

**ACDIS**  
*Occasional  
Paper*

**Power Projections of the People's Republic of China:  
An Investigative Analysis of Defensive and Offensive  
Realism in Chinese Foreign Policy**

*Eric Nathaniel Heller*

Undergraduate Senior

Departments of Political Science and Economics

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Research of the Program in Arms Control,  
Disarmament, and International Security

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

November 2003

This publication is supported by funding from the University of Illinois and is produced by the Program in Arms Control, Disarmament, and International Security at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The University of Illinois is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution.

ACDIS Publication Series: ACDIS *Swords and Ploughshares* is the quarterly bulletin of ACDIS and publishes scholarly articles for a general audience. The ACDIS *Occasional Paper* series is the principal publication to circulate the research and analytical results of faculty and students associated with ACDIS. The ACDIS *Research Reports* series publishes the results of grant and contract research. Publications of ACDIS are available upon request. For additional information consult the ACDIS home page on the World Wide Web at <<http://www.acdis.uiuc.edu/>>.

Published 2003 by ACDIS // ACDIS HEL:1.2003  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
359 Armory Building, 505 E. Armory Ave.  
Champaign, IL 61820-6237

*Series editor:* Matthew A. Rosenstein

# **Power Projections of the People's Republic of China:**

---

## **An Investigative Analysis of Defensive and Offensive Realism in Chinese Foreign Policy**

*Eric Nathaniel Heller*

Undergraduate Senior, Departments of Political Science and Economics  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Program in Arms Control, Disarmament and International Security  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
April 1, 2003



## CONTENTS

---

<i>About the Author</i>	v
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	vii
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Part One</b>	
<b>Realism Bifurcated: Offensive and Defensive Realism</b>	<b>3</b>
Offensive and Defensive Realism	4
<b>Part Two</b>	
<b>Chinese Foreign Policy</b>	<b>9</b>
Crises and Chinese Power Projections	10
Military Modernization and Weapons Buildup	11
<i>Nuclear Weapons Modernization Efforts</i>	12
<i>Conventional Force Modernizations</i>	13
<i>Chinese Proliferation Policies</i>	15
Chinese Domestic Social Policy	16
Political Rhetoric in Communist China	17
Policy on Territory and Territorial Claims	19
International Organizations and Alliance Formation	19
Economic Components of Chinese Foreign Policy	20
<b>Part Three</b>	
<b>Conclusions Concerning Defensive Realism and the Future of Chinese Power Projections</b>	<b>25</b>
Conclusions	27



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

---

Eric Nathaniel Heller graduated from the Departments of Political Science and Economics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in May 2003. Eric has also completed a Foreign Policy Semester at American University in Washington, D.C. His research interests focus on international security policy and defense analysis concentrating on the Middle East and the East Asia and Pacific region. Within this field, Eric has concentrated on regional security, proliferation, and terrorism. Among his publications are “The Prospect of Power Projections by the People’s Republic of China” published in *Defense and Security Analysis*, as well as “China-MidEast Conundrum” and “Between Iraq and a Hard Line,” both of which were published in *The Washington Times*.

Heller has worked as an intern for the US Department of State’s Bureau of Political-Military Affairs in Washington, DC where he was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation by the Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs. Additionally, he has worked as a defense analyst for the National Defense Council Foundation (NDCF) out of Alexandria, VA. While with NDCF, Heller was responsible for briefing and preparing Congressional testimony for Executive Director, Major F. Andy Messing, Jr. (USAR, Ret.) and preparing medical relief missions that resulted in ground level intelligence from conflict regions in addition to his regular research and analysis on terrorism, proliferation, and regional security.

Heller has represented the University of Illinois as its official delegate to the Student Conference on US Affairs at West Point USMA as well as serving as a student representative to the Cline Symposium on Terrorism and Public Life. He speaks both Modern Standard Arabic as well as Spanish. Following graduation, Eric will relocate to Washington, DC to pursue advanced studies in national and international security and a career in the field.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

---

I owe enormous thanks to Professors Paul Diehl and Julian Palmore of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for their tireless hours of editing and mentoring as a small paper expanded into a much broader undertaking. They not only helped to get this multi-year project off the ground, but stuck with me through the publication process.



## INTRODUCTION

---

*Therefore, analyze the enemy's battle plan to understand its merits and its weaknesses; provoke him to find out the pattern of his movements; make him show himself (hsing) to discover the viability of his battle position; skirmish with him to find out where he is strong and where he is vulnerable.*

Sun Tzu, *The Art of Warfare*

On April 1, 2001, a collision between a United States Navy EP-3 Aries II Reconnaissance plane and a Chinese F-8 fighter jet prompted a renewal of an old debate inside the Washington, DC Beltway and around the world concerning the intentions and direction of the rising Chinese power. That single event further polarized an already divided political community into their respective conservative and liberal beliefs about the People's Republic of China (PRC). This paper strives to understand the intentions of the leadership inside of China through a theoretical prism. The epigraph from the work of Sun Tzu illustrates the motivations for exploring future relations between the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, the United States, and the Middle East. Only by analyzing Chinese military modernizations in the last decade, economic trends, human rights abuses, the behavior of the ruling Communist Party, as well as other indicators can international relations scholars predict whether China is emerging as a partner or a peer competitor to the United States.

In order to assess the ambitions of the Chinese government, the author has chosen to explain the developments in Asia by way of the realist theory of international relations. In doing so, the intent is not to prove the validity of realism in contemporary international relations, but rather takes the approach of Frank W. Wayman and Paul F. Diehl in their book, *Reconstructing Realpolitik*, and evaluates whether realism in its *skeletal* definition is applicable to the changing dynamics of the People's Republic of China. The author acknowledges the shortcomings of realism as a way of all-inclusively explaining and predicting state interactions, but will address the deficiencies of the realist school of thought as they arise with respect to the People's Republic of China.

Bifurcating the concept of realism allows for the evolution of an offensive and a defensive branch of realism and in doing so increases the explanatory precision of realism. These two ideas will be explained further in the next section, yet an elementary definition is needed to begin. Offensive realism implies that a state will build up its security and economic apparatuses as the basic tenets of realism prescribe. The offensive realist state will use this power maximization in order to project its influence to any theater that can be used to increase further the absolute power of the state. Such an idea connotes a quasi-imperialist state that will use its power to influence the social, political, economic, and security sectors of other states. This aggressiveness operates under the seemingly zero-sum game that if State A does not build up its forces to bring lesser states under its control, then State B will do so and use its heightened sphere of influence to force State A to acquiesce to its demands.

On the other hand, while the concept of defensive realism assumes that a state will also build up its security and economic complexes, the intention is to gain as much power as is necessary to defend the state and its interests and thus power is not merely for its own sake. This idea may perplex one into suggesting that a "reasonable defense" is a very relative term especially under the auspices of an anarchical system. Nevertheless, defensive realism assumes that a state will build up power and project it to gain as the Chinese say, "*jing gho*," or safe Chinese borders. The exact definition of *which* borders need to be safe will be addressed in a later portion of the paper.

The subsequent portions of this work will pursue three goals: (1) to arrive at a clear and concise understanding of offensive and defensive realism; (2) to provide a thorough analysis of modern Chinese foreign policy through the lens of realism; and (3) to hypothesize about future power projections by China. In analyzing modern Chinese foreign policy, historical and social components as well as the evolution of the Chinese political system will be briefly addressed. The majority of analysis, though, rests in the economic and security aspects of foreign policy; keying the growing dependence of the Chinese economy on imported oil and the potential for projecting power in order to secure resources vis-à-vis a growing and modernizing military. Additionally, this paper will look at the security aspect of modern Chinese foreign policy and attempt to discern whether China's military policy represents a genuine modernization of an aging system or the preparation for

offensive power projection. The underlying purpose and aim of this research is to understand how the Chinese policymakers are thinking and what their intentions are. Incorporating case studies of neighboring countries, Taiwan, the Middle East, and the United States into a framework of defensive realism, one will have a model that explains past and present Chinese behavior as well as a model capable of predicting the next steps China will take.

The core argument of this paper remains that the foreign policy of the People's Republic of China is consistent with the theory of defensive realism. Specifically, China is trying to secure its Asian sphere of influence and acquire what it sees fit as necessary to defend a developing nation. Furthermore, the idea of *jing gho*, and thus a defensive zone, consists of Taiwan, all portions of mainland China, and arguably many of the oil-rich islands of the South China Sea including, but not limited to, the Spratley Islands. Attacks and so-called saber-rattling against the United States are not intentionally malevolent policies, but done rather to pressure the United States not to involve itself with China's actions and aspirations along the periphery of the South China Sea. Offensive power projections (such as towards the Middle East and/or the United States) are ineffective and hold no true threat, for the current structure of China's security and economic apparatuses (let alone its social and political culture) retains only intermittent and limited capability to exert their forces. Although "nuisance challenges" such as the downing of the US Navy plane or Chinese assistance to Iraq's Air Force do not pose a threat to the US survival, China's policies in the Asian theater as well as in the Middle East are threats to the national security of the United States and cannot be ignored. Simply put, though, a state operating within a defensive realist framework, such as the People's Republic of China, would conclude, based on a rational cost-benefit analysis, that its current social, economic, political, and military resources are not suited to challenge the hegemon in the near term.

---

**Realism Bifurcated: Offensive and Defensive Realism**

---

In order to determine the future of Chinese foreign policy, it is essential to draw upon the basic principles of the realist theory of international relations. Realism in its purest form is based upon the following assumptions: 1) that states are primary and rational actors, 2) states adjust their policies in order to further their own self-interests, and 3) for states, military and national security interests are the principal policies.<sup>1</sup> Further along in this analysis some of these assumptions will be slightly relaxed, at times incorporating principles related to structural realism. The author believes that in order to truly understand how a state is operating, one must study social, economic, security, and political elements of a country and how each of these parts interacts with one another. Such adjustments will include the role of multinational corporations and international organizations in the policy calculus, and economic determinants will be combined with military factors in determining the power of a state. Thus, the principal measures of power potential are population, gross national product (GNP), military size, and defense expenditures and trends. Only by incorporating all of these dynamics can a researcher grasp how a country's leadership is thinking and as such, what that leadership's next moves will be.

Realists divide state interests into those that are considered high politics—security and survival—and low politics—trade and other socio-economic policies. Under realism, the state will use all means necessary to achieve the objectives of the state up to and including the use of force.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the capacity for one state to influence another state is determined by: 1) its capabilities, 2) its willingness to assert these capabilities and accept the consequences, and 3) a state's relative capabilities compared to its competitor that may also include non-traditional power determinants.<sup>3</sup>

Realism concludes that states are motivated by power and national interest and as such will pursue gains relative to their peers and adversaries. The argument continues that in a system characterized by anarchy and threats viewed as omnipresent, a state will strive to increase its tangible power assets in comparison to its nearest threat or competitor.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently, nations will seek to maintain their territorial integrity and will focus on military security in its interactions with other actors in the system. Additionally, material capabilities, leadership, and unity are viewed as the center of power. States may also form alliances to balance power and thus increase their relative security.<sup>5</sup> Because states are rational actors, they will assess the costs and benefits of engaging in provocative actions and determine whether or not the expected utility that can come from such aggressive policies will be worth the consequences.<sup>6</sup>

The realist's pursuit of security vis-à-vis power amalgamation tends to lead actors, especially those adhering to defensive realism, towards strategies of deterrence. This is in part because military policies under realism will most likely result in some sort of an arms race characterized by the security dilemma and will be in pursuit of a minimum credible deterrent. In classic deterrence, a state will avoid projecting force onto another state for fear that such an action will result in retaliation with unacceptably high casualties and damage. As this paper will later demonstrate, attempting to deploy China's increased military might against the United States would be fruitless, for it would surely result in massive losses or possibly the destruction of the People's Republic of China depending on the extent of such a challenge. However, the desire to confront the United States has been observed in the plane crash during April 2001 and hard-line rhetoric throughout recent years from the Chinese government. Nevertheless, a fundamental lack of ability or willingness to act upon such desires leads to the security dilemma. In such a circumstance, relative changes in the policies or actions of one state are viewed in an extremely skeptical light by a rival. As such, a buildup of arms, military mobilizations, or economically aggressive policies by State A are met with equal policies by State B and so on. The dyadic relationship characterized by the security dilemma is an environment ripe with misperceptions by both states and a fundamental lack of trust for any verbal or written commitment. This ambiguity of motivation contributes in part to the growing mistrust and turbulence between the United States and the People's Republic of China that will be highlighted later in this paper.

The problem with such a security dilemma is illustrated as a case in point with the People's Republic of China's recent military modernization projects and economic expansion. A state's own quest for security and stability may generate its own security dilemma by appearing seemingly threatening to others.<sup>7</sup> Based on this paper's research, it is fair to conclude that China's motivations for modernization and the policies that have been used to pursue this modernization have resulted in a security dilemma. In other words, calls to nationalist

pride combined with growing trade deficits in China's favor, aggressive military buildups and modernization, and hard-line political agendas have led other states to feel that they might be the target of China's newfound power, and only gains relative to the Chinese will keep their countries safe.

However, realists also argue that a competitor will strive to emulate the policies and general characteristics of the state to which they aspire in order to be viewed as similar and non-threatening by the hegemon and international community.<sup>8</sup> To support this argument is China's bid for the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing and the drive for admission into the World Trade Organization (WTO). Neither policy would seem to improve the security of China drastically; however, being a member of the WTO and hosting the Olympic Games bring economic implications and prestige—signs of a powerful nation on the rise. No longer would the PRC be viewed as a rogue power, engaged in diplomatic tiffs over Taiwan and a downed US Navy plane, but as a mainstream country capable of rivaling what is at times viewed as a heavy-handed United States. Great powers are rewarded if they *appear* both strong and potentially dangerous because states ally with the strongest and most threatening powers.

At the same time, it must be mentioned that realism often suggests that states will balance against a threatening hegemon. In many respects this is what can be observed through China's behavior. China has worked to be a participant in international organizations, treaties, and events in order to appear benign to the United States and the rest of the world, yet these policies simply represent efforts towards power amalgamation by the Chinese government. Part of this is the argument that states will seek out policies that increase their relative power compared to their nearest competitors. Alliances may provide relative gains for a state in terms of rapid increases in power potential, yet they hold no promise for a lasting, trustworthy dyadic relationship, as most alliances are seen as temporary. As these basic principles of realism have now been established, the next step is to break the large concept of realism down into its two variations: offensive and defensive.

### **Offensive and Defensive Realism**

In the simplest bifurcation of realism, Sean Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller argue that realism is composed of both an aggressive and offensive version and of a more defensive orientation. In offensive realism, states view security as a fixed pie; unless a state works to increase its own security and resources by coercive means, others will take their portions and use them against the state that surrendered such capabilities in order to obtain more security. In such a circumstance, war and other aggressive military postures are more likely, and international competition will be rampant. At the same time, those states that believe that there is an infinite amount of security in the international system will adopt defensive strategies and view security as non-zero sum, therefore allowing themselves simply to work to retain their own security.<sup>9</sup> In this configuration, the old cliché that the best offense is a good defense holds true. Chairman Mao Zedong once called for an “active defense,” by which he meant that the Chinese must assert an “offensive defense, or defense through decisive engagement.”<sup>10</sup> Mao's statement provides a springboard for this paper's argument that China is best described as a defensive realist state.

In order to suggest later in this paper that the People's Republic of China's behavior fits into a model for defensive realism, it is necessary to elaborate first on the behaviors and actions that are demonstrative of this form of realism. In Table 1 on the next page, many different state actions have been posited and the behavior that corresponds to both offensive and defensive realism are explained. Descriptions of the categories of action follow.

**Table 1: Traits Associated with Different Types of Realism**

Category of Action	Offensive Realism	Defensive Realism
Crisis	Initiator	Responds to hostile actions (however, aggressive political rhetoric may aggravate situation)
Military Modernization/Weapons Buildup	Immediate, rapid buildup with a goal of utilizing all resources to maximize power potential	Goal to modernize to parity or near-parity levels with nearest strategic competitor—aims to create a credible minimum deterrent
Domestic Social Policy	Suppress domestic opposition without responding to international objections	Control internal dissent to the point that state can appear unified in its policies
Political Rhetoric	Open, aggressive, unclear intentions	Clearly defined policies and objectives
Territory	Blind projection of power to acquire more territory as projection potential permits	Target area viewed as defensive perimeter within which the state will project its power
International Organizations (IOs)	Global and/or regional rivalries, cooperation and involvement in IOs difficult as power projection will decrease trust of IO members	Regional rivalries, large-scale participation in IOs
Alliance Formation	Offensive alliance possible; after-effect of an offensive realist on its former allies threaten relative gains obtained	Will only engage in regional alliances if they play into potential for regional hegemony
Economic Policy	Pirating, economic sabotage, exploitation of cheap domestic labor	Champion regional resources in large-scale, global trade cooperation and trade organizations, exploit cheap domestic labor to an extent

Crisis refers to any political, economic, social, or military event that may arise between the focus state and one or more actors and leads to either the threat to use force; the use of force through military exercises, tests, or deployments; or a military confrontation that may or may not include enemy fatalities. If a researcher of foreign policy was to analyze a given crisis that had broken out, he would observe that under an offensive framework, the state had initiated the behavior that had led to the crisis. Under defensive realism, however, it would be suggested that the state was acting in a reactionary manner to the threat posed.

Military modernization refers to the speed, intensity, and motivation behind a state's military buildup and/or weapons procurement policy. A defensive realist state seeks to obtain a military capable of a minimal credible deterrent relative to its competitor(s), whereby the buildup of material gains is obvious, but only to the

point that it reaches parity or near-parity with strategic peers. On the other hand, the offensive state adopts a military policy that builds up its arsenal and consequently its national capability as much and as quickly as possible.

Domestic social policy describes how a state's government treats ethnic, religious, and linguistic minority groups within the state's border and whether they seek to blindly subjugate them or have respect for human rights. Both the defensive and offensive realist state works to put down internal movements seeking to disrupt state policy, yet the aggressiveness with which each variation does so differs. The offensive realist state will not respond to international objections and pressures to curtail abuses of minorities and political dissidents. A defensive realist state, however, stops short of blind persecution, instead working to control these movements only to the point that the international community sees the country as unified.

Political rhetoric is a subjective idea that pertains to how a state interacts diplomatically with other states and how said state promises to pursue its policy objectives. The concept of territory is crucial, especially to this paper, in that it highlights a given state's respect for the notion of the Westphalian nation-state and a nation's policy concerning additional territory acquisition. Where an offensive realist state will overtly declare its broad intention to challenge the hegemon and regional competitors, the defensive realist state will be very clear in what policies it is pursuing, the objectives behind those policies, and how it will react to any member of the international community attempting to disrupt its agenda.

Participation in international organizations, a state's ability and desire to cooperate, and alliances into which a state will enter are the crux of the next two categories. Offensive realist states typically will quickly find themselves in the middle of international or regional rivalries that disrupt the opportunity for the development of trust—opportunities which otherwise could lead to the creation of alliances or admittance into international organizations. On the other hand, the defensive realist state will most likely be entrenched in regional rivalries as a result of its assertion of a defensive perimeter. Although regional alliances are highly unlikely because of this, where they are available, such alliances will be utilized only to the point that they assist in eventually acquiring a regional hegemonic status. Nevertheless, that same state may utilize international organizations to bolster its international prestige and opportunities to assist in the modernization process.

Finally, economic policy is simply the state policy of expanding its economy and securing the resources and capital needed to do so. As it pertains to economic and energy security, the offensive realist state will assert its power, seeking to control the oil markets to include price and output influence by using economic, political, and military threats of and uses of force such as sanctions and military strikes. Conversely, the defensive realist state is concerned with securing trade routes and assuring relations with export countries conducive to continuing energy trade. Under such conditions, this would not only include military expansion to defend energy trade routes, but such indirect strategies as maintaining a cooperative relationship with the European Union or the United States to defend Middle East oil interests.

Going back to more general terms, power under defensive realism works as an instrument or tool to obtain minimum policy objectives, whereas offensive realism holds power to be of supreme importance to furthering states' policy objectives to the fullest extent that capabilities permit.<sup>11</sup>

Defensive realists believe that much of international politics is a Prisoners' Dilemma or a more complex security dilemma. The desire to gain mixes with the need for protection; much of statecraft consists of structuring situations so that states can maximize their common interests. The ever-present fear that others will take advantage of the state—and the knowledge that others have reciprocal worries—leads diplomats to seek arrangements that will reduce if not neutralize these concerns.<sup>12</sup>

In this respect, the defensive realist will utilize a *minimax strategy*; maximizing minimum gain and minimizing maximum loss. This paper argues that states that adhere to a defensive strategy will not only adopt defensive policies, but those states will also form a sphere or arc of influence in their immediate global theater that they will claim as a defensive perimeter. Within such a region, a state is willing to project its power to retain control over that which it feels belongs to it. Defensive realism argues that states will respond to the anarchy of the international system with the use of force out of fear, rather than out of hegemonic desires. It is also important to note that both defensive and offensive realists share the idea of relative gains as all realist states do. A defensive realist would be concerned with the relative gains necessary to secure control over its defensive perimeter, for example, as well as all of the other prescriptions for a defensive realist state presented

in Table 1. Similarly, while an offensive realist state is concerned with absolute gains to a great extent, it also strives to obtain relative gains until it has the capability to overcome the defenses and conquer a territory or state, for example, as well as the other ideas indicated in Table 1. At the same time, though, defensive realists assert that analysts should not overstate the role of anarchy in international relations, for global interactions provide incentives for restrained behavior. Reckless, expansionist behavior characteristic of offensive realism is a result of domestic political factors, and not attributable to anarchy.<sup>13</sup> In a globalized world where trade and economic policies carry great influence and the ability to adopt internationally accepted, imperialist policies is non-existent, a defensive strategy is likely to be the most widely accepted and tolerated.

Now that a framework for the variations of realism has been established, it is possible to explore a case study of the People's Republic of China. The next portions of this analysis will serve the dual purposes of establishing the accuracy of the distinctions posited earlier between offensive and defensive realism as well as proving that China is in fact operating within the realm of defensive realism. Earlier in this section, general assertions concerning the behavior of both offensive and defensive realist states were explained in each of the sectors that Table 1 presented. In order, though, to argue that China is truly a defensive realist state, this analysis will look for specific policy and behavior traits. Most notably will be policies in the political, social, economic, and security sector that support China's objective in creating a defensive perimeter. Such policies will include the harshest political rhetoric towards other regional states trying to gain control of disputed territories in the South China Sea. Also, it is necessary to look for military modernizations that focus on developing military capabilities with the potential to deploy successfully within this defensive cordon and not a push for global capabilities. This analysis also hypothesizes that the economic policies of the People's Republic of China will pursue energy security—in particular with respect to oil—in order to support its expanding economic and security infrastructure.



## PART TWO

---

### Chinese Foreign Policy

The most succinct method to describing what drives Chinese foreign policy is to highlight what is suggested to be the “informal ideology” of the foreign policy of the People’s Republic of China. The Chinese view of themselves is the following:

1) The Chinese are a great people, and China is a great nation, 2) The Chinese nation deserves a much better fate than that which it has experienced in the modern world, 3) China should be accorded compensatory treatment from those powers which have insulted or injured it in the past, and 4) As a great nation, China naturally occupies a central position in world affairs and must be treated as a great power.<sup>1</sup>

This aura of arrogance and greatness has been carried in the minds of the Chinese for centuries and modernization efforts have rekindled such calls to eminence. As the investigation of China’s foreign policies continues, it is essential to bear in mind that the above mentioned characteristics motivate policy as an intangible feeling that drives the country and its population towards the goal of global leadership.

Nationalism reflects the psychological necessity [*sic*] to draw a boundary between the Chinese and those who are accused of imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism.<sup>2</sup>

However, China avoids the identity question by turning around and first identifying the “other”—most notably Japan, the United States, and the former Soviet Union—instead of themselves.<sup>3</sup> Thus, one can see the apparent schism in China, whereby the government and population are proud and determined to ascend in the international community, yet remain unsure about the means they should be advancing—peaceful integration with the international system or confrontational competition.

As these sentiments and desires are molded into a comprehensive, grand national strategy, the Chinese leadership seeks to assure that China will rise to great power status by *shaping* the conduct of the international system rather than responding to its conditions.<sup>4</sup> As such the intention seems to be focused on forming the international conditions that provide the opportunity to increase the relative capabilities of the Chinese and in doing so work to prevent the United States from usurping China’s rise. To that end, China views military power as the primary guarantor of “comprehensive security,” while viewing and embracing multilateral diplomatic efforts as partial and conditional.<sup>5</sup> This point seems to pose one explanation as to why China asserts that disputes concerning sovereignty issues ought to be set aside rather than settled in multilateral fora as there is much more to be obtained in terms of relative capabilities by keeping the sovereignty question undecided, especially out of the hands of the major powers and largest international decision-making bodies. Where it suits the PRC to do so, though, China’s government has integrated a policy of “partnership cultivation” to deflect and avoid controversy during its period of economic and military expansion. The Chinese leadership believes that if great powers are put in a position to press China on controversial issues, the benefits that China can potentially reap from the relationship such as trade and investment will be put into jeopardy. Rather it seems more beneficial to employ policies that make China attractive to great powers while at the same time remaining flexible by avoiding decisive alignments with particular states.<sup>6</sup> As such, the Chinese are pursuing a setting that is most conducive to successful pursuit of Chinese national interests.

Even within such a foreign policy framework, one of the most contentious aspects of the PRC’s foreign policy remains its stance on sovereignty. This matter is further complicated by China’s perception of sovereignty as,

Such an abstract concept that China would have to decide case by case if a certain issue involves the principle of sovereignty. There is no guarantee, however, that an issue previously not considered to have involved sovereignty concerns will not have sovereignty implications the next time. It would appear that what sovereignty is about is itself an abstract issue.<sup>7</sup>

With these overarching remarks about the PRC’s foreign policy mentality, this work’s analysis of how China’s practical experiences in foreign policy line up with defensive realism’s postulations can begin.

## Crises and Chinese Power Projections

After dividing realism into offensive and defensive sectors in part one, the author stated that the presence of policies consistent with establishing a defensive perimeter would be central to defending the idea that China was a defensive realist state. Additionally, defensive realism postulates that China will not be the initiator in the vast majority of its crisis situation. In order to solidify these propositions, this paper will make use of Correlates of War (COW) data<sup>8</sup> on Chinese power projections and incidents of militarized disputes. For the purposes of this paper, the COW data used will begin at 1978. This is the year that scholars have designated as the end (and failure) of the Chinese Cultural Revolution when the Chinese leadership was forced to give a significant degree of economic power and independence back to the provinces. As China's government ended the era of The Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution, it subsequently moved into its modern era of foreign policy.

The COW data is presented in three sections in order to model the same analysis that this paper has pursued. COW data is presented in terms of Chinese incidents with the United States, Taiwan, and countries within the defensive perimeter with which this paper has concerned itself (projections towards the Middle East are not included as none appeared within the COW data up to 1992<sup>9</sup>). The countries/islands that have been included within the defensive perimeter include Indonesia, North and South Vietnam, the Spratley Islands and other off-shore islands, and the Philippines.<sup>10</sup> These countries and regions have been selected because they make claims to disputed territories and/or make direct threats to the South China Sea region, which the Chinese have claimed as a defensive perimeter.

Between 1978 and 1992, there were no militarized incidents between the United States and China. Once in 1994 and twice in 2001, the United States and China had militarized disputes regarding US reconnaissance of Chinese territories. In 1994, the Chinese responded to the US dropping of sonar buoys to track a Chinese submarine and in 2001 the Chinese fired warning shots over the bow of a US Navy oceanographic vessel because the Chinese felt that the ship was intruding on its territorial waters. Similarly in April 2001, the Chinese downed a US Navy EP-3 reconnaissance plane after claiming that it was intruding in airspace above China's territorial waters. In 2000, the Chinese also conducted further tests of their ICBMs in protest of the possibility of future US sales of advanced weaponry to Taiwan. This evidence is very consistent with the theoretical suggestions of defensive realism. This paper argues that the Chinese are currently not able to militarily challenge US hegemonic status. However, saber-rattling techniques such as the two disputes in 2001 support the idea that China will show its objections militarily to any other states' intrusion on the defensive perimeter that it feels it has the right to defend. Furthermore, while China retains a significant military loss of strength gradient that precludes it from challenging the United States on a global scale, the Chinese will confront the United States within its defensive perimeter where it feels that it has the political reasoning and military resources to do so. Additionally, while the Chinese would claim that the United States initiated these crises by violating China's territorial sovereignty, it is evident that like defensive realism predicts, the Chinese initiated the conflict only as a response to what were perceived as inflammatory moves by the United States within its defensive zone.

Between 1978 and 1992, there were three militarized disputes between the People's Republic of China and Taiwan. The three disputes occurred in 1987, 1988, and 1991 and were considered to be instigated equally by both countries. The levels of violence included two raids and a threat to blockade; however, none of the disputes reached very high levels of conflict. Following 1992, there has been a dramatic increase of militarized incidents between the two states. In 1993 and 1994, China issued multiple alerts and deployed military exercises mostly in protest of Taiwan's push for greater international attention and what China viewed as political aggressiveness geared towards gaining independence. In 1995 and 1996, there were multiple incidents in which China would show its force through military deployments and exercises in order to assert control over the South China Sea and to protest further developments towards independence in Taiwan. 1999 was a very tumultuous year for the two states as China tested missiles over Taiwan as well as deployed air sorties over the island in response to pro-independence remarks by the Taiwanese President concerning the desire to engage China on a "state-to-state" level. The year culminated with China's deployment of 100 M-Class guided missiles across the Taiwan Strait. Commensurate with Taiwanese elections in 2000, in which a pro-independence candidate was elected, shows of force by the Chinese greatly increased. These continued into 2001, with large-scale Chinese military exercises and the confrontation with Australian ships that were passing too close to sensitive areas of Taiwan and the South China Sea that the Chinese argued that they controlled.

The dynamics of the cross-strait relationship in the past twenty-four years function according to the predictions of a defensive realist state's crisis behavior. China does not act as a blatant initiator of

confrontations, but rather seems to be responding to aggressive political rhetoric by the Taiwanese pro-independence movement. Furthermore, the somewhat restrained nature of the disputes seems to reflect the idea that China does not feel the need to project its power inside its defensive perimeter unless it feels a great enough challenge, such as an overt declaration of independence by Taiwan. In the future, it is most likely that a similar relationship will endure unless one or both of the following circumstances develop: 1) Taiwan declares independence, which would almost assuredly bring about a full deployment of Chinese assets to reclaim the territory, or 2) a significant development in the Chinese military enables the Chinese to overcome its own military challenges to reclaiming the island with minimal collateral damage.

Finally, within the pre-determined defensive perimeter, between 1978 and 1992 there were sixteen militarized disputes. The majority of these disputes were within the dyadic relationship between China and South Vietnam. Of the sixteen disputes, ten belonged to the ongoing feud between China and South Vietnam, which included seizures and all-out interstate war. The rest of the disputes included shows of force, alerts, and the threat to use force. Only in two disputes did a seizure and border violation follow as a part of the crisis. Following 1992, China has employed blockades and utilized its military as a show of force towards Vietnam concerning the Spratley Islands. Until recent years, the Chinese have also been involved in militarized disputes with the Japanese over control of the Senaku Islands. China has also used its navy nearly every year as a show of force towards the Philippines to assert control over the Spratley Islands. Lastly, in 1996 there were shows of force by the Chinese directed towards the Indonesians regarding the Natuna Islands.

The evidence regarding China's use of force within its defensive perimeter is very consistent with the predictions of a defensive realist state. In all of the sixteen disputes found before 1992, the responsibility for beginning the crisis was shared equally between the states involved. Following 1992, the incidents that occurred seem to indicate a very similar trend, in that China responds to other states taking aggressive stances on the same territorial claims as China with shows of force and blockades. Additionally, the increased pace of militarized disputes within the defensive zone seems to parallel China's increased military and economic influence within the region.

Hegemonic and imperialistic policies were not at the roots of China's modern power projections. Instead, the intrusion into what China tacitly viewed as its territory and area of influence resulted in conflict. Based on the COW data up to 1992 and newspaper reports to date, the overall trend has been an increase in the number of times that China has projected its power. Including those incidents involving the United States, with very few exceptions, all of China's modern power projections have occurred within the region including Taiwan, the disputed territories, and the South China Sea—just as this analysis hypothesizes.

Although nearly every instance of past Chinese force projection is limited to a clearly defined theater, two caveats must be made. Between 1978 and 1986 there were five militarized disputes between China and Russia, of which four were clashes and the fifth, interstate war. Of the five disputes, only one was clearly instigated by the Chinese. Additionally, China confronted India in 1979 and 1985 with an alert and a military clash, respectively. In both of these disputes, though, COW data suggests that both India and China equally initiated the dispute. Although confrontations between these two countries and China may contradict the expectations of a defensive realist state according to the idea of a defensive perimeter, two points can be made in defense of these expectations. First, as defensive realism suggests, with the exception of one dispute, none of these conflicts were clearly initiated by the Chinese. Second, the idea of a defensive perimeter was based early in this paper on the idea of *jing gho*, the need for China's borders to be secure. A challenge to the security of its northern and western borders by Russia and India respectively may be part of the explanation for such disputes outside of China's defensive zone.

### **Military Modernization and Weapons Buildup**

Military modernizations have by far brought the most scrutiny to the evolving policies of the People's Republic of China. The most important questions that policymakers and scholars alike have been asking are: 1) what are the capabilities of the modern Chinese war-fighting machine? and 2) what are the intentions of the regime with a newly modernized military? The most recent catalyst of all of this analysis was the announcement early in 2001 that the PRC would increase military expenditures by 17 percent.<sup>11</sup> In order to understand the implications of such a policy initiative, however, one must consider some basic theories concerning arming and the propensity to go to war.

One such argument is that of *para bellum*, which makes the case for a deterrent strategy, whereby if one desires peace then one must prepare for war.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, though,

...Arms buildups may only represent a shift in the balance of power that is fundamentally more significant to the relationship than the military buildup itself.<sup>13</sup>

A country will arm itself for a variety of reasons: in response to arms buildups in a rivalry, national pride, defensive means, future plans of projecting power in order to achieve policy objectives, and the list goes on. This paper and adherents to defensive realism argue that a country will arm itself and modernize its military to the point of parity or near-parity with its nearest strategic competitor. Additionally, the defensive realist state seeks to establish a minimum credible deterrent whereby it has the military force to back up its claims to and its projections within its defensive sphere. The objective will be to create both a theater denial capability, especially in terms of US access to the Pacific region,<sup>14</sup> and the means to effectively decide military incidents with other states in the region. In the case of China, building up its military will hopefully create a credible deterrent and thus avoid the need to project significant amounts of force into its defensive zone.

Realism suggests that displays of resolve and capability will deter aggression, so arms and allies could help avoid unwanted conflict escalation. If that fails, however, they are useful tools for fighting a war.<sup>15</sup>

Accordingly, the conclusion of this brief section on the impact of military modernizations is that the actual buildup cannot be considered a threat in and of itself. Part of the explanation for this is that military expenditures are highly correlated with GNP, and therefore countries will arm themselves more as they have more resources. Based on China's rapid growth in GNP in recent decades, it should not be all that surprising that resources dedicated to modernizing the military have increased. However, the threat emerges when one considers how China will project its newfound military power based on its increasingly nationalistic political and socio-economic agenda.

The rest of this section will be divided into three main sub-sections: the buildup of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction (WMD) arsenals in the Chinese military, the increase and modernization of conventional forces, and the threat posed by continuing proliferation efforts of the People's Republic of China.

### ***Nuclear Weapons Modernization Efforts***

According to estimates, the People's Republic of China's current nuclear arsenal consists of about:

400 devices, 300 of which consist of warheads and gravity [dumb] bombs for use on its strategic "triad" of land-based ballistic missiles, bomber and attack aircraft, and one nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN)...[and] has enough fissile material to double or triple its arsenal.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover,

China is nearing an historic convergence between doctrine and capability, allowing it to increasingly achieve a degree of credible minimal deterrence vis-à-vis the continental United States—a convergence of its doctrine and capability it has not confidently possessed since the weaponization of China's nuclear program in the mid-1960s.<sup>17</sup>

That doctrine can be seen in the statements, informal motivations, and beliefs of modern Chinese foreign policy. This effective growth in power projection capability coupled with a long-standing animosity towards the so-called Western imperialists makes for a very tumultuous situation. The theoretical framework under which the paper operates would conclude that China would use nuclear weapons as an "offensive, preventive war strategy." As modernization is still under way, there is no way that the PRC could detect, let alone defend, an incoming attack.<sup>18</sup> What this suggests is that China intends on continuing its nuclear buildup, albeit at lower levels, and with a greater emphasis on more technologically advanced weapons rather than sheer numbers of nuclear warheads and related delivery vehicles. According to intelligence community estimates, much of the doctrine that has directed the nuclear drive and other military modernizations still carries from the policies implored by Mao Zedong.

...Chinese communist military success of "People's War" emphasized guerilla tactics within a protracted war strategy, the importance of manpower over technology, the moral and physical attrition of the enemy over time, and the importance of controlling the strategic "hinterland" to surround the

enemy's base in the developed urban centers. For nuclear doctrine, this translated into 1) opposition to quick or preemptive military action from a position of weakness, 2) an appreciation for "strategic retreat" and the primacy of defense in the interest of eventual victory, 3) a subordination of a strictly military viewpoint to the political-military goals of the revolution and 4) the ultimate superiority of man over weapons and technology.<sup>19</sup>

This was the military doctrine that Mao preached would help the Chinese to emerge as a global power. Even today, China's strategy focuses on winning without fighting, transforming its capabilities "beyond limited war," and employing asymmetric and irregular warfare tactics to defeat enemies with overwhelming strength and deployment capabilities.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, the last point that Mao highlights—the superiority of man over technology—seems to carry some explanation for the reason that the Chinese WMD program has progressed in the manner that has been observed. The Chinese nuclear arsenal is still extremely limited and although it has the capability to hit the continental United States, a credible minimal deterrent threshold (at least from the US perspective of mutual assured destruction from the Cold War) has not yet been attained.

To underscore China's strategy, during a meeting between a retired American military official and a high-ranking People's Liberation Army (PLA) officer statements were issued in which tensions flared over US support of Taiwan's autonomy from the mainland and the use of nuclear weapons. During the exchange, the PLA officer stated that under no circumstances would the United States deploy nuclear weapons against mainland China, for they care more about Los Angeles than about Taipei and the rest of Taiwan. In the end, the PLA officer stated, "If you hit us, we will hit you too."<sup>21</sup> This anecdote stresses the feelings that the Chinese hold and the motivation behind their buildup of nuclear arms.

First, China's historical perceptions of itself as a "victim" at the hands of aggressive, more powerful states limited political choices—especially in the early years of China's nuclear weapons development—which may have favored more offensive and threatening nuclear postures. Second, the period of China's early development and eventual deployment of its rudimentary nuclear arsenal coincided closely with a turbulent period of domestic political upheaval.<sup>22</sup>

China's official policy on the use of nuclear weapons is that they were developed simply for defensive purposes and that China has adopted a no-first use policy. The damning part of this argument is that the no-first use policy only applies to states that China views as independent of itself. Regions such as Taiwan, the Spratley Islands, and other territory in the South China Sea to which China has laid claim are not necessarily included in such a no-first use policy (it is essential to note of course that the use of nuclear weapons in situations such as the above mentioned is highly unlikely, for it would undoubtedly "mutilate the prize in the process"<sup>23</sup>). Additionally, the possible futility of China's no-first use policy simply fits with the capabilities of its current arsenal and the failure to actually assert a credible minimum deterrent.<sup>24</sup>

### ***Conventional Force Modernizations***

In addition to the growth in nuclear arsenals, during the 1991 Gulf War the Chinese finally saw the true capabilities of the US military and its advanced laser-guided munitions (LGMs). Such precision in weaponry posed a direct threat to the growing Chinese arsenals and provided a further impetus for the development of highly developed military assets. As such, in its White Paper on Defense Policy in 2000, the Chinese government stated that its objective was to maintain a new kind of regional stability and security and to prevent the encroachment of foreign governments on China's sovereign interests in the South China Sea.<sup>25</sup> Such a statement is very consistent with the rhetoric and military posture that one could expect from a defensive realist state. China's conventional forces have been undergoing rapid modernization efforts and engaging in regular war games as a form of foreign policy. It is in this sector of the Chinese military that conventional deterrence is established. With a recent concentration on rapid mobility operations, maritime denial, long-range air raids, and various air combat missions,<sup>26</sup> China has striven towards forming joint operations command systems and joint logistics systems,<sup>27</sup> seemingly directing military planning towards commodity consolidation.

The modernization efforts have increased the effectiveness of the Chinese military, yet their military still remains significantly below levels of parity with the US military in the Asia-Pacific region. The People's Liberation Army has undergone considerable changes in recent years. The national government, in attempts to appear less corrupt to the international community, has worked to divest national industries from PLA influence. Additionally, the 1.7 million man ground forces that comprise the PLA have been shaved down in

order to be a more flexible structure to face the challenges of modern warfare,<sup>28</sup> and seems to represent a more defensive move rather than an offensive buildup. The result of this move will be to increase the mobility of ground forces, enable the military to rapidly deploy, and decrease the amount of bureaucracy in the PLA. The greatest hindrance, though, remains the PLA's sealift capability, which can only carry between 10,000 and 15,000 PLA troops (plus vehicles and paratroopers).<sup>29</sup> This deficiency places the potential for a successful amphibious assault on Taiwan as poor at best. However, recent modernizations and decreases in the size of the infantry will arguably make this a concern in the near term if these efforts are successful in making the PLA a more flexible and transportable fighting asset.

Together with large-scale weapons sales from Russia, the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), has boosted its capabilities. The disclosure of plans to acquire two 8,000-ton Sovremenny-class guided missile destroyers (DDGs)<sup>30</sup>—whose principle aim will be to reject the sea lanes of the South China Sea to anyone opposing China's policies in its defensive perimeter—reinforces the growth in the blue-water naval capacity of the PLAN. One expert defense analyst posits that,

The trend in modern naval warfare in the 21<sup>st</sup> century...will likely involve states which seek to deny control of some portion of the sea to the powerful navies, whether at a critical choke point or in the waters adjacent to their coast.<sup>31</sup>

Recent naval acquisitions and military exercises by the Chinese support this claim as a means of defending their defensive zone.

Finally, the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) is also benefiting from advanced Russian deliveries. The Su-20MKK deep-strike and interceptor and the Su-27UBK fighter have increased the PLAAF's regional air superiority.<sup>32</sup> Although by Western military standards these do not pose a credible threat to global air superiority, in regional and localized conflicts such improvements increase Chinese capabilities tremendously and are thus very much in line with the predictions of defensive realism's military buildup. As an aside, it is important to note that in the 1990s Israel opted at the last minute not to sell the Phalcon airborne warning and control system (AWACS) aircraft to China; however, reports following the take down of the US Navy EP-3 plane suggest that the Chinese F-8 jet was armed with Israeli-sold Python-3 missiles. This weapons sales path will have to be closely monitored in the future, not only to see how far the Chinese are progressing, but how much of Israel's advanced weapons systems that are indigenously created by the United States are being sold to the Chinese. Such sales of US-originated technology pose a threat to the United States as its military secrets are sold by a close ally to a threat in the Asia-Pacific theater. However, the Sino-Israeli relationship that involves the proliferation of US weaponry is a subject in and of itself that must be explored in further analyses.

Finally, while still undergoing military modernizations, China conducts annual (if not more frequent) war games in the South China Sea and in the Straits of Taiwan. The use of commercial frigates and freighters in these exercises puts into question how much the Chinese need to streamline their army in order to be able to transport more of the PLA in an amphibious attack.<sup>33</sup> According to reports by Beijing sources,

...The main goals of the exercises are to practice "attacking and occupying an outlying Taiwanese island and fighting off an aircraft carrier." The mention of an aircraft carrier was seen as a reference to the U.S. Navy.<sup>34</sup>

Such a statement of definitive purpose in the exercises underscores that the Chinese would militarily confront the United States, but only in the sphere of influence where China asserts a defensive realist posture. Although the modern Chinese military has increased its professionalism and its level of technology, the Communist Party still strives to ensure unwavering loyalty to the Party through mandatory ideological training for the rank and file military personnel.<sup>35</sup> The Chinese government's social policy of maintaining control over its citizenry is easily implemented within the military structure and as such, the result is a military force always willing to execute the policies of the central government.

By all indications, China has geared its modernization efforts into what it views as a defensive posture. More precisely, China has streamlined its infantry and armored divisions for rapid deployment, acquired sea vessels capable of denying access to foreign navies into the South China Sea, and bought advanced fighter aircraft capable of regional deployments and engagements. These developments seem indicative of a very restrained offensive buildup, capable of exacting itself anywhere within China's defensive perimeter. It is in this respect that these moves can be viewed as defensive, for China will most likely need to respond rapidly to a

crisis within its defensive zone instigated by another state. Based on this analysis of Chinese military developments, it seems that all of them are consistent with the suggestions of defensive realism.

### ***Chinese Proliferation Policies***

Coupled with nuclear and conventional military modernizations are the proliferation policies in which the Chinese regularly engage. Reports indicate that the Chinese assisted the Iraqis, against UN sanctions, in laying fiber optic cable that linked Iraqi missile batteries and their long-range radar deployments.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, on May 1, 2001 a US spy satellite observed the shipment of nuclear-capable missile components entering Pakistan from across the Chinese border.<sup>37</sup> The Bush Administration has also placed sanctions on the Chinese arms manufacturer, China Metallurgical Equipment, for continued sales of missile technology to Pakistan.<sup>38</sup> Although some may argue that China's proliferation to Pakistan merely seeks to offset China's regional competitor in India,<sup>39</sup> fears of continued Chinese proliferation not only threaten stability of the regions to which Chinese weapons are being proliferated but also jeopardize overarching US foreign policy concerns. The biggest recipients of Chinese-proliferated weapons are North Korea, Pakistan, and Iraq—three countries that the United States has *at some point* deemed as rogue states and against which the United States intends to deploy a national missile defense (NMD). Finally, compounding the extensions of the Sino-Russian Friendship Pact are reports by the US intelligence community (IC) that Russia and China are working jointly in developing systems capable of cyber attacks against the United States through information warfare.<sup>40</sup>

Sales of technology further assist the growing Chinese economy and fund the modernizing Chinese military projects. Policymakers in China see arms sales as a foreign policy tool and a way for China to create new political ties with other countries.<sup>41</sup> Such a strategy of proliferation is much more representative of a defensive realist state than an offensive state. If China's ambition is to create alliances and friendly political relations and in doing so is able to benefit their economy, its behavior is most consistent with a defensive realist state. Regardless of the destabilizing effect of weapons sales to the regions to which China proliferates, if the goal of selling arms is to gain partners then the Chinese display defensive realist traits. The IC's assessment of China's current activities is as follows:

...In the last two decades the overall scope of Chinese proliferation activities has declined across the board. The geographic distribution of Chinese proliferation-relevant exports has narrowed from almost a dozen countries to three: Iran, Pakistan, and to a lesser extent North Korea.<sup>42</sup>

In the Sino-Iranian relationship, it is important to note that reports have surfaced suggesting that Chinese weapons sales to Iran have been conducted in exchange for Iran's non-interference with upheaval in China's Muslim-dominated Xinjiang province. Chinese firms, outside of the central government, have also been found to be selling dual-use missile technology products to other countries, such as to Syria, Libya, and Iraq.<sup>43</sup>

The best way to interpret recent military modernization by the PRC is that the increased capabilities of the PLA is a military advantage in the PRC's dyadic relationship with Taiwan and has increased the possibility for a much more belligerent Chinese stance on reunification.<sup>44</sup>

In sum, a few points need to be reiterated concerning the modernization of China's military. Defensive realism theorizes that a state will increase its military assets to the point of near-parity with its closest strategic competitor and in doing so will seek to establish a credible minimal deterrent. Coupling this is the defensive realist state's desire to establish a defensive perimeter within which it can effectively project its power. China has increased its military assets in some places, utilized technological advances to increase its lethality, and streamlined other portions of its war-fighting machine to respond to warfare challenges in the twenty-first century. The result has been the creation of a military force posture geared to defending a defensive zone that still retains a significant Chinese loss of strength gradient outside of this perimeter. China's military has created a nuclear deterrent in its region and embarked on an air force and naval doctrine centered on theater denial capability. Finally, its ground forces have been improved to create the ability for rapid mobilization within the defensive perimeter. As such, all of the developments of the PLA are consistent with those predictions of the defensive realist state.

### Chinese Domestic Social Policy

Mao Zedong once referred to the United States as a “paper tiger,” and as such any serious test of America’s resolve and ability to fight and win a war against the Chinese would be unsuccessful. Most people would heartily reject this notion in the twenty-first century with the United States at the head of a unipolar, hegemonic system. Instead, although Mao made this statement years ago, it continues to apply to the Chinese foreign policy making machine as it is representative of an enduring nationalistic call to right the humiliation of the Chinese at the hands of the West during the nineteenth century. Just one example of this comes from China’s ordinary citizens following the attacks on the United States on September 11. Being described as a “dangerous sign of political immaturity and chip-on-the-shoulder nationalism,” internet chat rooms on September 11, 2001 had comments that read, “Now the day has come for the American dogs...Serves ‘em right...So cool to see America bombed. Guys, let’s use the Internet to wage war on ‘em as well.”<sup>45</sup> Although not representative of the overarching political attitude in the People’s Republic of China, these statements go a long way in expressing underlying social feelings. Considering the impact of the downfall of China following the era of dynasties, though, it should not be surprising at all that many Chinese have adopted the feeling of *jing gho* or safe and secure borders for China. This idea conveys the feeling that the Chinese want to be free from what they view as corrupting influences from Western nations and wish to secure their own borders for internal growth and ascension.

Part of China’s nationalism is rooted in its domestic social policy. This internal policy is a good indicator of how foreign policy will be formed on a few different levels. First, criticism of China’s social and human rights policies by members of the international community inevitably sours relations on other foreign policy matters and incites a more belligerent stance by the Chinese. Second, part of China’s nationalist agenda demands that it present a unified front to the world. The backbone of this unification is a suppressive domestic social policy. Finally, as Table 1 indicated earlier in this paper, a defensive realist state will have very clear political policy objectives and an attempt to subvert these will result in power projection. One of these objectives is the international recognition of the right to national sovereignty. The Chinese are ardent in their belief that one nation should not meddle in another sovereign country’s issues. As such, a social policy that operates without regard for international condemnation supports this belief. Accordingly, if the Chinese deem it inappropriate for members of the international community to comment on its social policy, then surely much stronger objections will follow in foreign policy decisions such as Taiwan, which China believes to be the issue of a sovereign nation.

Typically, realism does not allow for one to inspect the domestic factors that motivate state policy because it assumes a unitary state. However, this component of realism must be relaxed, as China’s nationalist agenda demands a unified front to present to the world. In order to create this singularity, China’s central government has suppressed various internal voices within the state. Accordingly, the social aspects of Chinese domestic and international affairs in recent times must be analyzed in order to predict effectively how its government will project its power in the near term. Defensive realism has incorporated this flexibility into its interpretation of realism and theorizes about likely domestic policies for a nation. It suggests that a state will control internal dissent to the point that it appears unified in its national policies to the international community. A defensive realist state will be able to be differentiated from an offensive realist state, though, in that it will respond to some degree to international pressures against the suppression of minorities and opposition voices.

Although many inside the mainland hold deep sentiments about the aura of greatness to which they believe China is intrinsically blessed, there are social groups that are ostracized by the communist regime in hopes of retaining a firm hold over the population and conveying a unified image to the rest of the world. Much of this internal strife is concentrated in the Xinjiang Province of Western China. There, the communist Chinese forces continue to crack down on Muslim separatists in what remains a tremendous human rights problem in the country. This region, comprised heavily of Uighurs, a Turkic-speaking group of Muslims, is a locale of continuing government persecution and the only place that people are regularly put to death by the regime for trying to divide the country.<sup>46</sup>

The Chinese government says that the executions are meant to keep the separatist threat in check, arguing that Beijing is battling Islamic terrorists not unlike those the United States is fighting in Afghanistan, just a few hundred miles away.<sup>47</sup>

Though the United States is currently waging a war against terrorism, the threat from within China is not commensurate with the type of crackdowns being observed. This justification by the Chinese is part of the fine

line between offensive and defensive realist social policy. The Chinese responded to international criticism of the treatment of Muslim citizens by trying to rationalize the policy in terms of the US war on terrorism, something to which the United States and international community could relate. Innocent and guilty alike are executed regularly with no clear explanation or warning to their families. Additionally, the observance of Muslim holidays such as Ramadan are discouraged by tax breaks for stores and restaurants that stay open during prayer hours, and children are encouraged to eat meals during the fast at school.<sup>48</sup> All of this state violence continues, even though the Uighurs pose little to no violent threat to the state apparatus. Continuing instability in the Xinjiang region also threatens oil exploration efforts and pipeline construction between China and Central Asian reserves that have been seen as a potential alternative to growing Chinese-Middle Eastern oil dependency.<sup>49</sup> Not only are pipelines in jeopardy for their own security, but also the Tarim Basin in Xinjiang is arguably the biggest domestic oil production possibility in the near term.<sup>50</sup> Disruption and sabotage of refining and extraction efforts by separatist Uighurs threatens the greatest hope for a modicum of Chinese self-dependence.

In addition to the suppression of minority Muslim rights in the Xinjiang Province, workers' rights have been compromised in the movement towards incorporation into the global capitalist market.

As private and foreign companies race ahead in newer industrial centers... a new kind of working class is emerging, one dominated by rural migrants who have no tradition of unions or the security once enjoyed in state enterprises.<sup>51</sup>

Instead of receiving proper rights such as fair pay, health care, adequate working conditions, and fair hours of labor, this new breed of workers in the multinational corporation factories that have proliferated in China for the cheap labor have been exploited in hopes of obtaining a slightly cheaper product.

Working to join the WTO and to be a sponsor of the Olympics underscores the Chinese desire to push concerns for these domestic human rights abuses out of the way of international scrutiny so that China's image can continue to rise as defensive realism would predict. Additionally, working to join the WTO is an objective also rather close to the hypotheses of defensive realism. In order to respond to international pressures concerning workers' rights, China worked to increase the stakes for continued international objections by incorporating the protests into the framework of trade relationships instead of acceding to the remonstrations of other countries.

Additionally, in seeking to maintain its image as a unified and effective Communist regime, the Chinese government monitors tens of thousands of its own citizens in order to assure Party loyalty and in order to crackdown on any persons that attempt to challenge its rule.<sup>52</sup> Part of this involves the continuing crackdowns on personal freedoms by the communist regime through attempts to curb the proliferation of internet usage in the country, by imposing restrictions on websites that run counter to the Party's objectives in what has been termed the "Great Firewall of China."<sup>53</sup>

On the whole, domestic social policy is one of the more difficult aspects of defensive realism to prove. Part of this draws from the natural schism that exists between realism and internal state policies. However, social policy provides a gauge by which one can predict foreign policy direction based on the treatment of domestic social groups. In China's case, the international community has voiced its disapproval of China's human rights record. However, China has been able to sidestep the issue without ignoring the international community and other nations, but by increasing the stakes of protesting by inciting fear of trade disruptions. Consequently, based on the cases of domestic social policy presented above, it is the conclusion of this author that were the international community to take a firm enough stance and demand reform within China and present repercussions for non-compliance, China would likely acquiesce to some degree. It is for that reason that China represents a defensive realist state with respect to domestic social policy more so than an offensive realist nation.

### **Political Rhetoric in Communist China**

In the late Stalin era, the principles of Communist foreign policy that were shared by all such states at the time argued the world was composed of two hostile camps in which the Socialist states and its allies are aligned against the so-called imperialist states.<sup>54</sup> Over a decade after the fall of the Soviet Union, China still views itself entrenched in a rivalry with the Western states, namely the United States.

[O]ld paranoias and antagonisms, lurking beneath the surface of China's status quo internationalism, surfaced after 4 June 1989, reminding us that at least the Old Guard and its designated successors to the ideological presuppositions and reflexes of forty years ago were still present.<sup>55</sup>

Instead of trying to confront its adversary in a lopsided military confrontation, China has adopted a policy by which it shuns the outside world and seeks to maintain control over its defensive sphere of influence. Defensive realism claims that a state will have clearly-defined political objectives, whereas the offensive realist state will employ open and aggressive political rhetoric with intentions that are unclear at best.

Scholars of the Chinese political system argue that were the Chinese Communist Party's legitimacy ever to come under serious threat (although an internal threat), no rhetoric or diplomatic coercion by the United States could halt a massive Chinese military engagement with any of its competitors, notably Taiwan.<sup>56</sup> Such an argument represents two very clear political objectives that theorists of defensive realism have argued would exist. One is the necessity of the survival of the Chinese Communist Party and the second is the retention of Taiwan as part of mainland China. In the previous section, it was argued that China views its crackdown of separatists in the Xinjiang region as a justified move, much like the retaliatory strikes executed by the United States on targets in Afghanistan after September 11. At the same time, though, the official statement by the Chinese government was "wary support" for the American strikes. The Chinese continue to offer political acquiescence to the West that is motivated by the need for continued help in the economic modernization process.<sup>57</sup> This is evidence that the government in Beijing tends to remain rather schizophrenic in order to appease the West for continued support and in terms of its own human rights abuses, but then only offers marginal support for Western policies when they are seen as potentially inflammatory to the domestic political scene in China. Were China to be an offensive realist state, one would more likely observe much more belligerent political rhetoric and a fundamental lack of support for any US or Western initiative that did not directly support Chinese control of its defensive perimeter and economic growth and prosperity. Part of the need to avoid aggressive rhetoric that does not show clear Chinese intentions is a limit on how far Beijing can take economic warfare through rhetoric and policy without damaging ties to the United States and Japan, and keep sources of foreign investment which are vital to economic growth and survival of Communist Party power.<sup>58</sup>

Central to maintaining an environment favorable to the Communist Party are lessons learned from the Soviet experience. The Chinese witnessed the ill effects of glasnost and perestroika and thus the Chinese Communist Party is reluctant to introduce reforms.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, creating positive relations with other countries is crucial for continued growth of China. Clear and transparent rhetoric, followed by logical policies is the only way for such an environment to be fostered. One example of this is that tight ties with Russia are needed to solidify opportunities for necessary arms transfers and trade.<sup>60</sup> Only by using rational and controlled political rhetoric and policies by which defensive realism is characterized can the Chinese enjoy the benefits of positive relations.

On the other hand, the future of Chinese foreign policy may hinge on underlying political attitudes and perceptions by the Chinese government. Feelings of soft containment and strategic isolation of China by the United States could cause China to become more aggressive and less cooperative.<sup>61</sup> For example, recent efforts by the United States to strengthen relations with Russia and Japan may be viewed by China as a form of isolation. Consequently, China's political rhetoric, especially with respect to policy within its defensive perimeter would likely become stronger and quarrelsome. It is believed that China is greatly concerned with the US willingness to deploy forces to the Straits of Taiwan in defense of Taiwan as well as the warming relations of the United States with Australia and Japan. In many respects, the Chinese not only fear that Japan would become more active in the Straits due to US pressures, but more broadly perceive the onset of a wave of policies designed to contain China.<sup>62</sup> With the recent inclusion of the Russian Federation as a junior NATO partner, China's fears of being isolated within the East Asia and Pacific region seem likely to be agitated even further.

Political rhetoric, much like domestic social policy, does not directly impact foreign policy as much as the other components of Table 1. However, like social policy, it acts as a litmus test by which one can estimate China's future foreign policies. Defensive realism proposes that a state will use clear policy objectives as opposed to open and aggressive language. China has been very clear about its intentions to defend and project power into areas of its defensive zone. It has also been clear, more so by China's attitudes than rhetoric, that

continued threats or perceived threats to either the survival of the Communist Party or continued growth in China will result in stronger articulations of its policies and intentions.

### **Policy on Territory and Territorial Claims**

One of the central, if not *the* central, tenets of defensive realism is that a state will view a target area as a defensive zone within which it is willing to project its power as necessary. Therefore, it would likely follow that a state's policy on territory and territorial claims would incorporate those territories to which it lays claim. Additionally, a state is willing to conquer those territories that it claims as its own if a great enough threat to its defensive perimeter is perceived. In the case of China, one additional argument is made with respect to territorial claims and sovereignty issues. As a part of China's policy of claiming a defensive zone, it cites the need for respect for national sovereignty. Accordingly, wherever a crisis arises in the world where territorial sovereignty issues are even a question, one can expect the rights of the nation being intruded upon to be eagerly defended by China.

Part of China's defensive perimeter stems from Chinese claims to 80 percent of the territory within the South China Sea. Problems such as the fact that 70 percent of Japanese oil imports travel through this territory and past confrontations with the Australians over such waterways underscore that a defensive cordon has been implemented by the Chinese consistent with the hypotheses of defensive realism. Extensive analysis has already been conducted concerning power projections into China's defensive zone and need not be revisited extensively in this section. Needless to say, crisis behavior, military modernization trends, and political rhetoric all support the notion that China has created a defensive perimeter within which the territories and countries are subject to Chinese power projections.

Additionally, as a part of China's defense of territorial sovereignty issues, the Chinese have continued to defy Western powers, especially the United States, in their policy towards Iraq following the 1991 Gulf War. China's policy stance on Iraq serves two purposes in the Chinese political machine. First, the supposed erosion of national sovereignty is very similar to the argument used against US assistance to Taiwan. Issuing such an opinion towards the Iraqi situation deflects attention that this might be an argument for reunification with Taiwan. Second, as was discussed in the earlier sections concerning economic and military modernization, China's flow of oil from the region and its sale of weapons systems to Iraq are greatly compromised if a continuation of sanctions policy against Iraq continues or if the United States deploys its military to oust the Hussein regime. As such, China's official position remains that the

Sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of Iraq must be preserved and any such violation of these rights is and should be punished as violations of international law.<sup>63</sup>

This statement provides a validation for why the Chinese are able to create and project into a defensive zone. The true test of this belief will remain to be seen if and when the Chinese are placed in a situation where any aspect of Operation Iraqi Freedom or any subsequent operations within Iraq are voted on in the UN Security Council and the PRC is placed in a situation where it would decide to either vote for or against, abstain or exercise its veto. Additionally, because they have the clear political objective of maintaining control or at least status quo power over its defensive perimeter, China has satisfied two core arguments of defensive realism: political rhetoric and territorial policy.

### **International Organizations and Alliance Formation**

In the past decades, as China's economy, military, and political institutions have modernized, so too has its behavior with regard to international organizations and its willingness to enter into alliances. Defensive realism argues that a state will adopt cooperative behavior so long as it remains beneficial to the state's power amalgamation and does not interfere with a nation's securing of its defensive zone. However, defensive realism states that regional rivalries will be rampant and therefore a defensive realist state will only include itself in a regional alliance if it will play into that states' potential to become a regional hegemon. Consequently, any alliance that exists on a regional level will be states weakly tied together, and instead the defensive realist state will participate in large-scale international organizations. On the whole, China's behavior coincides very closely with these postulations.

A 1959 Sino-Soviet friendship pact underscored potential for cooperative behavior by the Chinese and on July 16, 2001, the two states once again signed an agreement of friendship and cooperation which opposed US NMD plans and backed China in its pursuit to reunify Taiwan with mainland China.<sup>64</sup> Such a political move underscores the transient nature of the Stalin-era rhetoric elaborated on in the section concerning political rhetoric, and reinforces the belief that China still feels a high degree of competition with Western nations. This Russian-Chinese alliance, though, is not even close to the strength of the 1959 treatise because the two nations are still very suspicious of one another—consistent with defensive realism’s theory on regional alliances. At the same time, though, \$1.5 billion has been traded from Russia to China and 40 percent of Russian arms exports are destined for China.<sup>65</sup> One perspective of this modern relationship is that China views working cooperatively with the Russians as a defensive policy, working to craft foreign policy that will balance against the United States. As defensive realism purports, China has adopted a policy of cooperation that suits its purposes of offsetting the US global influence, specifically in China’s theater of operations.

Additionally, in the past five years or so, China has geared its economic and trade policy towards joining the World Trade Organization. General trade and work to gain admittance into the WTO comprise an essential part of the economic segment of Chinese foreign policy. China’s ascension into the WTO offers promise for much of the American business community, but also threatens the ability of the United States to protest extreme violations of international human rights norms and will thus throw such arguments into the international forum. Therefore, as defensive realism suggests, joining the WTO allows the Chinese to appear to be a responsible and peaceful participant in a large-scale international organization. The economic benefits of the WTO provide China with unparalleled opportunities for trade and economic expansion. Such involvement also serves a dual purpose of restricting the degree to which other states, namely the United States, can protest China’s domestic social policies or any power projections within its defensive perimeter.

Finally, China’s bid to harness power in a centralized regional arc is underscored by its moves to gain political leverage with states of the region.

As more and more Pacific nations suffer from political upheaval and aid dependency on the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, it appears China is offering millions of dollars in untied “grants” to governments in the region that seek an alternative.<sup>66</sup>

This alternative to international lending houses could arguably lead to a regional hegemony that could be defended by the modernized military and growth in economic strength seen in China’s recent development. Beijing has also used membership in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) regional forum to fend off efforts to resolve territorial disputes in the South China Sea.<sup>67</sup> Both of these policies of the Chinese government are consistent with defensive realism’s argument that a state is self-serving in the degree to which it is cooperative with other nations in the region. In both of the above cases, China has appeared cooperative in order to gain financial leverage over other Asian-Pacific nations. Additionally, efforts to use ASEAN underscores the argument that China will appear to be an active member in international organizations so long as this involvement assists in securing a defensive zone and thus status as a regional hegemon.

### **Economic Components of Chinese Foreign Policy**

As scholars debate China’s growth and its future role in the international community, the topic of debate that typically arises just after military modernization is that of the immense growth in Chinese gross domestic product (GDP). China’s increasing economic strength and influence has placed it in a position of great leverage with its trading partners. Moreover, it has become incumbent upon the Chinese government to ensure economic growth to buttress a political order whose ideology collapsed with the fall of the Soviet Union.<sup>68</sup> Defensive realism makes the argument that a state will work to champion regional resources, join global trade organizations, and exploit cheap domestic labor, as these actions suit a policy of economic growth. China’s economic policy has been somewhat hampered by its dependence on resources and capital, namely oil and other energy products, to sustain its growth. The growth in China’s economy and its policies regarding power projections and the need to have a military to defend its economic assets are commensurate with this dependence and defensive realism.

One of the greatest problems of Chinese dependence is domestic oil consumption. Such a large emphasis is placed on this policy because problems concerning the control and security of oil deposits could prompt the sale of conventional weapons and development and proliferation of nuclear weapons in order to maintain these

resource flows.<sup>69</sup> In 1998, China's dependence on external oil imports had grown to 26 percent and domestic demand for crude oil products has continued to rise.<sup>70</sup>

With fuel oil, LPG [liquefied petroleum gas], and diesel demand likely to continue steady growth in 1999, particularly as the government continues its large-scale infrastructure investment projects, oil consumption is likely to increase by a further 1.5 to 3.0%.<sup>71</sup>

The growth in government-sponsored investment projects, coupled with a trend already having domestic demands in excess of domestic production potential, provided the impetus for an increase in dependence on foreign oil imports. A continuation of current trends suggests that by 2020, China's domestic demand for petrol products would exceed its domestic production by a factor of two.<sup>72</sup> Compounding this trend are estimates that by 2020, China could be 90 percent dependent on oil exports from the Middle East.<sup>73</sup> Such forecasts suggest that the exorbitant sums of money that are sure to reach the Middle East from China will arguably become entangled with a growing arms and technology trade pipeline between the two regions, destabilizing two already insecure regions.

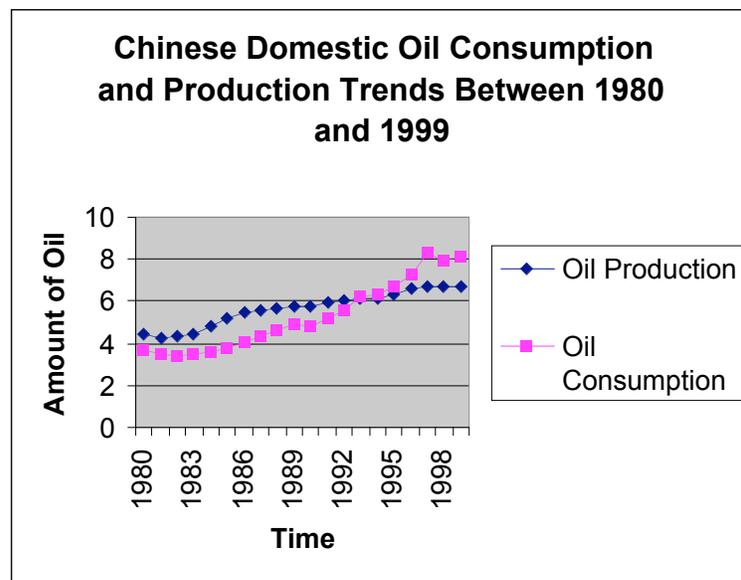


Figure 1

In working to solve its oil deficit, the PRC has looked to places such as Kazakhstan, Venezuela, Sudan, Iraq, and Peru for oil imports.<sup>74</sup> It may not be surprising to note the connection between potential oil suppliers such as Sudan and Iraq and the appearance of Chinese-sold weapons systems.

They're paranoid about it...China and India will grow more aligned to the Middle East. It's a good bet that China will barter weapons for some of the oil...a mysterious trading company under the Chinese Defense Ministry—outside of the normal state oil-importing apparatus—imports 150,000-plus barrels a day from Iran. China's oil insecurity helps to explain its interest in building a navy. Indonesian waters are infested with pirates and the archipelago is in danger of a social meltdown. Millions of barrels of oil a day already flow through the choke point of the Strait of Malacca to Northeast Asia.<sup>75</sup>

Herein lies the connection between possible oil-for-weapons programs conducted by the Chinese government and part of a desire to have a regional monopoly on blue-water naval capabilities. Most of the motivation behind this is the future threat to export routes in the oil market generated by localized conflicts and regional instability.<sup>76</sup> The problem is complicated by the crossing of multinational oil trade routes through the region and multiple territorial claims on waterways and lands that are in the middle of these same routes. As China's oil imports increase, they will attempt to safeguard their oil lanes. China claims 80 percent of the South

China Sea as Chinese territory and 70 percent of all of Japan's oil imports pass through this same South China Sea.<sup>77</sup> This clash of interests suggests that the tumultuous situation may only get worse if these disputes are not adjudicated and current oil consumption and military modernization trends continue. China's energy policy will become a much greater focal point for potential conflict in the future if its current net importation trends continue and its desire to become further involved in the global economy based on an oil-dependent infrastructure continue. Consequently, claims to oil-rich regions in the South China Sea may become a much greater concern for military deployments and a source of insecurity in the region,<sup>78</sup> as defensive realism predicts.

While expanding its economy, the People's Republic of China has created an enormous trade imbalance with the United States. By utilizing cheap domestic labor and resource prices, the Chinese have gained leverage over the United States that poses a threat to future US economic security. The evolution of this dyadic trade relationship is illustrated in Figure 2.<sup>79</sup>

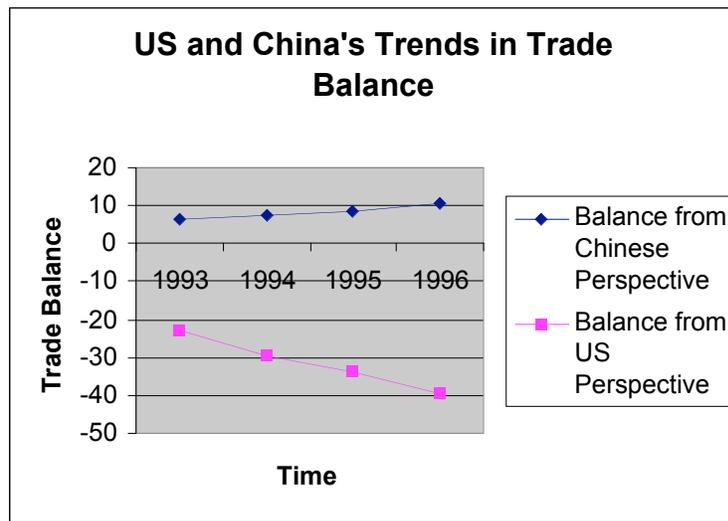


Figure 2

The gap between the United States and China and indications of growing discontinuity in the trade balance endangers prospects for a fair bilateral trade relationship in the future. Hopefully, admittance and faithful participation in the WTO will bring about the idea of free and *fair* trade in the global community. In addition, reports in the early days of George W. Bush's administration indicated that China's need for the United States as a viable and growing market in the future would outweigh its anger at many US policies such as those in Iraq, the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, and the militarized dispute over the downing of the US Navy reconnaissance plane.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, if China becomes confrontational with the United States, its opportunities for increased integration into the global economy are compromised in addition to providing the United States with wiggle room to strengthen its ties with Taiwan.<sup>81</sup>

Economic explosions in Taiwan and in Hong Kong have arguably motivated mainland China to expand its economic potential to new heights. From Taiwan's perspective, there has been a significantly increasing outflow of high-tech companies to the mainland in search of cheap labor.<sup>82</sup> The trend that is emerging is of a Taiwan that is tied to the mainland to a much higher degree than they ever could have predicted or probably desired. One example of this trend is the lifting of investment curbs with the mainland by Taiwan to provide China with the infrastructure to pair with its large engineering-trained workforce to produce raw materials for advanced microchips.<sup>83</sup> Logically, Taiwan may face the same fate of a trade deficit as the United States; however the stakes for Taiwan will be much greater.

Growing trade deficits between China and the United States and Taiwan reveals a lot about the prospects for conflict in the future. As the United States and Taiwan both become more dependent on Chinese products, the potential for China to project its power increases dramatically. The growing degree of China's economic leverage increases the costs for any military intervention by the United States in response to China's foreign policy initiatives. Additionally, as Taiwan's dependence on China's economy increases, its ability to implement inflammatory policies such as pro-independence statements diminishes greatly.

Based on the economic case study of China, nearly all of its economic policies are consistent with a defensive realist state's traits. The policies that China has adopted have resulted in such remarkable economic expansion that now position China in a leveraging stance, whereby it can defend its power projections into its defensive perimeter. Moreover, many scholars point to China's behavior during the 1997 East Asian Financial Crisis in which China opted not to devalue the yen, accepting the costly effects of such a decision in light of stabilizing the precarious economic situation. As observers speculated about the potential devaluation of the yen, holding off on such a move arguably increased Beijing's *reputational* payoff.<sup>84</sup> By increasing its influence on global trade, China has increased the stakes of intervention by any of its biggest trading partners. Of the Chinese policies most likely to elicit strong international objections, the most noteworthy are power projections intent on securing oil trade routes from the Middle East. Additionally, as defensive realism argues, China is seeking to champion regional resources and oil extraction projects inside of its defensive zone. Such a circumstance would be the best situation for the Chinese, whereby it could secure energy resources via power projection, yet limit international sanctioning of such policies by maintaining growing global trade imbalances in its favor.



### PART THREE

#### Conclusions Concerning Defensive Realism and the Future of Chinese Power Projections

At the outset of this analysis, it was argued that China's foreign policy is consistent with a defensive realist scheme. Broadly speaking, the argument is that China views amounts of security in the international system as infinite, and as such has adopted a policy by which it builds up economic and security apparatuses until it feels that it could adequately defend itself. At the same time, China views the calculus of the international system as dictated by anarchy in which there is no central authority to assert what is right and what is wrong. The social, political, economic, and security developments that have occurred in the last couple of decades are consistent with a state intent on consolidating power in a post-Cold War Communist society and opposing what it views as an imperialist tendency on the part of the West. Specifically, the nationalist agenda in both mainland China and Taiwan towards incorporation and independence, respectively, is responsible for much of the harsh rhetoric and diplomatic conflict that has continued to exist both between Taiwan and China as well as between China and the United States.

While the COW data and news reports presented in the section "Crises and Chinese Power Projections" provide an assessment of the short-term implications of China's modernization efforts, Figure 3 presents a slightly broader perspective.<sup>1</sup>

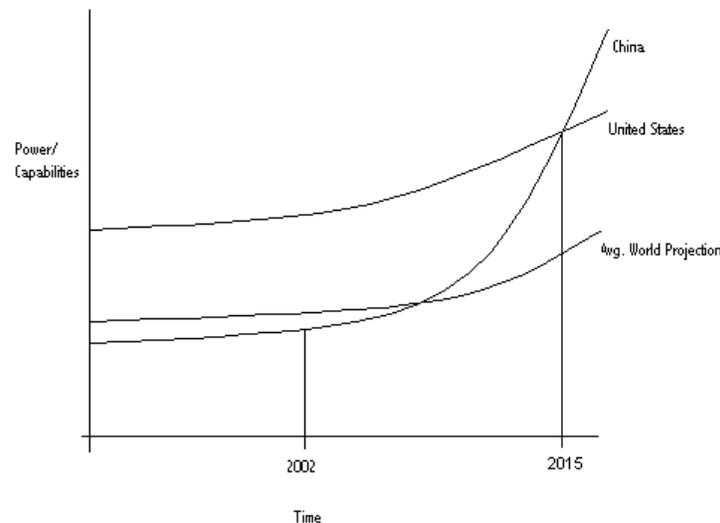


Figure 3

Figure 3 depicts a possible growth path for a status quo power and a challenger based in principle upon Organski's Power Transition Theory.<sup>2</sup> According to Organski's theory, the time just before and just after the PRC achieves parity with the international community are the ones at which the PRC feels confident enough that it can effectively project its power with minimal objection from the international community (near-parity is defined as 80 percent of the dominant country's power<sup>3</sup>). Likewise, defensive realism suggests that a state will seek to modernize to levels of parity or near-parity with its closest strategic competitor(s). That said, the point at which an adequate level of parity has been reached is the time in which the upcoming state can pursue and secure its defensive sphere in an overt fashion without fear of compromising its growing status in the world. Additionally, many have argued that China is in the process of trying to undermine US hegemonic status in the world.<sup>4</sup> This argument is based in part on the supposition that if China, while still relatively weak, faced a serious threat from one or more great powers, it would likely resort to Cold War-style "counter-hegemonic

balancing.” On the other hand, if the PRC’s relative capabilities significantly increase or threats are not felt from others in the international community, China might work to reshape the global system to be more favorable to its own interests.<sup>5</sup> According to Figure 3, the point at which either a transition war or peaceful transition will take place is still very far away (just after the year 2015). Therefore, one can ascertain whether the Chinese will pose a threat to the United States in the long term based on its behavior before and after it reaches parity levels with the *international community* (the average world projection). If a sustained level of power projections within China’s defensive cordon follows the Chinese reaching parity with the *international community*, the United States will likely feel that its hegemonic status is threatened, in turn causing the United States to initiate a preventive war. On the other hand, if China peacefully transitions as it ascends without projecting its power within the Asia-Pacific region, then the United States may be able to adopt more cooperative strategies. In reality, though, the possibility for a preventive war by the United States is very unlikely, as the US economy would face costs that do not come close to exceeding the benefits of stifling China’s growth. Noteworthy, though, is that in a semi-cooperative relationship such as that of the United States and China—with a satisfied hegemon and dissatisfied challenger—the emerging relationship is most likely a confrontational competition highlighted by many sub-war disputes of varying length and severity.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, unless critical changes in the underlying dyadic relationship are altered, the long term Sino-American relationship is not necessarily certain war, but rather a tense relationship characterized by military and economic competition and increasing political, military, and economic confrontations. Correspondingly, defensive realism would suggest that as China’s regional power and control over its defensive perimeter increase and its power projections accordingly increase, US and Chinese interests will come into greater conflict in the Asia-Pacific region, resulting in higher numbers of crises and power projections.

Currently, there exists a loss of strength gradient outside of China’s direct military sphere of influence that, in the near term, has very little hope of being overcome. As such, China’s potential for challenging the United States on a global scale is highly unlikely. That same loss of strength gradient also restricts the degree to which the Chinese can project direct military power into the Middle East. Therefore if one is to analyze the future of power projections towards the United States, Taiwan, and the Middle East, a rather clear picture begins to emerge. China is somewhat of a threat to all of these countries and regions. From the US perspective, political showdowns such as the one over the downed reconnaissance plane on Hainan Island underscore China’s work to become a force in the international arena and efforts to avoid having to kowtow to US policies.

In the Middle East, oil export and military transfer trends indicate continued Chinese military support through proliferation and direct military assistance to various countries in the region. The need to solidify Middle East oil resources is imperative for the PRC, especially because domestic and regional sources of oil are proving difficult to obtain. The question following from the convergence of oil exports and military trends asks whether China is willing and able to project its power into the Middle East in order to secure oil resources. Militarily speaking, this would be very difficult to say the least, and relative gains in the international forum would probably be erased by the economic and political costs. However, evidence exists that China has supported modifications to improve Iraqi air defense systems and continued military sales to Iran, Syria, and Libya.

Finally, the question regarding China’s willingness to invade Taiwan and other territorial claims in the region must be asked. Based on the conclusions of this paper these seem to be the most likely targets of Chinese power projection in the near term. Taiwan and the multitude of other islands that fall under what China considers to be a defensive umbrella are directly threatened by increasing Chinese power. Obtaining these territories is part of China’s belief in secure borders. The economic impact of having these countries is important to China on account of the natural and technological resources that such territories possess. Additionally, the political value of asserting China’s power and claiming what it feels to be rogue nations is invaluable. The continued growth of the Chinese economy assisted in great part by a growing dependence on oil necessitates control over the trade routes through which they pass. Accordingly, trends indicated by the COW data and reports since the COW data expired support the notion that in the near term, China will most likely project its power into its defensive perimeter. At the same time, though, China surely acknowledges the high costs that would be associated with such power projection endeavors. Therefore, while the threat is most likely within this defensive perimeter, China would abstain from a serious military incursion unless another regional member made a move, such as Taiwan declaring independence or the Philippines militarily occupying the Spratley Islands.

## Conclusions

Following the fall of the Soviet Union, international relations scholars have worked to create a framework by which they could understand China's behavior and the direction in which it is headed. This paper refined realism into a structure that explains a very specific type of country. Defensive realism characterizes a state that is increasing its power in the economic, political, security, and social sectors of its society and willing to project it power into a defensive zone. It is from this idea of a defensive perimeter from which the probable behaviors in Table 1 were drawn. By securing a defensive zone and thus a regional hegemony, a state that is seeking to compete with the global hegemon can first confirm its potential. With very few and explainable exceptions, China's behavior corresponds extremely well with the suggestions of defensive realism. As such, this paper has provided a framework by which China's behavior in the near term can be analyzed. Additionally, by understanding China's policies based on defensive realism, policy planners in the United States can truly understand what ought to be viewed as genuinely threatening behavior and those which need not elicit a hostile response.

In many respects, analysts are correct in arguing that China believes that nominal support and membership in the Western-dominated international community will allow it to change the rules of the system from the inside. Consequently,

[c]ommon interest evaporated with the end of the Cold War, in which [the United States and China] were united in containing the Soviet Union. Now China, freed from threatening Russian forces to the north and Soviet client Vietnam to the south, is expanding its strategic reach east and south by claiming rights over the whole South China Sea and increasing its influence in Southeast Asia. "Enjoying the advantages of size, demographic weight and centrality, China is demanding a free hand in East Asia."<sup>7</sup>

China is rapidly rising as the United States and the rest of the world continue to grow at a steady pace. Is the world about to see a large-scale war between the United States and China, or even a proxy war in the Middle East? No. However, the caveat to that answer is that diplomatically and politically, the Chinese have tested the waters of hostility and coercion with the United States and arguably lost. Parity with the United States is at least a decade away, yet parity with the rest of the world is rapidly approaching. Power projections are possible and likely in some form in the near term unless actions by the international community and the United States commit to adjudicating conflict over territorial disputes and assure the Chinese of their security with present territory. Only with such an initiative will China's pursuit of security in an anarchical system be controlled, and regional and international security be upheld.



## NOTES

---

### PART ONE

<sup>1</sup> Mark V. Kauppi and Paul R. Viotti, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism, and Beyond* (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1999), 55-56.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 64-65.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>5</sup> Paul F. Diehl and Frank W. Wayman, eds., *Reconstructing Realpolitik* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1994), 8.

<sup>6</sup> Kauppi and Viotti, *International Relations Theory*, 56.

<sup>7</sup> Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise," in *The Perils of Anarchy: Contemporary Realism and International Security*, eds. Michael E. Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995), 137.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>9</sup> Michael E. Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller, eds., *The Perils of Anarchy: Contemporary Realism and International Security* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995), xi.

<sup>10</sup> Allen S. Whiting, "China's Use of Force, 1950-96, and Taiwan," *International Security* 26, no. 2 (fall 2001): 105.

<sup>11</sup> Kenneth Waltz, *The Man, State, and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 37.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Jervis, "Realism in the Study of World Politics," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (fall 1998): 986.

<sup>13</sup> Kauppi and Viotti, *International Relations Theory*, 69.

### PART TWO

<sup>1</sup> Thomas W. Robinson and David Shambaugh, eds., *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1994), 43.

<sup>2</sup> Chih-yu Shih, *Reform, Identity and Chinese Foreign Policy* (Taipei, Taiwan: Vanguard Institute for Policy Studies, 2000), 207.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>4</sup> Avery Goldstein, "The Diplomatic Face of China's Grand Strategy: A Rising Power's Emerging Choice," *The China Quarterly*, no. 168 (December 2001): 836.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 844.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 846.

<sup>7</sup> Shih, *Reform, Identity and Chinese Foreign Policy*, 149.

<sup>8</sup> This data comes from Paul Diehl and Gary Goertz, *War and Peace in International Rivalry* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000), which is derived from the data presented in the Correlates of War (COW) Project.

<sup>9</sup> Following 1992, Lexis-Nexus reports were compiled on each of the three regions of Chinese foreign policy and a description of each significant incident has been included and to the best ability of the author a description of the level of violence like the one used in the COW data has been utilized.

<sup>10</sup> Taiwan is considered to be within China's defensive perimeter, however for the purposes of this section it is much more effective to look at Taiwan as a separate issue as it is the most pressing portion of disputed South China Sea territory for the People's Republic of China.

<sup>11</sup> Julie Chao, "China Says No Military Aid Given to Iraq," *The Washington Times*, March 7, 2001.

<sup>12</sup> Susan G. Sample, "Military Buildups—Arming and War," in *What Do We Know About War?*, ed. Johan A. Vasquez (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 178.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>14</sup> David S. Fadok, "Juggling the Bear: Assessing NATO Enlargement in Light of Europe's Past and Asia's Future" (Occasional Paper 24, Institute for National Security Studies, USAF Academy, Colorado, March 1999), 30.

<sup>15</sup> Sample, "Military Buildups," 178.

<sup>16</sup> Bates Gill and James Mulvenon, "The Chinese Strategic Rocket Forces: Transition to Credible Deterrence" (in *China and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Implications for the United States* conference report, National Intelligence Council Conference, November 5, 1999), 16-17. Also available at [http://www.cia.gov/nic/pubs/conference\\_reports/weapons\\_mass\\_destruction.html](http://www.cia.gov/nic/pubs/conference_reports/weapons_mass_destruction.html).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

- <sup>20</sup> Hideaki Kaneda, "A View from Tokyo: China's Growing Military Power and Its Significance for Japan and Its National Security," in *China's Growing Military Power: Perspectives on Security, Ballistic Missiles, and Conventional Capabilities*, eds. Andrew Scobell and Larry Wortzel (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, September 2002), 73.
- <sup>21</sup> Whiting, "China's Use of Force," 129-130 (see part 1, n. 10).
- <sup>22</sup> Gill and Mulvenon, "Chinese Strategic Rocket Forces," 8.
- <sup>23</sup> F. Andy Messing (Maj., USAR [Ret.]) and John M. Wohlfarth, "China's Real Goal May Be Oil," *The Los Angeles Times*, March 17, 2000.
- <sup>24</sup> Gill and Mulvenon, "Chinese Strategic Rocket Forces," 10.
- <sup>25</sup> *China Foreign Policy White Paper*, 2. Available at <http://www.chinaguide.org/e-white/2000/20-1.htm>.
- <sup>26</sup> Susan M. Puska, "Rough But Ready Force Projection: An Assessment of Recent PLA Training," in *China's Growing Military Power: Perspectives on Security, Ballistic Missiles, and Conventional Capabilities*, eds. Andrew Scobell and Larry Wortzel (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, September 2002), 226.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.
- <sup>28</sup> Jane's Information Group, "Long March to Modernisation," *Jane's Defence Weekly* 36, no. 2 (July 11, 2001): 24.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.
- <sup>31</sup> William J. McCarthy (Capt. USN), "Directed Energy and Fleet Defense: Implications for Naval Warfare" (Occasional Paper 10, Center for Strategy and Technology, Air War College, Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, May 2000), 50.
- <sup>32</sup> Jane's Information Group, "Long March to Modernisation," 27.
- <sup>33</sup> Bill Gertz and Rowan Scarborough, "Inside the Ring: Militarized Freighters," *The Washington Times*, August 7, 2001.
- <sup>34</sup> John Pomfret, "China Plans War Games Off Taiwan," *The Washington Post*, June 1, 2001.
- <sup>35</sup> Jane's Information Group, "Long March to Modernisation," 23.
- <sup>36</sup> Greg Jaffe, "Chinese Firms Help Iraq Upgrade Defense Despite Beijing's Promises," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 14, 2001.
- <sup>37</sup> Nicholas Kralev, "U.S. Pressures China Over Arms Exports," *The Washington Times*, August 7, 2001.
- <sup>38</sup> Jane Perlez, "U.S. Imposes Sanctions on Chinese Arms Maker," *The New York Times*, September 2, 2001.
- <sup>39</sup> David R. King, "Interpreting Shadows: Arms Control and Defense Planning in a Rapidly Changing Multi-Polar World" (Occasional Paper 10, Institute for National Security Studies, USAF Academy, Colorado, March 1999), 10.
- <sup>40</sup> Bill Gertz, "CIA: Russia, China Working on Information Warfare," *The Washington Times*, June 22, 2001.
- <sup>41</sup> King, "Interpreting Shadows," 12.
- <sup>42</sup> Gill and Mulvenon, "Chinese Strategic Rocket Forces," 62.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.
- <sup>45</sup> Nicholas D. Kristof, "The Chip on China's Shoulder," *The New York Times*, January 18, 2002.
- <sup>46</sup> Craig S. Smith, "China, in Harsh Crackdown, Executes Muslim Separatists," *The New York Times*, December 16, 2001.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>49</sup> Yitzhak Shichor, "From Horse to Horsepower: Energy in China's Relations with Central Asia," *Pacifica Review* 13, no. 1 (Feb 2001): 99.
- <sup>50</sup> Robert A. Manning, *The Asian Energy Factor: Myths and Dilemmas of Energy, Security and the Pacific Future* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 103.
- <sup>51</sup> Erik Eckholm, "China Seeks Support in Fight with Separatists," *The New York Times*, October 12, 2001.
- <sup>52</sup> Smith, "China, in Harsh Crackdown."
- <sup>53</sup> "Chinese Premier Urges Tighter Control on Internet," *Ananova*. Available from [http://www.ananova.com/news/story/sm\\_349172.html/menu](http://www.ananova.com/news/story/sm_349172.html/menu).
- <sup>54</sup> Steven I. Levine, "Perception and Ideology in Chinese Foreign Policy," in *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, eds. Thomas W. Robinson and David L. Shambaugh (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 38.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.
- <sup>56</sup> Peter Hays Gries, "Correspondence: Power and Resolve in U.S. China Policy," *International Security* 26, no. 2 (fall 2001): 159.
- <sup>57</sup> Erik Eckholm, "China Grins and Bears It: Need for U.S. Trade May be Outweighing Disagreements with Bush Administration," *The New York Times*, July 30, 2001.
- <sup>58</sup> David Lague and Trish Saywell, "A Growing Storm for East Asia," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 164, no. 19 (May 2001): 17.
- <sup>59</sup> Fadok, "Juggling the Bear," 30.
- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Goldstein, "China's Grand Strategy," 840-841.

<sup>63</sup> "Nation Concerned with Middle East Peace," *China Daily*, January 15, 2001.

<sup>64</sup> Patrick E. Tyler, "Russia and China Sign 'Friendship' Pact," *The New York Times*, July 17, 2001.

<sup>65</sup> Jane's Information Group, "Long March to Modernisation," 34.

<sup>66</sup> "Region Enters a New Era of Shifting Alliances," *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Available at <http://www.smh.com.au/new/0105/21/world/world1.html>.

<sup>67</sup> Lague and Saywell, "Growing Storm for East Asia," 18.

<sup>68</sup> Goldstein, "China's Grand Strategy," 837.

<sup>69</sup> Clifford E. Singer, *Emerging from the Valley of the Shadow: Towards Comprehensive Global Nuclear Management in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (ACDIS Course Reader, Program in Arms Control, Disarmament and International Security, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, January 2001), 5.

<sup>70</sup> David G. Fridley and Jonathan E. Sinton, "What Goes Up: Recent Trends in China's Energy Consumption" (Energy Analysis Department, Environmental Technologies Division, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, U.S. Department of Energy; accepted for publication in *Energy Policy* in March 2000), 5.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>73</sup> Shichor, "Energy in China's Relations with Central Asia," 94.

<sup>74</sup> Fridley and Sinton, "Trends in China's Energy Consumption," 2.

<sup>75</sup> Chandrani Ghosh and Andrew Tanzer, "Insatiable: China and the Rest of Developing Asia are Driving the World Oil Market," *Forbes Magazine*, July 23, 2001.

<sup>76</sup> Manning, *The Asian Energy Factor*, 42.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> The reason for a lack of symmetry between the two lines assessing the growing trade imbalance between the United States and China is a result of statistical discrepancies that come from official Chinese government releases. These reports profess an overstatement of the trade imbalance by members of the US government. As such behavior by the Chinese government is rather common, the most reliable data on the trade balance comes from the US perspective.

<sup>80</sup> Eckholm, "China Grins and Bears It."

<sup>81</sup> Goldstein, "China's Grand Strategy," 855.

<sup>82</sup> Mark Lander, "For Many Burmese, China is an Unwanted Ally," *The New York Times*, December 30, 2001.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Goldstein, "China's Grand Strategy," 845.

### PART THREE

<sup>1</sup> China's GDP and military expenditures will exceed or at least rival the same figures by the United States in 2015, according to Anil Bameza, Charles Wolf, Jr., KC Yeh, Donald P. Henry and Michael Kennedy, *Long Term Economic and Military Trends 1994-2015: The United States and Asia* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1995), 9-15.

<sup>2</sup> Ronald Tammen et al., *Power Transitions: Strategies for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. (New York: Chatham House, 2000), 22.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>4</sup> Sample, "Military Buildups," 170 (see part 2, n. 12).

<sup>5</sup> Goldstein, "China's Grand Strategy," 860 (see part 2, n. 4).

<sup>6</sup> Tammen, *Power Transitions*, 11-12.

<sup>7</sup> Lague and Saywell, "Growing Storm for East Asia," 17 (see part 2, n. 58).