles Larsen, Commander in Chief of the US Pacific forces stated in his
1993 speech entitled “Challenges facing the US in the Pacific” that “Democracies everywhere are in America’s immediate interest”. Feulner, argues that the more democratic the world becomes, the more peaceful it becomes, and therefore the more congenial for U.S. values and interests.

2.1.7 Peaceful Settlement of Maritime Disputes

A key element of the US-led international system that has operated since the Second World War is that force or coercion should not be used as a means of resolving disputes between countries, and certainly not as a routine or first-resort method. Some observers are concerned that some of China’s actions in asserting and defending its territorial claims in the East China Sea (ECS) and South China Sea (SCS) challenge this principle and help reestablish the very different principle of “might makes right” as a routine or defining characteristic of international relations.

China has extensive, though imprecise, claims to large parts of the South China Sea (SCS), which is believed to be rich in oil and gas deposits as well as fisheries, and through which a major portion of world’s trade passes. Territory claimed by China is also claimed in part by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, and in entirety by Taiwan, with the fiercest territorial disputes being those between China and Vietnam and China and the Philippines.

In the East China Sea (ECS) China and Japan are engaged in disagreement on the Senkaku/Diaoyu. This is the most explosive territorial dispute in Northeast Asia. It has been a contentious issue between China and Japan since the early 1970s. The peaceful resolution of these disputes is very vital to the US as involves two major treaty allies.
At the 17th ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) held in Vietnam in July 2010, former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated Washington’s continued commitment to the importance of regional peace and stability, maritime security, unimpeded commerce and freedom of navigation in Southeast Asia. Clinton announced that the peaceful resolution of competing sovereignty claims to the South China Sea is a US “national interest” and Washington “supports a collaborative diplomatic process by all claimants for resolving the various territorial disputes without coercion.”

US National Security Advisor Tom Donilon during Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit in Bali also stated that “The United States has an interest in the peaceful resolution of disputes but we don't have a claim, we don't take sides in the claims.”

The 2015 national security strategy also points out clearly that the US denounces coercion and assertive behaviors that threaten escalation as a means of resolving maritime disputes. However, the US encourages open channels of dialogue to resolve the maritime dispute in the South China Sea and the East China Sea (ECS) peacefully in accordance with international law.

Also, it is important to note that the proximity of the Spratly islands to South China Sea shipping lanes adds an important strategic element to the dispute. A threat to freedom of passage through the South China Seas would severely disrupt regional economies. If, during any military action in the Spratly islands or, for that matter, in the course of defining its claim over the currently occupied or coveted territory any nation threatened to inhibit the free flow of maritime traffic along these critical SLOCs, the U.S. would almost certainly become involved since America's economic growth and security depend upon continued freedom of navigation for both merchant and military shipping.

Given the growing importance of the U.S.-China relationship, and the Asia-Pacific region more generally, to the global economy,
the United States has a major interest in preventing any one of the various disputes in the South China Sea from escalating militarily.68

2.2.0 China’s Core National Interests

China’s core interests are the issues that Beijing essentially considers nonnegotiable and is likely willing to use military force to protect against any change to the status quo.69 As defined variously by Hu Jintao, Wen Jiabao, Dai Bingguo, and Foreign Ministry officials, China’s articulated core interests include: preserving the political system, national security, sovereignty, and territorial integrity (preventing the separation of Xinjiang, Tibet, and Taiwan), and sustainable economic development.70 President Xi Jinping also reaffirmed ‘sovereignty, security, and development’ as China’s core interests at the 3rd meeting of the Party’s Political Bureau on January 2013.

2.2.1 Preserving the Political System

Survival of China’s political system is a vital goal of the Chinese communist party as it has helped preserve the party’s monopoly of political power.71 According to Deng Xiaoping, the political interest with the highest priority is political stability. This is because it is basic to realizing all other national interests.72

2.2.2 National Security

The protection of the overall welfare of the Chinese citizenry from internal or external harm remains very critical to the Chinese government and continues to shape its orientation. Nuclear proliferation especially in the Korean Peninsula poses existential threat to China and has therefore worked assiduously towards achieving denuclearization of the Korean
Peninsula. Similarly, China is poised to mitigate the detrimental effects transnational threats such as terrorism and climate change.

2.2.3 Maintaining Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity

The reunification of Taiwan, separatist activities in Tibet and Xinjiang and the maritime disputes in the South and East China Sea occupy an important space in China’s foreign policy. Beijing considers these areas as core interests which borders on the sovereignty and territorial integrity and has not hesitated to defend these interests. In the Joint Statement issued by Obama and Hu at the Washington summit, China declared that the “Taiwan issue concerns China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity” and that China expected the United States to adhere to the bedrock foundations of Sino-American relations in the past three decades: the One China policy and the Three Joint Communiqués.

2.2.4 Sustainable Economic Development

One fundamental interest of the Chinese government is to ensure rapid economic development. This is very vital because it legitimizes the Communists Party’s regime. Over the past three decades the Chinese Communist Party has been able to ensure rapid economic growth lifting about 300 million people out of poverty. Positioning the Chinese economy to maintain growth and increase the quality of life of China’s citizens is therefore paramount.
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CHAPTER THREE

THE RISE OF CHINA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR US INTERESTS
IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

3.0 Introduction

This chapter seeks to explore the implications of the rise of China on US interests in the Asia Pacific Region and the possibility of Sino-America conflict in the Asia Pacific Region.

3.1 The Rise of China

In geopolitics there is no bigger contemporary issue than the inexorable rise of China from a peasant society to economic and military powerhouse. China’s economic rise is one of the most important developments in the post-Cold War period. Since opening up to foreign trade and investment and reformation of its market dating to 1979, China has been among the league of fastest-growing economies, achieving an astonishing annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth averaging nearly 10%. The Chinese economy accounted for 2.9% of global income in 1978, reached 4.7% of global income in 2004 and is predicted to reach 7.9% by 2020. In recent years, China has emerged as a major global economic and trade power. It is currently the world’s largest merchandise trading economy, second-largest recipient of foreign direct investment (FDI), largest manufacturer, largest holder of foreign exchange reserves, and was projected to become the world’s largest economy in 2014. These economic achievements, combined with progress in science and technology, have also enabled China to embark on a wide-ranging transformation of its military. The recent testing of its stealth aircraft J20, the showcasing of its first aircraft carrier and startling revelation of the Song Class submarine during the US Naval exercise indicate a momentous development.
in its military capacity. In 2014, the Chinese government released its authorized defense expenditure at 808.23 billion Yuan ($131.57 billion), with an upward adjustment of 12.2% from the previous year. Furthermore, ballpark figures published by The Economist in 2012 show that, if recent trends continues, China’s military spending could surpass America’s after 2035. According to the 2012 annual report from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), China has the largest military troops in terms of active personnel numbers.

China has the most active land-based ballistic and cruise missile program in the world; of particular concern is the development and testing of a "carrier killer" anti-ship ballistic missile that could potentially threaten U.S. carriers; China possesses one of the largest force of surface-to-air missiles in the world; China has the largest force of principal fighting ships, submarines, and amphibious warfare ships in Asia. The landmark of Chinese naval development can be illuminated by the fact that China’s first aircraft carrier entered service in 2012.

It has become increasingly apparent that Beijing’s military modernization, including its adoption of an anti-access/area denial strategy, creation of artificial islands, and its acquisition of sophisticated, conventional precision-strike capabilities, places it in pole position in terms of military arsenal. China’s anti-access/area denial strategy is designed to restrict, slow down, or endanger an adversary from occupying or traversing a particular territory. China is also developing the ability to target the satellites, computer systems, airborne surveillance and strike platforms, surface naval forces, and forward bases that underline U.S. power projection.

Over the next 20 years, China’s gross domestic product (GDP) could exceed those of the United States. China could therefore become a more capable opponent than either the Soviet
Union or Nazi Germany at their zenith, neither of which ever neared America’s economic might.\textsuperscript{12}

### 3.1.1 Implications for the Preservation of Freedom of Navigation in the South China Sea

American interests are progressively more at risk in the South China Sea as a result of the economic and military rise of China and concerns about its readiness to support existing legal benchmarks. The United States throughout the region have a deep and abiding interest in sea lines of communication are constantly opened to all states, both for commerce and for peaceful military activity. However, China has consistently challenged this regime, both by questioning historical maritime norms and by developing military capabilities that allow it to threaten access to this maritime region.\textsuperscript{13} This finds expression in China's development of capabilities to deny American naval access to those waters, provides evidence of possible Chinese intentions to block freedom of navigation in specific contingencies.\textsuperscript{14} This U.S. objective faces strong opposition from China, whose political, economic and military power continues to grow.

It appears to be part of China’s “access denial” strategy aimed at keeping the U.S. Navy from operating freely in the South China Sea.\textsuperscript{15} China’s Marine Administration now has many well-equipped patrol ships and airplanes to do law enforcement acts in its claimed EEZ on a regular basis. Among Chinese weapon programs of concern to the United States has been the effort to develop a “carrier killer” anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM) known as the DF-21D. The Pentagon report describes the DF-21D as “intended to provide the People’ Liberation Army (PLA) the capability to attack large ships, particularly aircraft carriers, in the western Pacific Ocean.”\textsuperscript{16} China’s long-term investments in coast guard capabilities and military
modernization, as well as commercial maritime assets, have given it far more capacity to wield influence in its near seas.\textsuperscript{17}

Chinese domination over or control of its near-seas region could have significant implications for the security structure of the Asia-Pacific region. In particular, Chinese domination over or control of its near-seas area could greatly complicate the ability of the United States to fulfill its obligations to Taiwan under the Taiwan Relations Act.\textsuperscript{18} It could also complicate the ability of the United States to fulfill its obligations under security and defense treaties with other countries in the region, particularly Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand. Generally, it could complicate the ability of the United States to operate U.S. forces in the Western Pacific for various purposes, including maintaining regional stability, conducting engagement and partnership-building operations, responding to crises, and executing war plans.\textsuperscript{19} The right of free navigation in EEZ which is a longstanding facet of international law is a sine qua non for easy access to U.S. network of alliance partners and commercial interests in the region. However, Chinese efforts to build artificial structures on features in the Spratly islands that could be used to control maritime space represent substantial danger to critical interest of the United States and other regional states.

\subsection*{3.1.2 Implications for Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula}

The current period of rapid growth in China’s economic, military, and diplomatic activities is entwined with increasing Chinese Communist Party (CCP)-Korean Workers Party (KWP) exchanges Beijing is applying more of its increasing wealth and diplomatic capital to bolster stability in North Korea and achieve denuclearization on the Korean peninsula. In this regard, it appears that China’s rise will have a significant impact on the regional security environment as China seeks to address the North Korean nuclear issue a chronic near-term
threat to regional security and stability.\textsuperscript{20} Progressively, North Korea relies on China as its economic and political lifeline. Trade between the two countries represents more than half of North Korea’s total external trade, and most critical items, including food and fuel, come from China.\textsuperscript{21} With China serving as North Korea’s largest supplier of fuel and food a wealthier and a stronger China will be able to use its leverage on North Korea to ensure denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. This is indeed consistent with US and China’s interests. For China, a stable periphery in Northeast Asia would lessen the security challenge that North Korea presents and create a favorable environment for socioeconomic development. For the United States, peninsular peace would help promote the security of its allies in the region, curtail its security responsibilities in Northeast Asia, and remove the danger of warfare on the Korean Peninsula. \textsuperscript{22}

Chinese cooperation is indispensable to the success of denuclearization on the Korean peninsula and to achieving regional stability. Sino-U.S. cooperation to prevent proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) is in the mutual interests of both countries and will be a critical proving ground for the relationship. Failure to make progress toward denuclearization of the Korean peninsula would be a significant impediment for efforts to promote a cooperative approach to regional security in Northeast Asia. \textsuperscript{23}

\subsection*{3.1.3 Implications for the Peaceful Resolution of Taiwan’s Status}

China’s growing economy provides the resources for Beijing to modernize its military capabilities needed to defeat Taiwan in the event of any move towards independence. China’s military development presents a modest but still considerable threat to US security interests in Taiwan. China is focused primarily on capabilities that would allow it to force Taiwan or to prevent or defeat US intervention in a cross-straits conflict by deploying an anti-access
strategy. In the event of Chinese attempts to coerce Taiwan, for instance, the US will face an uphill task demonstrating support for Taiwan than it did during the 1995-1996 Taiwan crisis, when it was able to send two aircraft carriers to Taiwan’s aid with no impediment. The deployments of two aircraft carriers by the US was viewed as excessive and a bitter pill for the Chinese to swallow. It was one that electrified the Chinese political and military leaders to undertake measures to develop what we now know today as the anti-access and area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities next to China’s maritime parameter in the Western Pacific. China’s A2/AD capabilities have been developed to deal with a future Taiwan Strait crisis and possible U.S. military intervention. China has made clear that it will use force if Taiwan declares independence, and much of its conventional military buildup has been dedicated to increasing its ability to coerce Taiwan and reducing the United States’ ability to intervene. In addition to its enhanced conventional capabilities, China is also modernizing its nuclear capability to increase their capacity to survive and strike back following a large-scale U.S. attack. The Chinese modernization aims to acquire the capabilities that may presumably trigger the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) to execute a quick and decisive victory against Taiwan, along with deterring US military intervention.

Since the US is committed to the peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue the outlandish Chinese military buildup focused on Taiwan poses an obvious threat to and a major problem for the US. Given its enormous military might the US will face an uphill task to defend Taiwan if it is attacked by China. A lot has changed since 1996 when the US was able to deploy two aircraft carriers to the aid of Taiwan when China recklessly engaged in consecutive military exercise close to Taiwan. China now has a “carrier killer” anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM) known as the DF-21D which is projected to provide the People’
Liberation Army (PLA) the capability to assault large ships, particularly aircraft carriers, within the parameter of the western Pacific Ocean.

A study conducted by the RAND Corporation suggests that at the current rate of Chinese military development, within a decade the China will be able to gain victory in a war against the US over Taiwan. The study concluded that the US would most likely lose a Taiwanese war with China. According to the study, the United States will no longer be able to defend Taiwan from a Chinese attack by 2020. Failure to defend Taiwan from Chinese Aggression will severely erode US credibility as a guarantor of peace in the Asia Pacific region and America's commitment to Japan, as well as its reliability to defend other allies would suffer grievous harm.

3.1.4 Implications for Maintenance of Economic Openness and Access to Regional Markets

The Asia-Pacific region is undergoing massive transformation, precipitated by high levels of economic growth and deepening levels of integration. The region is a key engine for the global economy. Its economies have an accumulated GDP of $39 trillion, 56 percent of world economic output and 56 percent of total U.S. trade. The Asia Pacific is a region of vast opportunity which is linked to the prosperity of the United States. Without greater access to the Asia Pacific market, that ambition will be frustrated.

With its vast market, burgeoning middle class, and a growing economy which is projected to become the world’s largest before 2030, China will provide great opportunities for the U.S. should cooperation between the two countries continue to take priority over strategic competition. According to official statistics, U.S.-China economic ties have expanded significantly over the past three decades. Total U.S.-China trade rose from $2 billion in 1979
to a whopping $592 billion in 2014.\textsuperscript{35} China is currently the US’s second largest trading partner, serving as a $250 billion market for U.S. firms, among which many view their participation in China’s market as decisive to staying globally competitive. China is currently the largest foreign holder of U.S. Treasury securities estimated at $1.3 trillion as of May 2013. China’s purchases of the U.S government debts also keep the interest rate in the US very low, expediting economic growth and resurgence in the of the US economy.

Richard Weitz contends that there is a prospect that the more developed the Chinese economy, the less likely Chinese officials would take belligerent actions that could undermine their access to foreign trade, technology, and investment which represents the sources of their country’s prosperity.\textsuperscript{36}

Whilst the growth in the Chinese economy over the past three decades provide a huge market for US products, Nanto and Chanlett however, contends that China is displacing the United States as the primary trading partner for many Asian countries. They noted that everyone in Asia ally or adversary seems to be jumping on the “Chinese bandwagon.” They argue that China’s market has become so widespread that Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea have all joined the Chinese based economic network rather than try to work against it. Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan have progressively turned toward China for imports and exports, and their companies increasingly are dividing their manufacturing processes to take advantage of lower costs in China.\textsuperscript{37}

\textbf{3.1.5 Implications for Maintaining a Favorable Balance of Power to the United States in the Asia Pacific Region}

One defining feature of power in the international system is that it is ever-changing.\textsuperscript{38} In the post-cold war era the United States has emerged as the hegemonic power in the Asia Pacific
and the world at large. However, currently the rise of China with its preponderant power has the potential to transform the balance of power in Asia. Over the past three decades, China has proven its incredible ability to plan and assemble resources to execute goal-oriented, well-timed strategies in economic, diplomatic, and military spheres with telling effects on friends and foes alike. It is indeed laying down new markers, recalibrating new lines in the land, air, water, and all around its fringe, striving to expand its territorial and maritime perimeter, creating and recreating institutions, and coercing others to fall in line. Mearsheimer argues that a much more powerful China can also be expected to try to push the United States out of the Asia-Pacific region, the same way the United States drove the European powers out of the western hemisphere in the 19th century. He added that a wealthy China would not be a status quo power but an aggressive state determined to achieve regional hegemony.

Although, in his 2010 article in People’s Daily, Dai Bingguo, China’s top diplomat, claims that China does not seek hegemony and will never compete with other countries for leadership in the region, or seek so-called joint hegemony. It is inadvertently rumbling the American isolationists and pacifists stands of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The United States did not then seek out to dominate or control the world, nor did it pursue military adventurism beyond its shores. It is noteworthy that at some point in time and in reaction to events, however, the US came to do both.

Mearsheimer believes a wealthy China would not be a status quo power but an antagonistic state determined to achieve regional hegemony. According to Aaron Friedberg, China’s ambition for regional hegemony runs counter to an obvious goal of U.S. grand strategy, which has remained constant for decades to prevent the domination of either end of the
Eurasian landmass by one or more potentially hostile powers.\textsuperscript{43} Richard Bernstein and Ross Munro in their book \textit{Coming Conflict war with China} express similar sentiments with Aaron Friedberg highlighting the fact that China’s ambition of achieving a hegemonic status in Asia is in conflict with a longstanding US interest of preventing any single country from gaining overwhelming power in Asia.\textsuperscript{44} Given such a scenario China emergence over the past three decades with preponderant economic and military will hamper US primacy.

Yang concludes that given a hegemonic aspirations, China is determined to maximize its influence relative to all rivals by diverting as much national wealth as possible from civilian needs to military modernization.\textsuperscript{45} The establishment of its East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) in 2013 and its irritable reclamation projects in the South China Sea are prima facie substantiation of China’s aspiration to expand and establish unlimited control over the sea and air on its eastern periphery, and become the hegemon in the Asia Pacific region.\textsuperscript{46} The surfacing of China as a hegemon in the Asia Pacific will seriously hamper Washington’s leadership in the Asia Pacific Region.

\subsection*{3.1.6 Implications for Promoting American Political, Religious and other Values in Asia}

Advocates of democracy fear that the rise of China will create a credible authoritarian alternative to liberal democracy.\textsuperscript{47} China’s Communist political system is anachronistic, but its capability to maintain order while promoting rapid economic growth and social change is admired by many Asian officials and other elites. Asian governments have growing interests in stability; they seem to favor the kind of stability inherent in the Chinese system over the uncertainty of U.S.-styled democracy disrupting the order of previously authoritarian states. Anecdotal information also suggests that Chinese culture enjoys an upswing in parts of Asia,
toting up to forces that perceive ethnic Chinese playing a more outstanding role in Southeast Asia. As Edward Friedman argued, authoritarian China’s success is attracting imitators around the world, showing that China’s Communist Party seems to know how to attain economic growth, preserve stability, become a global player, and hold on to the monopoly of power at home. This in actual fact hurts the very core ideals of American exceptionalism and the conviction that America’s set of values such as competition, freedom and equality are unique and best for the world.

Democracy is the primary threat for the Communist Party, which enjoys the advantages of unaccountable power. Beijing therefore has exerted its new-fangled power and prestige to protect this principal interest, thus obstructing the spread of democracy in Asia. China has therefore, supported the military tyrants in Burma and deflected ASEAN efforts towards Burmese democracy. Peter Westmore argues that without Chinese support over many years, the military regime in Burma would have collapsed. Isolated by the international community as a result of its overthrow of a democratic regime nearly two decades ago, the secretive military regime in Burma has survived largely on unstinting Chinese support.

Authoritarian China’s economic success seems glorious however, its human rights record is nothing to be envious of. In the Chinese economic success story lies an important danger which is the creation of a blossoming middle class which will be demanding for more accountability and representation. Until the communist party engages in incremental political liberation consistent with the economic fortunes of its citizens it is bound to fail.
3.1.7 Implications for the Peaceful Resolution of Maritime Disputes

The rise of China threatens one key element of the U.S.-led international order that is the non-use of force or coercion as a means of settling disputes between countries that has operated since the Second World War. China has been steadily building its own military and law-enforcement forces and has begun to use them in new and sometimes threatening ways which is critically affecting US allies in the Asia Pacific in the process. Although, sovereignty disputes in the East and South China Seas dates back to several decades, China’s increasing diplomatic, economic, and military power is improving China’s capability to assert its interests. It is progressively more lucid that China does not intend to resolve the disputes through multilateral negotiations or the application of international laws but instead will use its growing power in support of coercive tactics that pressure its neighbors to concede to China’s claims. According to the annual report to Congress: concerning the military and security developments involving the People’s Republic of China “China’s ambitious naval modernization program has produced a more technologically advanced and flexible force. The PLA Navy now possesses the largest number of vessels in Asia, with more than 300 surface ships, submarines, amphibious ships, and patrol craft.”

Over the past decades China has demonstrated greater readiness to assertively flex military strength in an exclusionary manner that threatens China’s neighbors. Chinese exercises and military presence in airspace and waters surrounding disputed islands, previously rare and notable events, have become a norm. In 2010 Admiral Robert Willard, Commander of the US Pacific Command, testified to a US Congressional Committee that, China has increased its submarine and air defence fleet considerably, has improved its patrols throughout the region and has demonstrated an increased readiness to deal with nations within the contested island chains. Not only is China using its military arsenal but it also using punitive trade policies as instruments of coercion. In 2010, China used its market-dominance in the rare
earth industry as a political and diplomatic instrument, limiting exports of rare earth minerals to Japan following tensions over a collision between a Chinese fishing boat and Japanese patrol ship.\textsuperscript{57}

If states particularly US allies and partners in the South China Sea dispute and East China Sea lose assurance in the United States to play the role as the primary regional security underwriter, they could engage in costly and potentially destabilizing arms buildups to balance or, alternatively, acquiesce to the demands of a dominant China. Neither would be in the U.S. interest.

3.2.0 Prospects for Sino-America Conflict in the Asia Pacific Region

For over four decades since President Richard Nixon and Mao Zedong signed the Shanghai Communiqué reestablishing diplomatic ties between US and China, relations between these two countries have been marked by cycles of altercation and collusion, and rivalry and cooperation. The Tiananmen incident of 1989, Taiwan Strait crisis of 1995-1996, The US bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999, collision of a US Navy EP-3 Surveillance plane and a Chinese F-8 fighter over the South China Sea, the US arms sale to Taiwan and President Obama’s meeting with the Dalai Lama manifests grotesquely the tense relations between the US and China.

This notwithstanding, China and the United States have a common interests, including the prevention of terrorism, the proliferation of nuclear weapons, climate change. Both the US and China support the denuclearization Korean Peninsula and have worked in concert under the six party talks to ensure complete and irreversible denuclearization of North Korea. Also, China and U.S. joined forces together to contain the Soviet Union during the Cold war.
Overarching this “sweet - sour” relationship between the US and China is the possibility of a Sino-America conflict. It is very important to note that while these two countries want to steer clear of conflict with each other the biggest danger of a US-China clash will probably originate from a flow of events that leads both countries to make poor, rushed, or ill-conceived choices. This risk will grow in consequence and perhaps in probability as China’s might increases. According to Mearsheimer there are four prospective hotspots over which he believes the US and China might engage in a confrontation. These are the South China Seas, East China Sea, the Taiwan Strait and Korean Peninsula. 58

3.2.1 Maritime Dispute in the East China Sea

The East China Sea dispute involves China, Japan and Taiwan. This longstanding contention can be divided into two different subjects, firstly the territorial sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands (known as Diaoyu in China, and Diaoyutai in Taiwan), and delineation of maritime zones, which has a bearing on natural resource rights. 59
The origin of this longstanding dispute dates back to the late 1960s when reports by the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and Far East suggested the possibility of the existence of large hydrocarbon reserves in the surrounding area of the islands. Japan bases its sovereignty claim on the fact that it incorporated the islands as terra nullius (vacant territory) on the 14 January 1895 and has always been occupying the islands since then. China, however, argues that it discovered the islands long before 1895 and quotes several historical documents dating back to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Although, United State is not directly a party to the dispute it has a commitment to defend Japan when it is attacked. This situation pits the US directly against China in the territorial dispute.

The Senkaku/Diaoyutai/Diaoyu Islands are under Japan’s administration although China continues to access the disputed territory. In September 2010, a collision between Japanese
Coast Guard vessels and a Chinese fishing trawler near the Senkaku/ Diaoyutai/Diaoyu islands, and the subsequent decision of the Japanese government to detain the Chinese crew and indict the Chinese captain under Japanese law, momentarily heightened the territorial dispute to the level of an international crisis.

In the wake of this incident, the United States unequivocally clarified its stands that while it does not take a position on the sovereignty of the islands, its mutual defense treaty with Japan covers all areas under Japanese administration, including Senkakus/Diaoyu islands raising the possibility of a U.S.-China conflict over the islands. United States has also made it clear that the dispute should be resolved peacefully and if Japan were to be attacked as a result of this dispute, the United States would honor its mutual defense treaty obligation to come to Japan’s defense. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton vividly remarked that:

“Well, first let me say clearly again the Senkaku fall within the scope of Article 5 of the 1960 U.S.-Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security. This is part of the larger commitment that the United States has made to Japan’s security. We consider the Japanese-U.S. alliance one of the most important alliance partnerships we have anywhere in the world and we are committed to our obligations to protect the Japanese people.”

In September 2014, deputy US Defense Secretary Robert Work reiterated this position when he told the Council on Foreign Relation that the US will respond with military force if allies in the Pacific were threatened. Between March 2013 and March 2014 Japan scrambled its fighter planes to interrupt Chinese aircraft about 415 times, and the velocity has not conspicuously reduced since then. China on the other hand has intercepted US and Japan surveillance flights in or near the disputed islands. In a situation when rival military aircraft maneuver in such a challenging manner, a sheer miscalculation or mishap could elicit an extremely horrible incident.
The risk of a clash, with the attendant likelihood for escalation, is not a distant possibility between China and Japan in the East China Sea given China’s recent belligerent actions including the declaration of an East China Sea air defense identification zone (ADIZ) that overlaps substantially with Japan’s ADIZ and covers the disputed islands.\textsuperscript{66} The US could become entangled in such a Sino-Japanese conflict as a result of its obligations under the US-Japan Mutual Security Treaty to defend territories under Japanese administrative control.

It is very important to note that the US-Japan alliance to balance assertive China can be paralleled with the Franco-British-Russia Triple Entente, which was designed to offset the threat presented by an increasingly assertive Germany. This alliance system was the catalyst that drove the major powers to the First World War.\textsuperscript{67}

\subsection*{3.2.2 Taiwan}

Taiwan is one of the possible triggers of war involving China and the United States. Even though, China lost control of Taiwan during the Chinese Civil War over six decades ago, it still regards Taiwan to be province of the mainland and for that matter a renegade province, and reunification remains a key political objective for Beijing. China has made it apparent that it will utilize force if Taiwan advances towards independence.\textsuperscript{68} Indeed, a significant part of China’s military modernization is aimed at executing a quick and decisive victory against Taiwan, along with deterring US military intervention.

Reunification of Taiwan is a very important subject for China. For strategic reasons, the Taiwan issue is right at the top of China's agenda. The reunification of Taiwan with the mainland has important implications for China’s maritime interests. First, it will put China in a better geographic position to guard the sea lines of communication in the Taiwan Strait and promote the development of the regional and global economies. Second, China will have
more maritime resources under its control and raise its standing as a sea power. Third, China can expand the depth of its strategic defense and better protect its national security. Fourth, reunification will enhance China’s comprehensive national power and make great contributions to the rejuvenation of China. Hence, reunification is non-negotiable.

Although the US accepts the fact that Taiwan is part of China, it believes that unification should be done through peaceful means. The United States has a Taiwan Relations Act to ensure that no use of force is allowed to change the status of the island nation. The United States constant provision of advanced armaments and military technology, intelligence, and training to Taiwan is aimed at enhancing Taiwan’s security to ward of Chinese aggression. While The United States views it as a case of defending a democracy, free market partner and significantly fulfilling its commitment to Taiwan by providing it with armaments and military technology, China on the other hand sees only claims of national sovereignty denied by 150 years of imperialist humiliation. With China claiming reunification as its core interest, a clash of interests seems to exist between Washington and Beijing especially when the former continues to provide Taiwan with armament which China believes is injurious to its territorial integrity.

In the event that China uses force against Taiwan James Dobbins in his article war with China argues that, “the goal of the United States would be to prevent Chinese coercion or conquest of Taiwan and to limit, to the extent possible, the damage inflicted on Taiwan’s military, economy, and society,”69 with a higher risk of escalation as it borders on the core interests of both states.
3.2.3 Maritime Disputes in the South China Sea

China has extensive and imprecise claims to large portion of the South China Sea (SCS), which is believed to be rich in oil and gas deposits as well as fisheries, and through which a major portion of world’s trade passes by sea. The territory claimed by China is also claimed in part by Brunei, Malaysia, Philippines, and Vietnam, and in entirety by Taiwan, with the fiercest territorial disputes being those between China and Vietnam and China and the Philippines.⁷⁰

The Paracel Islands are claimed by China and Vietnam, while the Spratly Islands are claimed entirely by China, Taiwan, and Vietnam, and in part by the Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei and Scarborough Shoal which is claimed by China, Taiwan, and the Philippines.

As a U.S. treaty ally, the Philippines, is a key strategic waterway for the U.S. Navy. The United States is likely to intervene in any situation if China uses force against the Philippine. This position is affirmed in The 1951 U.S.-Philippines mutual defense treaty states in Article IV that “Each Party recognizes that an armed attack in the Pacific Area on either of the Parties would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common dangers in accordance with its constitutional processes.”⁷¹

The rich supply of oil and gas in the South China Sea makes the region an area of potential conflict in the age of energy competition.⁷² About 90 percent of all commercial goods that travel from one continent to another move across water, and half of those goods in terms of gross tonnage (one-third in terms of monetary value) traverse the South China Sea.⁷³

Despite the position of the U.S, Chinese Maritime Surveillance ships reportedly harassed a Philippine ship conducting a seismic survey in the area. The United States has therefore
stepped up military cooperation with both the Philippines and Vietnam, in addition to announcing its policy of strategic rebalancing toward the Asia-Pacific, and strengthened defense relations with many of China’s neighbors.⁷⁴

Should tensions get out of control, the possibility of U.S. intervention in defense of its allies, and hence, risk of direct US-China military confrontation will be very real and high.


**Figure 3 Maritime Territorial Disputes Involving China Island groups involved in principal disputes**
3.2.4 The North Korean Challenge

The Korean Peninsula is one of the remaining geopolitical powder kegs of the twentieth century: a divided peninsula occupied by two different countries still technically at war one vibrant and modern (South Korea), the other closed, impecunious and aggressive (North Korea). The risk of instability emanating from North Korea has been an implacable ingredient of regional security ever since an armistice was signed on July 27, 1953. Recently, the 2010 sinking of the Cheonan and shelling of Yeonpyeong Island killed scores of South Korean sailors and civilians. These developments signal the possibility that more serious incidents could precipitate significant tension in the U.S.-China relationship. In 1953, at the conclusion of the Korean War, the United States and South Korea signed a Mutual Defense Treaty, which became the basis of a far-reaching alliance which persists today. China has the 1961 Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance with North Korea that requires China to render military and other assistance in the event North Korea comes under armed attack by any state. Therefore, any attack on either North Korea or South Korea is likely to draw US or China into the conflict.

Also, a sudden collapse of the North Korea regime as a result of economic stagnation or political upheaval can spell doom on the Korean peninsula. A critical concern of the US and South Korea will be to keep tabs on North Korea’s nuclear and ballistic-missiles and subsequently lay the foundation for unification. China would hope to safeguard the buffer that North Korea provides. Faced with trepidation that inability to act first, would allow South Korea and the United States to create a democratic and united Republic of Korea allied with the United States on China’s border, it might move its own forces in to contain a South Korean–American takeover of the entire country. China’s utmost strategic fear is that an external power or powers will pitch camp around China’s periphery capable of encroaching
on China’s territory or meddling in its domestic institutions. When China believed that it faced such a threat in the past, it went to war rather than risk the effects of what it perceived as gathering trends in Korea in 1950, against India in 1962, against the Soviet Union in 1969, and against Vietnam in 1979.\textsuperscript{80} The probability of conflict, unintended or otherwise, between US and Chinese forces is huge in this circumstance, with considerable potential for escalation.

### 3.2.5 The Dispute over the Exclusive Economic Zone in the South China Sea

In addition to maritime disputes in the South China Sea and East China Sea, China is involved in a dispute, directly with the United States, over whether China has the right under international law to regulate the activities of foreign military forces operating within China’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The position of the United States is that while the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which created EEZs as a feature of international law, gives coastal states the sovereign right to regulate economic activities (such as fishing and oil exploration) within the confines of their EEZs, it prohibits coastal states the right to regulate foreign military activities in the parts of their EEZs beyond their 12-nautical-mile territorial waters. The position of China is that the UNCLOS gives coastal states the right not only to regulate economic activities, but also foreign military actions such as weapon testing, flight operation, and joint military exercise in their Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZs).\textsuperscript{81}

The dispute regarding whether China has the right under UNCLOS to regulate foreign military activities in its EEZ is related to, but essentially different from, the issue of territorial disputes in the South China Sea and East China Sea. The two issues are interrelated because China can declare EEZs from inhabitable islands over which it has sovereignty, so
accommodating China’s claims to sovereignty over inhabitable islands in the South China Seas or East China Sea could allow China to expand the EEZ zone within which China claims a right to regulate foreign military activities.82

This disagreement has led to a lot of confrontations the most notable so far is the collision of a U.S. EP-3 surveillance plane with a PLA fighter jet about 70 miles off China’s southern coast over the South China Sea on April 1, 2001. Since then, China and the United States have continued to clash in the South and East China Seas. China has reportedly “harassed” - the entire U.S. ocean surveillance fleet on various occasions such as the United States Naval Ship (USNS) Bowditch (September 2002), Bruce C. Heezen (2003), Victorious (2003, 2004), Effective (2004), John McDonnell (2005), Mary Sears (2005), Loyal (2005), and Impeccable (2009). 83 Similarly, the US Congressional report mentioned that on December 5, 2013, Chinese navy ship intentionally positioned itself in the passageway of the U.S. Navy cruiser Cowpens as it was operating 30 miles from China’s aircraft carrier Liaoning, forcing the Cowpens to detour to avoid a possible clash.84

Unfortunately, with the absence of mutually acceptable grounds, the ultimate arbiter over the U.S. military activities in China’s claimed EEZ will be the two nations’ national power, especially their military power.85 China is making steady efforts to improve its fighting capabilities. China’s Marine Administration now has many well-equipped patrol ships and airplanes to do law enforcement acts in its claimed EEZ on a regular basis. It will only be a matter of time before China will take a more forceful stand on this issue.

This alarming contention between a traditional sea power and a rising one has historical examples, two of which, namely Britain and Germany, as well as America and Japan, ended
in war. Great Britain resented Germany’s hegemonic potential in Europe and its strategic threat to British sea power. It reacted by fortifying the Royal Navy and joining forces with France. The subsequent naval arms race and mounting levels of Anglo-German acrimony contributed to the circumstances that led to First World War.86

From the above analyses one can conclude without much reservation that the Asia Pacific region is a hotbed for superpower politics as a result of conflicting national interest between China and US. Also, Sino- America rivalry in the Asia Pacific region will hardly abate any time soon geo-strategic considerations, economic reasons and China’s assertiveness.
Endnotes


4 Morrison, W. M. op. cit


7 China's Military Rise the Dragon’s New Teeth www.economist.com/node/21552193 (accessed on 30/06/15)


24 Lai, D. op. cit.


26 Lai, D. op. cit.


28 Ibid


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CHAPTER FOUR  
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS  

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations.

4.1 Summary of Findings

It is an open secret that China will become a predominant military and economic power in the Asia Pacific region. Rising powers have always demanded the fruits to which they believe are akin to their growing power. The rise of China will not be any different. China’s actions will be more conspicuous in the Asia Pacific region where the US relates directly with China with significant interests in the preservation of free navigation in the South China Sea, denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, peaceful resolution of Taiwan’s status, maintenance of economic openness, maintaining a balance of power in Asia Pacific favorable to the United States, promoting American political, religious, and other values in Asia, peaceful resolution of maritime disputes.

The current status of China in international relation poses fundamental challenges to US interests in the Asia Pacific Region although some opportunities abound. Firstly, the rise of China is significantly having negative implications for US interests in the Asia Pacific region especially with regards to altering an enduring interest of the US in the area of freedom of navigation on the South China Sea. American interests are progressively more at risk in the South China Sea as a result of the economic and military rise of China and concerns about its readiness to support existing legal benchmarks. The United States
throughout the region have a deep and abiding interest in sea lines of communication are constantly opened to all states, both for commerce and for peaceful military activity. However, China has consistently challenged this regime, both by questioning historical maritime norms and by developing military capabilities that allow it to threaten access to this maritime commons.

Also, emboldened by its military transformation China seems poised to complicate US intervention when China uses force to reunite with Taiwan. China’s military development significant threat to US security interests in Taiwan. China is focused predominantly on capabilities that would allow it to coerce Taiwan or to deter or defeat US intervention in a cross-strait conflict by employing an anti-access strategy. Since the US is committed to the peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue the outlandish Chinese military buildup focused on Taiwan poses an obvious threat to the US.

Again, the rise of China poses a threat to the US interest of preventing the emergence of a hegemon in the Asia Pacific region. Mearsheimer argues that a much more powerful china can also be expected to try to push the United States out of the Asia-Pacific region, much the way the United States pushed the European great powers out of the western hemisphere in the 19th century.

Furthermore, the rise of China and its increasing assertiveness threatens the US led order that is based on the non-use of coercion as a means of settling disputes. China has been steadily building its own military and law-enforcement forces and has begun to use them in new and sometimes destabilizing ways which is critically affecting US allies in the Asia Pacific in the process.
Lastly, the rise of China provides a credible authoritarian alternative to US-type liberal democracy. China’s Communist political system which has the ability to sustain order while promoting rapid economic growth and social change is proving to be a viable alternative to the Washington Consensus.

It is very important to note however that the rise of China is beneficial to US interest in ensuring irreversible denuclearization of North Korea. Beijing is applying more of its increasing resources and diplomatic capital to bolster stability in North Korea and achieve denuclearization on the Korean peninsula. China exerts a strong economic and perhaps political influence on North Korea which can unduly entice and persuade North Korea to move in the direction required to ensure an economically viable state whose security concerns do not require it to maintain nuclear stockpile.

Similarly, with its vast market, burgeoning middle class, and a growing economy which is projected to become the world’s largest before 2030, China will provide great opportunities for the U.S. should cooperation between the two countries continue to take priority over strategic competition. China is currently the US’s second largest trading partner, serving as a $250 billion market for U.S. firms, among which many view their participation in China’s market as critical to staying globally competitive. China is now the largest foreign holder of U.S. Treasury securities ($1.3 trillion as of May 2013). China’s purchases of the U.S government debts also keep the interest rate in the latter low, facilitating economic growth and recovery in the world’s largest economy.

The possibility of Sino-America conflict is inevitable given the incompatible interests of these two countries. This risk will grow in consequence and perhaps in probability as China’s
strength increases. The bases of a China–US military clash are most likely to be Taiwan, North Korea and disputes arising from the South and East China Seas.

Firstly, Taiwan is particularly important, for it could be one of the causes of war between China and the United States. Although, the US agrees with the fact that Taiwan is part of China, it believes that the reunification process should be peaceful devoid of coercion from Beijing and therefore has a Taiwan Relation Act to back this commitment. Beijing on the other hand has vowed to use force if Taiwan makes moves towards independence and indeed most of China’s military modernization drive is targeted at Taiwan. Chinese aggression against Taiwan can provide a basis for US intervention with higher risk of escalation.

Secondly, the East China Sea is one area of Sino-American rivalry. The East China Sea dispute is one of the turbulent maritime disputes in the Asia Pacific region. This dispute involves China, Japan and Taiwan. It has to do with the Sovereignty of the Senkaku (in Japan)/Diaoyu (in China) Island in the East China Sea. The origin of this dispute can be traced to the late 1960s when reports by the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and Far East suggested the possibility of the existence of large hydrocarbon reserves in the vicinity of the islands. Even though, the United State is not directly a party to the dispute it has a commitment to defend Japan as enshrined in the Article five of the 1960 mutual defense treaty. This situation makes the US a party in the territorial dispute. Japan and China military aircrafts and vessels have always confronted each other in or near the disputed islands. In a situation where rival military aircraft maneuver in such a challenging manner, a sheer miscalculation or mishap could elicit an extremely horrible incident.

Also, the South China Sea is another theater for Sino-America conflict. China has extensive, though imprecise, claims to large parts of the South China Sea (SCS). China and the
Philippine have competing claims on the spratly islands and Scarborough Shoal. The US-Philippine 1951 mutual defence treaty which states that an armed attack against Philippine will be met with common danger increasingly makes Sino-America confrontation inevitable. North Korea represents a fundamental source Sino-US of rivalry. The risk of instability emanating from North Korea has been an implacable ingredient of regional security ever since an armistice was signed on July 27, 1953. Recently, the 2010 sinking of the Cheonan and shelling of Yeonpyeong Island killed scores of South Korean sailors and civilians. These developments signal the possibility that more serious incidents could precipitate significant tension in the U.S.-China relationship. The 1953 US- South Korea Mutual Defense Treaty and the 1961 China-North Korea Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance makes the stakes of Sino- America confrontation very high in the face of North Korea bellicosity. Also, a sudden collapse of the North Korea regime can spell doom on the Korean peninsula. A major concern of the US and South Korea will be to keep taps on North Korea’s nuclear and ballistic-missiles and subsequently lay the foundation for unification. China would wish to preserve the buffer that North Korea provides. China’s greatest strategic fear is that an outside power or powers will establish military deployments around China’s periphery capable of encroaching on China’s territory or meddling in its domestic institutions. This would be a political challenge to China’s authoritarian system. The only way for China to prevent such an outcome would be for China to move its own forces in to contain a South Korean–American takeover of the entire country, with the possibility of a military clash between China and the US.

Lastly, China is involved in a dispute with the United States, over whether China has the right under international law to regulate the activities of foreign military forces operating within
China’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). This situation has already resulted in a number of clashes between the United States and China. Significant among them are the collision of a U.S. EP-3 surveillance plane with a PLA fighter jet about 70 miles off China’s southern coast over the South China Sea on April 1, 2001. On July 17, the Washington Times reported that in June Chinese vessels “harassed” the U.S. Navy ocean surveillance vessel Impeccable in what the U.S. Navy claims were “international waters” about 100 nautical miles from Hainan, in 2013 Chinese navy ship put itself in the path of the U.S. Navy cruiser Cowpens as it was operating 30 or more miles from China’s aircraft carrier Liaoning, forcing the Cowpens to change course to avoid a collision. This looming rivalry between an established sea power and a rising one can degenerate into armed confrontation with catastrophic ramifications.

4.2 Conclusions

When a state's capabilities expand significantly, its leaders have a tendency to define their interests more broadly and to seek a greater amount of influence over what is happening around them. Emerging powers seek not only to protect their frontiers but to reach out beyond them, taking measures to ensure access to markets, resources, and transportation routes; to protect their citizens abroad, support their friends and allies, create and recreate institutions and propagate their values and generally, to have what they deem to be their legitimate say in the affairs of their region and of the broader world. China like all rising powers will not be any different.

The magnitude and scale of China’s growth, together with its increasing assertiveness, represent a challenge to the US interests in the Asia Pacific due to the under listed reasons:
- Freedom of navigation is one longstanding US interest however; China has consistently challenged this regime by developing military capabilities that allow it to threaten access to this maritime region.

- US committed to the peaceful resolution of Taiwan’s status however China’s growing economy provides the resources for Beijing to modernize its military capabilities needed to defeat Taiwan in the event of any move towards independence. China’s military development presents a considerable threat to US security interests in Taiwan.

- China is displacing the United States as the primary trading partner for many Asian countries. Every country in Asia, ally or adversary seems to be aligning with the Chinese market. China’s market has become so extensive that Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea have all been attached to the Chinese based economic network.

- Currently the rise of China with its preponderant power has the potential to transform the balance of power in Asia. China emergence over the past three decades with preponderant economic and military will hamper US primacy in the Asia Pacific region.

- It is increasingly more lucid that China does not intend to resolve the maritime disputes through multilateral negotiations instead it is using its growing power to coerce US allies and partners to concede to China’s claims.

- The rise of China will create a credible authoritarian alternative to liberal democracy in the Asia Pacific region. China’s success is showing that China’s Communist Party seems to know how to attain economic growth, preserve stability and become a global player. This in actual fact hurts the very core ideals of American exceptionalism and the conviction that America’s set of
values such as competition, freedom and equality are unique and best for the world.

4.3 Recommendations
Collective Sovereignty over the South China Sea
In order to avert conflict over the South China Sea, claimants should come together and establish collective sovereignty over the South China Sea allowing them to collectively control the islands, territorial seas, and airspace. Similarly, primary sovereignty over the South China Sea can be given to China but resource-related rights to all signatories. This solution avoided conflict over resources.

China’s Military Expenditure Should be Transparent
Countries in the Asia Pacific are not only worried the scale of China’s military build-up, but also the lack of information about how it might use its new forces and even who is really in charge of them. The growth of China’s military power must be accompanied by greater clarity of its strategic intentions in order to avoid causing friction in the region. Military-to-military relations should be improved China and the US, because the most likely cause of any conflict in these seas would be the result of accident or miscalculation.

Intensification of Negotiations between China and the US
The Intensification of talks through existing high-level bilateral channel of communication, such as the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue, which was established to discuss long-term challenges in the relationship, will help to create the avenue for enhancing mutual understanding and trust.
US Should Halt Arms Sales to Taiwan

A major obstacle to forging a stronger Sino–US partnership is US arms sales to Taiwan. The US should halt arms sales to Taiwan as it only precipitate negative reaction from Beijing. The US should rather increase its deterrence capabilities to prevent Beijing from using force against Taipei.

Strengthening the Capacity of Regional Bodies to be able to Respond to Crisis

Regional organizations such as Asia Pacific Economic Community (APEC) and Association of South East Asian Nation (ASEAN) should have strong structures and conflict resolution mechanisms to be able to intervene and mitigate any possible adverse situation that may arise.

Plan for Contingencies

Potential North Korean instability would have a negative influence on regional stability and affect the dynamics of interstate relations in the Asia Pacific Region. Therefore, United States and China should work out a plan that will take care of a sudden North Korea collapse. Also, China should do more to influence North Korea to denuclearize.
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