

AALBORG UNIVERSITY

**Great Power Relations in the 21st Century:  
How can the United States respond to the  
challenges posed by the emergence of great  
power rivals in Asia?**

By

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis sets out to answer the question of what will be the character of twenty-first century great power political competition. It specifically examines the power competition in Asia and the Pacific, looking at India, China and the United States. The countries chosen are distinctly different politically and culturally. It assesses the validity of the Offensive Realism theory of John Mearsheimer, the Clash of Civilizations theory of Samuel Huntington and the Rimland hypothesis of Nicholas Spykman as tools for the understanding of twenty-first century power politics.

The purpose of this thesis is to test theories with distinctly different approaches derived from power politics, culture and identity and geopolitics. By applying their core ideas to a range of scenarios involving all three great powers, and their interaction with lesser powers, across the Asia-Pacific region, it aims to ascertain which theories offer the best explanation for the behaviour of great powers in the coming century.

The results of the study find that relations are characterised by fear and competition, with China being the most feared and most disruptive in the region. Fear of China plays a large part in bringing the US and India together, as does a lack of direct competition between those two. It notes that competition is carried out through efforts to influence smaller states, and only rarely do the great powers directly confront each other. It finds that war is unlikely between the great powers except through miscalculation when using force against a smaller power. The threat of force and psychological intimidation are the main uses of hard power, to create facts on the ground which a weaker adversary cannot reverse. The study finds that Mearsheimer's Offensive Realism is consistently effective as an explanation for the way in which states behave, that they are mostly driven by the desire to accumulate power at the expense of other states, so long as their gains are relatively greater than other states.

It shows that Huntington's Clash of Civilizations is partially effective: it successfully explains why nationalism is on the rise in Asia through its consideration of confidence, but its belief that smaller states will always try to align within their own civilisations was not true in cases where the civilisational core state was felt to be the most dangerous.

Finally, the thesis shows that Spykman's Rimland theory offers a good explanation for the actions of the United States and China, but is less relevant to India. It does however, adequately explain the basis of American power, and how China is a threat to that.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

A2/AD – Anti-access/ Area denial  
ADIZ - Air Defence Identification Zone  
AfPak – Afghanistan – Pakistan theatre of operations  
ASEAN – Association of South-East Asian Nations  
ANZUS - Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty  
BJP - Bharatiya Janata Party  
CPC – Communist Party of China  
DPRK – Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)  
EEZ – Exclusive Economic Zone  
INC – Indian National Congress (Congress Party)  
ISI – Inter-Services Intelligence  
LAC – Line of Actual Control  
LTTE – Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (Tamil Tigers)  
PLA – People's Liberation Army  
PLAN – People's Liberation Army Navy  
PRC – People's Republic of China  
ROC – Republic of China (Taiwan)  
ROK – Republic of Korea (South Korea)  
SAARC - South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation  
SEA – South-East Asia  
UN – United Nations  
UNCLOS – United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea  
US – United States (of America)  
USAF- United States Air Force  
USMC – United States Marine Corps  
USN – United States Navy

## CHAPTER I: Introduction

In the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union, academics were faced with great difficulty in their efforts to understand and explain the world. Few had predicted that the Soviet Union would disintegrate so rapidly and so completely, and many were at a loss to explain what had happened and what it portended for the world. Different views were argued, and for a time a lot of optimism was expressed. The 'End of History' (in a Hegelian sense) was proclaimed, and it was believed that as the West had shown the superiority of its economic, government and social models, and it was merely a matter of time before the rest of the world adopted these models in the ultimate triumph of liberal democracy.

With this confidence, and aware of its unchallenged economic and military supremacy, the United States became a crusading power during the 1990s, committing its armed forces to policing the globe. The US demonstrated its overwhelming military lead by repelling the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, destroying Saddam Hussein's large Soviet-equipped army. They then undertook a series of military adventures, in Somalia, the Balkans and to enforce sanctions. Despite the disastrous intervention in Somalia, the United States was mostly successful in its efforts. At the millennium, the United States was regarded as by far the most powerful state to have existed, described as a 'hyper power' due to its extreme dominance in all fields.

However, seeds sown by the deployment of American forces to Saudi Arabia to counter Saddam Hussain would return to haunt American with the terror attacks of 9/11. What followed was a decade of war as America went in search of vengeance, before launching an ill-conceived invasion of Iraq. While the initial invasion confirmed the devastating technological supremacy of the United States, the long and bloody occupation showed the limits of American power. The second pillar of American strength also began to weaken after the year 2000, as the American share of global GDP steadily shrank, followed by the recession of 2008 which brought the economy to a shuddering halt. At the same time, the Asian economies had been steadily growing, China in particular experiencing astronomical growth following the reforms of Deng Xiaoping. For the first time people began to talk about rising powers, multi-polarity and the decline of the United States.

The reality confronting American policy-makers and strategists in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that the unquestioned uni-polarity that existed after the end of the Cold War is coming to an end. While China is not yet a peer competitor, it is increasingly starting to act like one. India is also growing rapidly. A European Union with greater foreign policy cohesion and military co-operation could be a challenger for leadership of the Western world. Other powers such as Russia, Brazil and South Africa express their dissatisfaction at their place within the current global order and seek its revision.

In the face of the disorder likely to categorise the realm of international politics then, American strategists must form long term plans for how to respond to these challenges. At the same time, the United States has to face these challenges at a time when less money is available, when the population, wearied by long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, is increasingly inward focused, when the military is being greatly reduced by the process of sequestration, and the United States' government is facing frequent gridlock from its dysfunctional system. In this study, we will discuss the options available to the United States regarding the two most significant rising powers; China and India.

The question which this study shall aim to answer then is **'How can the United States respond to the challenges posed by the emergence of great power rivals in Asia?'** In asking this question I hope to examine what the nature of great power relations will be in the twenty-first century, and what multi-polarity will look like in a world that hasn't experienced it since before the Second World War. Thus, to answer this I shall examine the differing nature of the challenges presented by China and India to the dominance of the United States. I shall then proceed to examine alternate policy options available to the Americans, based on the theories listed below. I shall consider various approaches and initiatives the United States can pursue towards the Chinese and Indian governments, its options regarding international organisation amongst countries in the Pacific and the role that smaller countries in the region have to play in American strategy. I will also assess what are the United States' core interests and desired outcomes. This study will therefore be concerned with the direct interactions of the three major powers, and of certain other countries in the Pacific region where their interests collide.



We shall discuss what we can expect to develop relying on a theoretical framework primarily consisting of the work of John Mearsheimer, Samuel Huntington, and the debate around the Heartland/Rimland theories. From this we will discuss what appropriate policies the United States can pursue in regards to these two potential behemoths, and form a picture of what an American strategy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century might look like.

## **CHAPTER II: Methodology**

We shall begin this section by describing the main theories that will be used, and outlining the rationale behind the decisions of which theories and countries this study will focus on. We shall then discuss the limitations of this study.

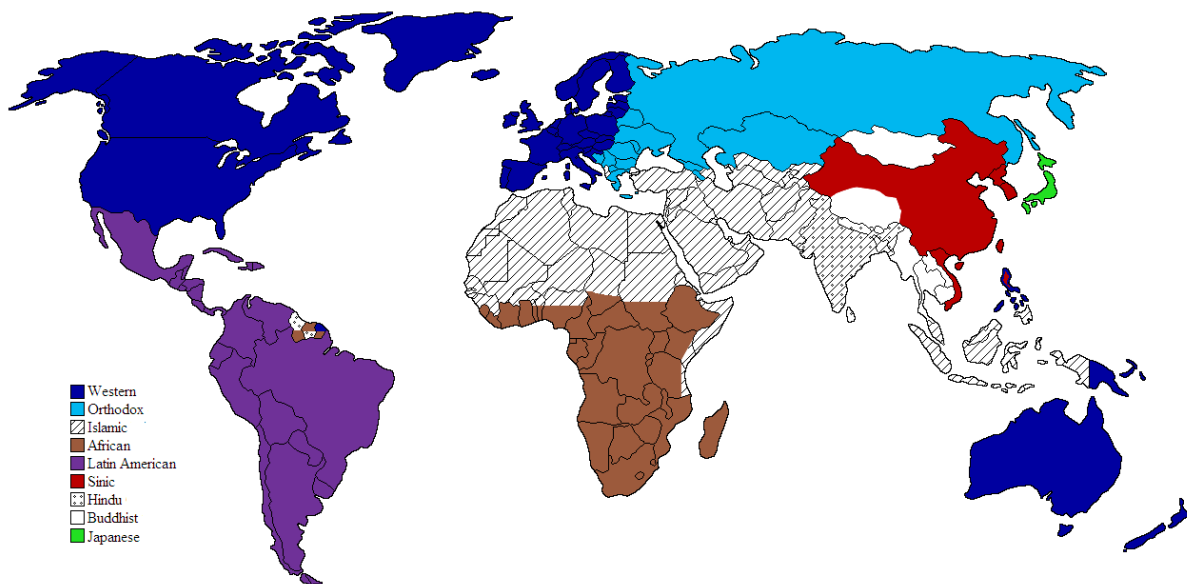
### ***Section 1: Discussion of theories***

The theories of Mearsheimer and Huntington are both taken from the Realist school of thought. I have written this work with an emphasis on realist theory for three reasons. Firstly, because the international system outside of the European Union remains anarchic, there is no higher authority to which states can turn. The UN has been rendered more powerless than ever in the twenty-first century. Second, “Nationalism is probably the most powerful political ideology in the world” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p365). The international order, especially in East Asia is composed of strong states that almost all contain strongly nationalist populations which will be a major pressure on the foreign policy of the main actors. Thirdly, that Liberal theory is not a good model for the Asia-Pacific. Non-state actors have a relatively minor role here, and in countries like China for instance, multi-national corporations have very little power. Further, Liberal theory states that free trade should make nations cooperative, and that strong trade ties should be of paramount importance to states. I shall argue that despite greater inter-connectedness and ever increasing volumes of trade, it is secondary to nationalist sentiment, as shown by Japan and China's dispute over uninhabited islands causing boycotts of goods and the closure of businesses.

Mearsheimer is primarily interested in power dynamics, in terms of how countries react to other powers destabilising existing hegemonies. His theory of Offensive Realism, outlined in 'The Tragedy of Great Power Politics' argues that great powers seek as much power as they possibly can, because with no way of knowing the intentions of other great powers, they must ensure their own security by maximising their own power at the expense of other states in the system. This was chosen as an approach as a way of understanding how three large powers might interact while each seeking primacy in the same regions. Mersheimer's work is part of the Hierarchic realism approach to international

relations, a position which can be broadly defined as a belief that states exist in an anarchic order, and that those with the power to do so form hierarchies of power to which client states belong, with their own relative power determining their position in the hierarchy. Different great powers attempt to build their own hierarchies and maximise their power because “great powers fear each other and always compete with each other for power. The overriding goal of each state is to maximise its share of world power, which means gaining power at the expense of other states... Their ultimate aim is to be the hegemon – that is, the only great power in the system” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p2).

The basic tenets of Offensive Realism are that “the international system is anarchic... characterized by security competition and war” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p30). Secondly, that all states “inherently possess some offensive military capability” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p30), which makes them potentially dangerous to each other. Because they pose an inherent risk to each other, the state is primarily concerned with survival above all other considerations. It is also assumed that states are rational actors, who consider “how their own behaviour is likely to affect the behaviour of those other states” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p31), and that states consciously plan for both the long and short term consequences of their actions. Because states know that they are in a self-help system, they “understand that the best way to ensure their survival is to be the most powerful state in the system” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p33). Therefore, every state has the goal of achieving hegemony. States which are not in a position to pursue hegemony can either bandwagon with a potential hegemon hoping to benefit from its largesse and being protected from it, or they can balance against it, by forming alliances with neighbouring states and seeking assistance from a different hegemonic state. All states “care about relative power, not absolute power” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p36), because they are concerned not only with their own gains, but on the potential gains of others resulting from their actions. Mearsheimer holds that the fear great powers have of each other is a central component in driving competition, and that “the amount of fear between them largely drives the severity of their security competition” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p42). For these reasons, I have chosen this theory as a means to analyse the differences between American perceptions of China and India, and to examine the rational analysis states within the region make between these three powers.



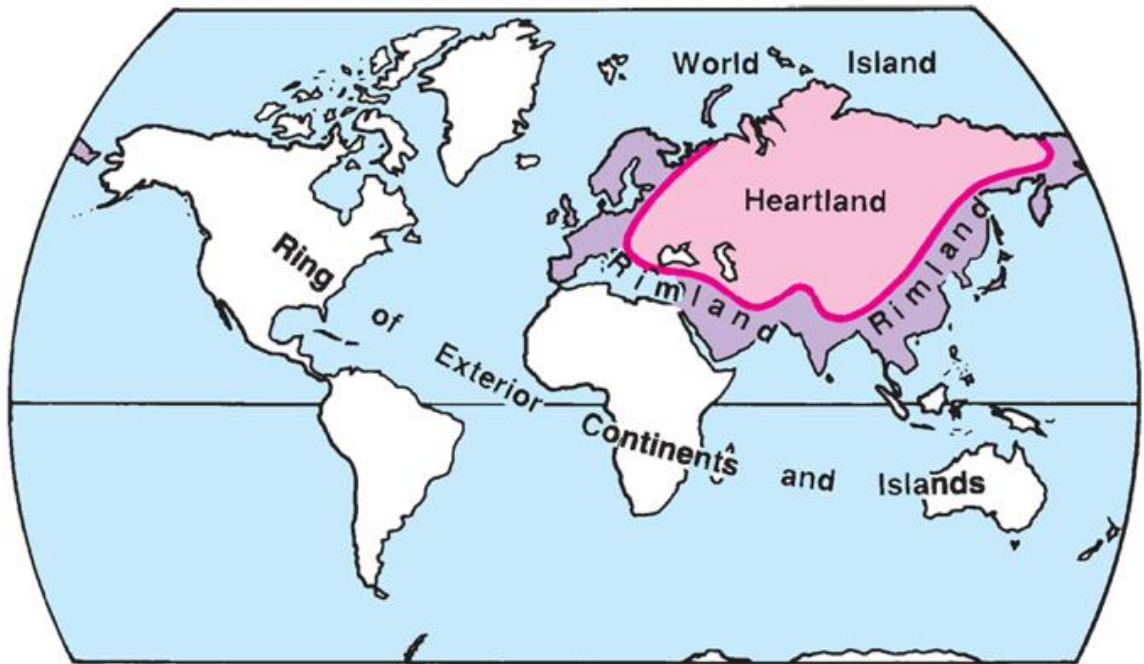
**Figure 1: Map of the Civilisations (Huntington, 1996)**

Huntington is also a realist, and as such is interested in power dynamics. His *Clash of Civilizations* is concerned with the role cultural differences play in guiding a state's policy towards states of a different culture, and the way in which confidence in a civilization as a whole leads the dominant state in that civilization to try to enforce its norms globally. It also describes how cultural and institutional differences can affect relationships. I have chosen this theory as a way of examining the differences between the American approaches to China and India, as it, unlike the work of Mearsheimer accounts for institutional and cultural differences and similarities between states, and how that can affect their relations.

The starting point of Huntington's thesis that the world is divided into civilisational blocs, which are formed by cultural and religious similarities, and a conscious sense of being part of whole. Civilisations possess core states of their politically most powerful and important members, and may have a leader. Huntington notes that since the end of the Cold War the most important distinctions “among peoples are not ideological, political or economic” (Huntington, 1996, p21) but rather are tied into questions of identity and culture. Huntington holds that in the twenty-first century that the world will be multi-polar, and the poles will be the major powers of the major civilisations. He observes that non-Western civilizations are increasingly powerful and as “their power and self-confidence

increase, non-Western societies increasingly assert their own cultural values and reject those “imposed” on them” (Huntington, 1996, p21). He states that the likely flashpoints of the coming decades will be along what he terms the 'faultlines' between different civilizations. Smaller countries with non-Western civilisations will have a choice between trying to “join or to “bandwagon” with the West. Other Confucian and Islamic societies attempt... to resist and to “balance” against the West” (Huntington, 1996, p29). In this study we will discuss the role of civilisational differences in relations between the United States, India and China, what are the implications of confidence in their civilisations, and what role we can expect civilisational identity to play in the calculations of smaller states in the region.

The Heartland/Rimland debate is a geopolitical concept discussing the relative importance of different areas of the globe for political mastery. The two main theorists of this debate are Halford Mackinder, who first conceived of the Heartland, and Nicholas J. Spykman who responded by emphasising the Rimland. In short, it is a debate between whether the landmass of Central Asia or the coastal rim of Asia and Europe are more important for a state to control to be a world power. At its core it is a discussion regarding the role of geography, and of the difference between land and sea power.



**Figure 2: Map showing Heartland and Rimland (Source: McGraw-Hill)**

Spykman held that the rise of the United States could be primarily attributed to the fact that it had direct access to the Atlantic and Pacific oceans which made it the “most favoured state in the world from the point of view of location” (Spykman, 1942). Spykman places geography at the core of international politics observing that history is “made in the temperate latitudes”, which due to the unequal distribution of land between the hemispheres, in effect means “North America, Europe, the Greater Middle East and North Africa, most of Russia, China, and the bulk of India” (Kaplan, 2012, p91). Spykman observes that because America is the undisputed hegemon of the American continents, it has “power to spare for activities outside the New World” (Spykman, 1942). Unlike Mackinder's heartland thesis, which focuses on Eurasia, Spykman's Rimland is a vision of geopolitics that encompasses the globe. “Mackinder is vital to an understanding of Cold War geography; whereas Spykman... is more relevant than Mackinder in an age in which every place can affect every other place” (Kaplan, 2012, p92).

The work of Spykman also has similarities to the naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan, and is a major influence on the work of James Holmes and Robert Kaplan. I have chosen this theory as a starting point for a wider consideration in the role of geography in inter-

national relations. It is the guiding principle for the main geographical area of focus for this study, and to explain why rivalry and competition is more intense in some parts of the Asia-Pacific than in others.

Between these three approaches, I hope to explain why American relations with India and China differ, based on power calculations, cultural difference, and the limitations and opportunities and limitations extended by geography.

## ***Section 2: Discussion of which states to study***

I will now explain why China and India were chosen as the states that are studied in this essay. While there are several emerging powers I could have chosen, China and India are the most populous by far and the most significant. They represent a distinctly new trend of non-western superpowers emerging, and have interesting similarities and distinctions in their histories. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, these two areas were the wealthiest areas on the planet, and both were reduced by Western powers to a weakened state from which they had to recover in the second half of the 20th century. In other ways though, their history diverges. While both suffered from Western imperialism, India was colonized while China, with the exception of coastal cities such as Qingdao, Hong Kong and Macau was not. China suffered revolutions and internal collapse in the early 20th century, while India has maintained the basic structures of colonial era administration. After the Second World War, China became an authoritarian communist state, while India became a parliamentary democracy. However, for geopolitical reasons they were on opposing sides of the Cold War, with India being friendly towards the Soviet Union, while the Chinese pursued ties with the Americans after the Sino-Soviet split.

Since 2001, the BRIC/BRICS grouping has been used to describe emerging economies, leading to a political organisation amongst Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. While I could have taken other members of this grouping as starting points of discussion, China and India are by the far most obvious and important to talk about. Brazil is geographically remote, a cultural isolate in its own region and possessing a small global political stature. It has unkindly been said that “Brazil is the country of the future – and al-

ways will be” (Wolf, 2010). It is certainly the case that Brazil has not matched the economic growth of the Asian giants.

Russia could also have been a topic for debate, but in many ways its profile is different to the other BRICS. It is not an emerging country with a post-colonial background, it is a former imperialist and superpower which when into catastrophic decline. Its military power is declining from its peak in the 1980s and its industrial base has collapsed as it has become a petro-state, perhaps less 'Upper Volta with missiles' as Helmut Schmidt once put it, and more of an oversized, over-armed Saudi Arabia. The area which Huntington defines as what Russia might consider its natural sphere of influence has largely been absorbed into the European Union, leaving Russia with few friends, most of which are from the former Soviet Union such as Kazakhstan and Belarus. Thus, Russia is in some ways the black sheep of the BRICS family, its economic growth in the early 2000s being driven by a spike in oil prices, and its military adventuring has been directed against much weaker states. Russia then, although a revisionist state that actively seeks to counter the United States and European Union, faces a declining ability to do so as oil prices fall and the small size of its economy and population relative to other 21st century great powers make its confrontational stance untenable in the long run.

The final BRICS member, South Africa is the most minor member. It joined after the original BRICs group formed, and in many ways is not even close to the other four in terms of power potential. While it is still a regional hegemon in Southern Africa, this owes more to its developed political establishment inherited from the colonial and apartheid eras, where it had more attention focused on it as a British Dominion than other British colonies in Africa. Its apartheid government developed a powerful state to enforce minority rule, and its structures were maintained following its transition to democracy. South Africa's position though is being eroded. It had the advantage of avoiding the chaotic misrule after independence that marred many African countries, but countries such as Nigeria, with much larger populations, are now catching up. South Africa is simply not powerful enough to be a hegemon of the whole of Africa, let alone a major world power, which makes its inclusion in BRICS somewhat puzzling; “Unlike China, South Africa is not an economic powerhouse. It has neither the profit potential nor the productivity of India or Brazil. Russia's economy (the smallest of the BRIC nations) is four times larger



than South Africa's, which accounts for just 2.5 percent of the bloc's gross domestic product (GDP). And with a population of 50 million, South Africa lacks the sizeable citizenry of those other countries” (Robins, 2013). In explaining South Africa's inclusion in the grouping we should be aware that the invitation came from China, and that “South Africa is Africa's largest economy, and Africa is key for BRIC resources, trade, and economic expansion... The country's inclusion in the consortium had everything to do with politics, and very little to do with economic equivalency, developmental dynamics, or societal similarities. The invitation was about "location, location, location" -- and a favour from some very powerful friends” (Robins, 2013). Its inclusion owes significantly more to the economic benefits South Africa can provide to the other members than it being a truly equal member.

### ***Section 3: Limitations of study***

Having explained the theories to be used and the choice of case studies above, I shall now discuss the limitations of this study.

Firstly, the fact that the core theories used during this study are all realist theories. This is a conscious decision not to use liberal theory, for the straightforward reason that I do not believe it is a good theoretical approach to explain the relationships between the United States and China. The two largest economies are deeply intertwined and from liberal theory we would expect them to develop ever closer ties. Instead we see competition developing and intensifying. Similarly China and Japan should seek closer ties as major trading partners, and yet they rattle sabres over largely uninhabited islands. The assertiveness of China and the determination of Japan not to back down owe far more to Thucydides' classic motives of “fear, honour, and interest” (Dent, 1910). Further, the central elements of this study are concerned with the impact that the emergence of new powers has on existing political hierarchies, which in my view are best explained through realist thought.

Secondly, as a consequence of limitations of space, the scope of this study is inherently limited. A study including Russia in particular could give a more complete image of the strategic picture in the Asia-Pacific region, and a better understanding of power competition in Central Asia. However, there was no space to do justice to such a study, so I made

the decision to limit myself to the two most important and interestingly contrasting powers in the region.

## CHAPTER III: The United States and China

### Introduction

To begin with, we shall discuss recent changes in the East Asia-Pacific region. First of all, it is important to identify what is meant by this definition. For practical purposes, the area we are talking about is bounded on the north by the Aleutian chain and on the East by the United States' Western Seaboard. To the South, its limits prescribe an arc curving from the Pitcairn Islands, under New Zealand and Australia, to emerge in Indonesia, to include the coastal states of Indochina and then follow the Chinese coastline north to include the Korean peninsula, Japan, and the Russian Far East.

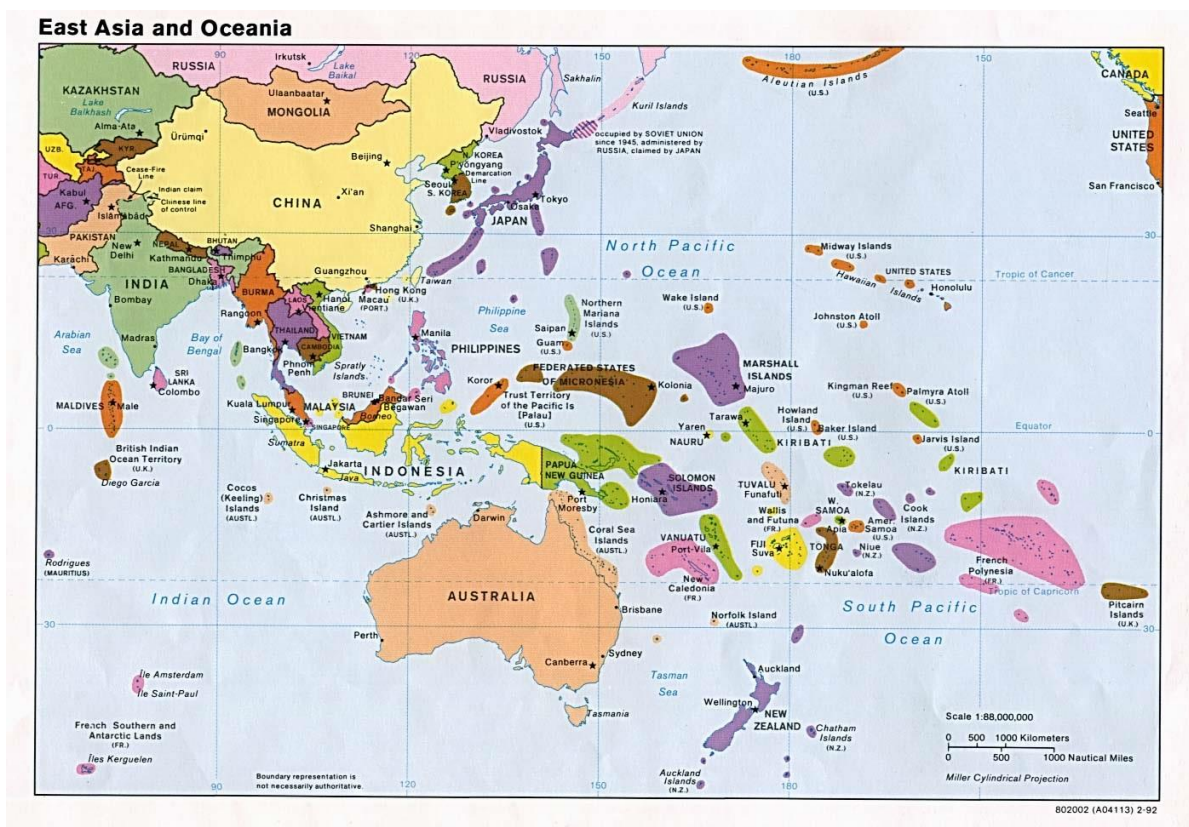


Figure 3: Asia Pacific Map

This area encloses several major economies, including the established powers of Australia, Japan and South Korea, as well as several large emerging economies, most notably Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines, which were included amongst the 'Next Eleven' by Goldman Sachs. Traditionally the area has included weak authoritarian states, post-

colonial states with varying degrees of reliance on their former masters such as Malaya and the Philippines, and economically powerful colonial and post-colonial city states such as Singapore and Hong Kong. The two most conventional powers, Japan and South Korea were, to borrow a phrase normally reserved for Germany, economic giants and political dwarfs. Japan's global role has been constrained since 1945, a result of the combination of its cultural uniqueness, its domination by the United States following defeat in the Second World War, and the resentment with which it is regarded in its neighbourhood following Japan's crimes in that conflict. South Korea's economic growth since the 1960s has been staggering, far outpacing the initially more industrialised North. However, the existence of its belligerent neighbour has dominated the foreign policy of the South, placing it in permanent danger of attack. To counter this, a large US troop deployment is present in the country, which has had the effect of binding South Korea closely to the United States, even including participation in the Vietnam War.

Since the end of the Cold War however, this equilibrium has changed. The former colonial states have disappeared almost completely from the scene, and the relative power of Australia and New Zealand has diminished. Japan's economic miracle, reaching its peak in the 1980s, and South Korea's 'Miracle on the Han', have made them more assertive in their own region, and in Japan's case willing to be more assertive in its relations with the United States. Further, some of the Authoritarian regimes such as the Philippines and Indonesia became democratic, while others such as Vietnam became economically vibrant if still politically repressive. Global power has shifted eastward as these populous nations have developed.

The most significant development though, has been the emergence of China as a major economy. After the dark decades of Mao's rule, the reforms of Deng Xiaoping have made China more politically stable, less susceptible to the whims of one man and most importantly, by opening China to some degree of capitalism, its economy boomed on an unprecedented scale. With an assertive, confident China increasingly believing that it has a rightful place in the world to occupy, the stage is set for potentially major upheavals in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## ***Section 1: China's Regional Role***

Given the dramatic improvements in Chinese fortunes in recent years, its place in the region has been in a state of flux. During the Cold War it was primarily turned inwards, after the civil war and under Mao's leadership. Where China did take an external role, it was anti-Western and opposed to the US and imperialism. This policy saw it send its army to intervene in the Korean War after UN forces pressed to close to the Chinese border. After the death of Stalin and Khrushchev's 'Secret Speech' denouncing him, the Chinese broke decisively away from the Soviets. Relations deteriorated to the point of an undeclared conflict fought in 1969. China's relations were then determined by countering the Soviet Union: the Soviets were friendly with India, so China pursued relations with Pakistan. Vietnam was aligned with the Soviet Union, which led to a Chinese invasion when Vietnam invaded Cambodia in 1979. The Chinese military was primarily focused on the risk of land war with the Soviet Union, with "one million troops" (Kaplan, 2012, p202) stationed at the border.

In 1972 a seismic shift in Cold War politics came with the visit of President Nixon to China. In exchange for a partial recognition of the Communist government, the United States secured a promise for a political solution to the Taiwan question. More importantly it opened up trade links and political contacts between the two countries and produced an anti-Soviet alignment.

Since the end of the Cold War, China has largely replaced Marxism as its official ideology and derives its legitimacy instead from Han nationalism and a guarantee of producing economic growth and rising living standards; "it does not come armed with a missionary approach to world affairs. It has no ideology or system of government it seeks to spread" (Kaplan, 2012, p199). By the early 2000s, China's economic rise was being felt around the world, leading to the more assertive China that exists today.

China's rise to being a great power is a function of its latent power. Mearsheimer defines the main components of latent power as "the size of a state's population and its wealth... the two most important components for generating military might" (Mearsheimer, 2001, p60). With a population in excess of 1.3 billion, China's population is the largest in the world, only India's comes close. With the American population at a shade under 320 mil-

lion being the third largest in the world, the latent power of China's population is clear. China's wealth is also vast, from a labour intensive, export based economy which has delivered stunning growth and budget surpluses. Chinese people have experienced a remarkable rise in living standards and prosperity. Chinese labour remains less efficient and less productive than workers in the West, but is significantly cheaper. While living standards remain lower than in the West, and in rural China desperate poverty continues, it is important to note that China can become the world's largest economy without needing to reach Western standards of development. Because the Chinese workforce is so vast, a GDP per capita just 40% of the size of the United States' would be "sufficient to make it into the world's largest economy" (Barber, 2014). Mearsheimer stresses that "a large population does not ensure great wealth, but great wealth does require a large population" (Mearsheimer, 2001, p62). The significance of China's development in recent years is that industrialised China produces more surplus wealth than in its earlier agrarian economy because a large part of the product is not being consumed by the producers; its GNP is no longer mostly measuring farmers who eat the food they produce. Its latent wealth is greater because Beijing now has far more money available to spend on what it wishes, which in turn gives it greater military potential. The likelihood that the Chinese economy will deliver greater surplus wealth than the American economy makes the challenge posed by China to the United States unlike any other the United States has faced since it first became a great power. Since the US emerged as a global power at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it has had the world's largest economy. The other countries with which it has competed; Wilhelmine and Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan and the Soviet Union all had significantly smaller economies.

One of the reasons China provokes alarm in the United States is that it is already inherently a continental power, and free of other geopolitical constraints enjoys a freedom to act abroad and look to the sea. China possesses a "nine-thousand-mile coastline with many good natural harbors" (Kaplan, 2012, p189). Historically, China has been a land based power, expanding west into Central Asia, and attempting to subjugate Korea and Vietnam either directly or through the "tribute system" (Womack, 2010, p3). In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it was also open to sea-borne attack from the British

and the Japanese, both of whom had off-shore bases from which they could strike with impunity. After the Sino-Soviet split, the Soviet Union presented the major threat, focusing China's military attention to its northern border. Because it faced huge danger from this direction, it could not leave itself open by focusing on the island chains surrounding it, or divert materials from the army to build a blue water navy. Now, however, the other powers in the region are significantly weaker in size, population and economic growth. Japan is the only serious competitor nearby, but its population is smaller and ageing, and its military is severely limited by the constitution. Russia, the other major potential check on Chinese power is in no position to do so, its military having been badly neglected during the post-Communist era. President Putin's focus on reasserting Russian primacy on its western frontiers has left its east neglected, while Russia's abysmal relations with the West encourage it to seek cooperation with Beijing to oppose the United States where necessary, and avoid turmoil on a second front. With extensive sanctions in place, and a general desire in Europe to wean itself off of dependence on Russian gas, China is an important trade partner for Moscow. The result of the decline of China's neighbours occurring as it rises is that "China is probably more secure on land than it has been in decades, or centuries" (Kaplan, 2012, p212).

The Chinese government's primary concern is to ensure its survival, and the continuation of Communist Party rule in China. Being now largely devoid of ideology, the legitimacy of the CPC now rests on its ability to deliver economic growth and provide a "middle-class lifestyle for much of its population" (Kaplan, 2012, p199). This concern sees it scouring the globe for resources, particularly sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, where it is willing to work with authoritarian regimes despised in the West, because it has no interest in adjusting their behaviour. China is overwhelmingly driven by its need for natural resources, to make up for China's lack and to feed the endless appetite of its industry. To secure these resources, China needs "port access throughout the South China Sea and adjacent Indian Ocean" (Kaplan, 2012, p199).

## ***Section 2: Challenges in China poses to the US in the region***

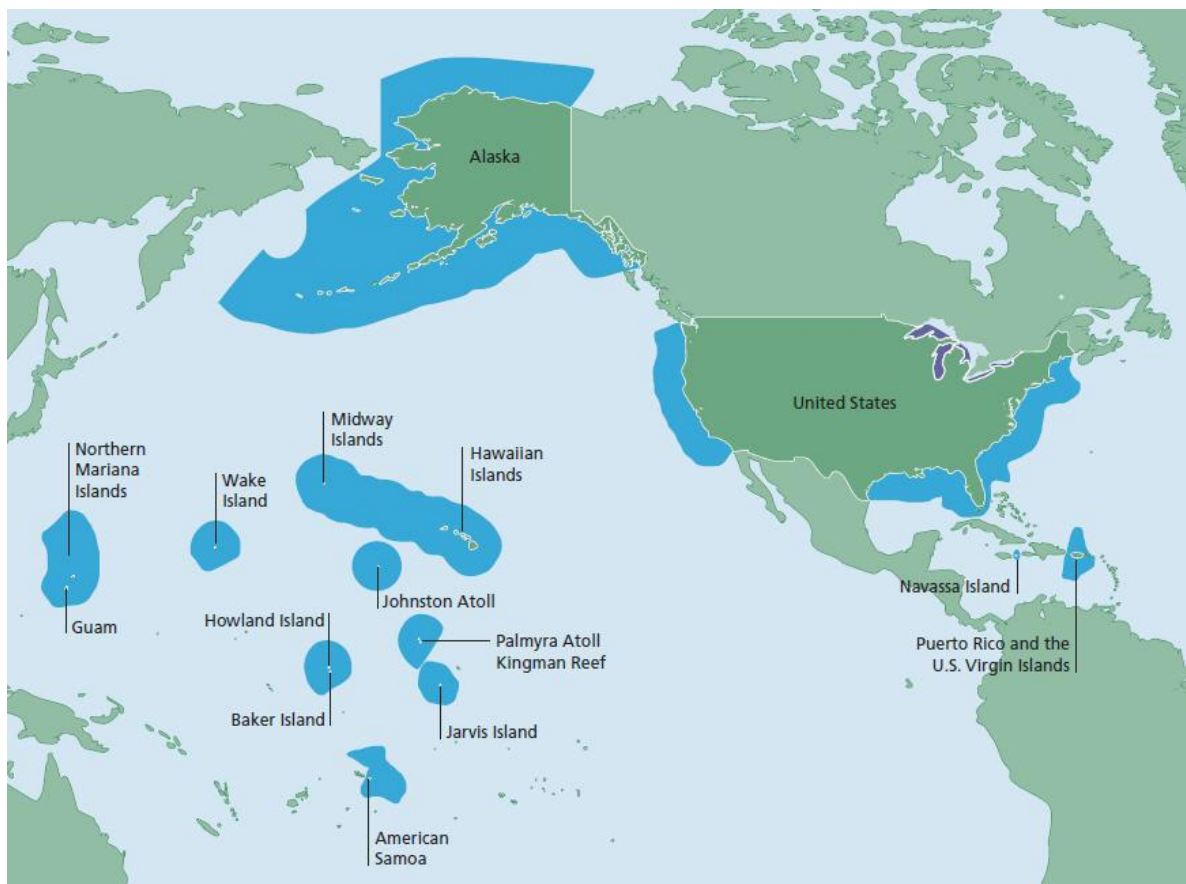
As we have seen China's rise is very different to peer competitors the United States has faced in the past. It comes from a vastly greater population base and is succeeding in converting that potential into economic strength. In this section we will discuss why the United States might feel threatened by this development, and what actions China might take and what affect that would have on the United States. We shall look at American alliances in the regions and how those countries would adapt to multi-polarity.

### **The United States in the Pacific**

Firstly, we shall consider why the rise of China provokes alarm in Washington. The basis of America's security from other powers, and its capacity to act around the globe rest on two pillars; that it is “separated from the world's other great powers by two giant moats – the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p127), and that it has command of the seas giving it freedom to intervene anywhere outside of the Heartland. Because the United States has achieved the unique position of regional hegemon, it did not seek to become hegemonic outside of the Western Hemisphere. Its position as hegemon made it in effect a status quo power. When potential peer competitors have emerged, it has attempted to leave other regional powers to balance against it “and when that approach failed, the United States used its own military forces to eliminate the threat and restore a rough balance of power in the area so it could bring its troops home” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p237). After the Second World War however, the United States did not have the option of withdrawing from North-East Asia. “The Soviet Union... was a potential hegemon in Northeast Asia” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p260), and with Japan defeated, China fighting a civil war, and the colonial empires in ruins, the United States had little choice but to stay to contain the Soviets.

A glance at the map shows “the reality of America’s status as an Asia-Pacific power: it possesses a sweeping array of sovereign territory in which to base Pacific-focused forces” (Lord and Erickson, 2014).





**Figure 4: Map of American territory and associated EEZs in the Pacific (Source: Wikimedia Com-**

Not only does this territory offer the United States basing options to project power outwards, they also serve a defensive purpose, by keeping America's western frontier away from the state of Hawaii or the coasts of California, Washington, Oregon. US territory that lies further west means that America's first line of defence is in Guam and the Mariana Islands rather than on the western coast of the mainland. While the possession of these islands allows the US Navy to avoid being bottled up in West Coast ports, these territories and their populations must themselves be defended. Failure to do so adequately in the past is why islands such as Wake, Midway and Guam are best known as the location of battles of the Second World War. This American forward presence then is a blessing for US strategists, but not one without drawbacks.

In the modern era, America's power is built on its global reach; its power projection capabilities derive from the effectively unlimited range of its nuclear-powered aircraft carriers, and its numerous overseas bases. In the Pacific region, the most important of those are the bases in Japan, and on the island of Guam. In addition, large forces are stationed in South Korea, but these are positioned primarily to resist aggression from the North and in any case there have in recent years been “reductions in U.S. combat troops [which] were accompanied by a substantial reduction and consolidation of the American basing infrastructure” (Lord et al., 2014). The American bases in Japan, especially the Marine Corps bases in Okinawa, are politically controversial given the widespread resentment amongst the local population over the feeling of military occupation, the anger caused by assaults by the US personnel on locals, the pollution caused by the base and the election of anti-base “Okinawan leaders [who] simply do not have the leverage to force Tokyo’s hand, leaving anti-base politicians quite able to make promises, but quite unable to keep them”(Hough, 2014).

The bases in Guam are already “some of the most strategically important US bases in the Pacific” (Central Intelligence Agency, 2014), and the island is set to become more important as the United States moves more forces into the region as part of the pivot, while at the same time becoming home to troops moved from other East Asian countries. The island is seen as a safer bet for focusing American forward deployments because the island's status as a US territory means that there is no political opposition, and no risk of the base being forced to close as happened in the Philippines. As a result “Guam’s capabilities and infrastructure have been built up significantly over the past decade” (Lord et al., 2014).

As we can see, these islands are of immense value to the United States for power projection into the Eurasian rimlands. The Chinese are also aware of the obvious potential of these islands. The first island chain is a string of islands from Sakhalin in the north-east to Borneo in the south-west that effectively surrounds the Chinese coastline, and includes the island of Okinawa, as well as Taiwan. China is aware that the fact that it is enclosed by territory belonging to Japan and the ROC, as well as major US bases means that they have the potential to deny “China’s military access to the vast maneuver space of the Western Pacific while hampering its movements up and down the Asian seaboard”

(Holmes, 2014a). China should be under no illusions of the role of US bases in the first islands, the current American strategy document 'A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower' explicitly states that “[c]redible combat power will be continuously postured in the Western Pacific and the Arabian Gulf/Indian Ocean to... assure our friends and allies of our continuing commitment to regional security, and deter and dissuade potential adversaries and peer competitors” (Conway, 2009).



**Figure 5: Map of US Bases in the East Asia (Source: <http://www.fpri.org/> )**

For China, this poses an unacceptable risk. In 2013, the Chinese navy repeatedly crossed the chain to perform exercises in the western Pacific, including its first circumnavigation of Japan. Ou Jianping of China's National Defense University was quoted as saying that the “Chinese navy must grow into a blue-water navy because almost all of the aggression against China in modern times came from the sea” (Xiaokun, 2013).

The likelihood of America and China forming adversarial relations is increased by the “specific geography of China's potential sphere of influence in maritime Asia” (Kaplan, 2012, p217). This makes Taiwan a particularly important litmus test of their relations. The stated positions of the two giants are diametrically opposed, China regarding the island as integral part of China, and talks in terms of inevitable unification. The Americans,

on the other hand, speak about protecting a long-standing democracy. A glance at the map above shows that Taiwan is where the first islands press closest to China, allowing an outside power to project power across the economic and demographic heart of China. If China should ever reintegrate Taiwan to the mainland, the constriction of the first island chain would be torn open, and the Pacific Ocean would be open to the Chinese navy. Its military energies would be free “to look outwards in terms of power projection, to a degree that has so far been impossible... it will be the virtual fusing of Taiwan with the mainland that will mark in a military sense the real emergence of a multipolar world” (Kaplan, 2012, p218). A China that possesses Taiwan would be capable of asserting dominance over the Asian rimland.

In worse news for the American positions in the first islands, is the development of anti-access strategies. In 1996, during a crisis between the ROC government and Beijing, the United States sent a carrier force to sail in between Taiwan and the Chinese mainland. The threat forced Beijing to back down. The lesson drawn from this by China, and other powers such as Iran, is even if they do not possess a large enough fleet to win a conventional naval battle, that is irrelevant if they can make it too dangerous for an enemy fleet to use its control of the sea against the mainland. By making an area too difficult for the enemy fleet to use an area, the defender denies it to them while not needing to contest possession on the high seas. This is the essence of A2/AD strategies. This has been made possible by “the development of more lethal air defenses and anti-ship cruise missiles; cheaper, more integrated surveillance systems; and new weapons, such as anti-ship ballistic missiles” (Greenert and Welsh, 2013). The last in particular poses a grave threat to America's aircraft carriers. In the event of another Straits crisis between Taiwan and China, it would be foolhardy in the extreme to send ships so close to the Chinese shore. Furthermore, the increased range of land-based missile systems mean that “these capabilities can be applied to prevent or slow U.S. or allied assistance from arriving in time to stop or repel an attack — providing an aggressor much greater leverage over neighbors who depend on allies for security” (Greenert et al., 2013). In other words, in event of a Chinese attack on Taiwan, the United States may be powerless to intervene, despite its commitments to its defence. Given that China explicitly states that in event of Taiwan seeking

formal independence it will intervene militarily, this is a hotspot that could seriously damage American credibility if China feels itself able to act unilaterally against Taiwan.

The Americans do not help matters by striking an inconsistent tone with regards to the cross-Strait dispute, on the one hand taking steps to protect Taiwan, but on the other not selling the top-end military equipment that Taiwan needs, and being “adamant in its insistence that Taiwan not take any steps towards formal independence” (Mazza, 2011).

Complicating American efforts to defend Taiwan, China already possesses missiles with “the range to attack Kadena Air Base on Okinawa, a U.S. Air Force facility that is in many ways the best air base ashore for U.S. operations against China” (Hoyler, 2010). If the Okinawa bases were rendered inoperable, American planes would have to fly from Guam to operate in the skies over Taiwan. The sheer distance to be travelled, coupled with the limits of how many aircraft the USAF has available and how many planes can reasonably be based on Guam significantly reduces American combat effectiveness, regardless of any one-to-one superiority the American fighters have.

For the Americans, the reality is that the value of bases in the first islands is diminishing both as a potential forward base to deter China, and as a first line of defence. This is an issue the Americans will need to address sooner rather than later if they are to maintain command of the Pacific rimland. The Americans also need to develop a clear vision of what its relationship with Taiwan should be, to avoid misleading the Chinese.

## **China and Japan**

So far we have seen that the United States values its Pacific holdings for the security that they give to the continental United States, and for allowing the United States to forward deploy its forces. We have seen that the United States opposes the emergence of a regional hegemon in East Asia because such a power could expand directly towards the American homeland or threaten American control of the seas, and that America's presence there is to prevent that eventuality. Now we shall take a closer look at the other states in between the US and China; Japan, South Korea and the states bordering the South China Sea.

We shall begin with Japan, the most northerly of these states. From the late nineteenth century until 1945, Japan became the only non-Western great power by adopting the mili-

tary and industrial methods of the West. It industrialised quickly and became a formidable military power, defeating the Russians in the war of 1904-5 and building an empire in Korea and eastern China. During the Second World War, Japan overran much of China's east coast, before launching an attack on the British and Dutch colonial empires and against the United States at Pearl Harbor. After Japan's defeat, it was subjected to military occupation by the Americans who introduced a new constitution for a democratic, demilitarised Japan. The constitution established democracy in Japan, and forbade it from raising "land, sea, and air forces" (Japan Const. art. IX, §2). As part of America's Cold War containment, a large military presence was based in Japan. During the Korean War, occupation forces were moved from Japan to fight the North Koreans, and afterwards Japan remained a key base for response by communist forces against South Korea.

Japan and China have a complicated history, from China's huge historical cultural impact on Japan, to the sudden redistribution of power following the Meiji Restoration. Following Japan's aggression to China in the twentieth century and especially the crimes committed during World War II, Chinese public and political opinion has been decidedly anti-Japanese. This animosity has been stoked by a feeling in China and Korea that Japan has done nowhere near enough "to take responsibility for its war crimes" (Chen, 2014) while on the other hand the "Japanese are fed up with the Korean and Chinese demands for apologies and compensation" (Chen, 2014). Japanese politicians continue to provoke outrage in China and Korea by making public visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, which honours Japan's war dead, including war criminals.

It is against this poisonous mix of nationalism, resentment and blame for past crimes then that relations between Japan and China take place. Following Japan's stunning growth after the war, it was hailed by many as "world champion" (Wallerstein, 2003, p275) during the 1980s when its economic growth peaked, and many Americans feared the Japanese economy would overtake their own. These fears proved unfounded when the Japanese economy encountered severe 'stag-flation' which led to the so-called 'lost decades' of the Japanese economy from 1990 until 2010, and which still hampers Japan's economy. In this time, China's economic growth made itself felt. In both cases, the societies became, in the words of Assistant Secretary of State Winston Lord, "increasingly conscious and proud of their accomplishments" (Huntington, 1996, p226). Japan has be-

come more confident of its place in the world, and engages with the United States on more equal terms than before. More importantly, the increasing nationalism of the Chinese, the confidence of a rising civilization predicted by Huntington compels unease in Japan, leading to an assertive nationalism of its own, as evidenced by Prime Minister Abe's statement that "Japan is not, and will never be, a Tier-two country" (Akira and Nahory, 2014).

Chinese hostility to Japan lies not just in the historical violence against China, but also has solid form in territorial disputes over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. The uninhabited islands were claimed by Japan in 1895, the same year that it took possession of Taiwan from China. China claims that the islands form part of the province of Taiwan, and should have been returned when Japan ceded Taiwan to the Kuomintang government after the Second World War. The dispute emerged as a serious issue in 2012 when the Governor of Tokyo announced his intention to "use public money to buy the islands from their private Japanese owner" (BBC, 2014a). By doing this, Japan "offered Beijing the chance to retaliate by challenging Japan's de-facto control of the islands while still claiming the moral high ground" (YapingWang, 2013). From this began a series of clashes between the Japanese coastguard and Chinese vessels. This then escalated to China declaring an Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) over the Senkakus, up until which point the United States had been neutral in the dispute. By requiring all aircraft in this zone above Japanese territory to report to China, the Americans responded by sending two B-52 bombers to flyover the islands, bringing the United States out clearly on Japan's side. The crisis remains at a high tempo, with the Chinese Foreign Ministry describing the island as a core interest, a term "usually reserved for sensitive Chinese concerns such as Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang" (Kazianis, 2013). The issue at stake in the dispute over islands has little to do with ownership of uninhabited rocks, or righting historical wrongs. Nor does it have much to do with the gas deposits believed to exist under the islands. Instead, it has everything to do with politics. First, if China could force Japan to back down it would be a clear demonstration of China's improved position, and highlight the weakness of Japan. Secondly, it sends a clear signal to smaller states in dispute with China as to China's capabilities and willingness to pursue disputed territory even against its strongest neighbour. Thirdly, it probes the American alliance with Japan, and the strength

of American commitment to defend its treaty allies. While the number of incidents has quietly decreased, the issue is unlikely to go away since neither side will back down and “China rejects the notion that the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) can be used to decide South China Sea sovereignty issues” (Tiezzi, 2014a).

China's relations with Japan are also soured by the increasing strength of Japan's military, the revision of Japan's constitution to allow for 'collective self-defence' and the fear that “expanding military co-operation with the United States could lead to the provision of de facto Japanese assistance to Taiwan in a future cross-Straits confrontation” (Weitz, 2013, p59). Japan also has the capacity to convert its advanced technology and expertise in nuclear power to a nuclear weapons capacity, although this would require a serious deterioration in the security situation in the region to overcome Japan's legal prohibitions as well as the deep horror with which nuclear weapons are viewed in Japan.

The fundamental issue in Sino-Japanese relations is the competition between them as to who should be the dominant state in North Asia. Japan has long been accustomed to its position of superiority supported by a powerful economy and incredible technological innovation. In this period it has been able to take something of a holiday from politics, enjoying a neighbourhood with no rivals, a legal requirement not to to action abroad, and freedom from having to take worry about their own defence thanks to the alliance with the United States. The high intensity of confrontation off the Senkakus places enormous risks on the shoulders of junior naval officers and pilots, and the risks of unintentional escalation are great. Although this dispute does not have the explicit threat of war as do issues involving Taiwan, a violent exchange here would be potentially more disastrous as it could lead to conflict between the two powers, and the very high probability of American involvement.

### **South Korea and Sinosphere**

The Korean peninsula is the closest foreign power to the most populated areas of China. The southern part of the peninsula is only 120 miles (200km) from the Japanese main islands. The impact of this on Korean history has, needless to say, been enormous. Traditional Korean society “prided itself on its mastery of Confucian culture”. Unlike China's borders with the steppe or Indochina, Korea was clearly marked out by the Temun and



Yalu rivers, and by the sharp rise in elevation across the border. In the nineteenth century Korea became a target of Japanese imperialism, and after the end of the Second World War was partitioned between Soviet occupation in the North and American occupation in the South. This in turn led to the establishment of rival states, the communist DPRK and the American-aligned ROK in the South. The DPRK received backing from both China and the Soviet Union, exemplified in the Korean War where Soviet pilots flew for Korea unofficially, while China made a decisive intervention by committing its army at the point when UN forces had all but crushed the DPRK. After the US normalised relations with China, ties between South Korea and China were able to develop, leading to normalisation after the Koreans joined the UN. This “not only provided economic stimulus but also some relief from dependence on the US. China – South Korea relations entered a honeymoon, while in the 1990s China and North Korea barely spoke to one another” (Womack, 2010, p515). China's policies towards the Koreas have been met with a fair degree of success, most notably in instigating the Six Party Talks.

The most important issue on the peninsula remains the Kim regime and the problems it causes. Since the end of the Soviet Union, it has been diplomatically and economically isolated from the rest of the world, and has resorted to violence and belligerence as a way of attracting attention and necessary aid. Most seriously, North Korea has developed its own nuclear weapons capability. China, despite a distinct cooling in its own relations remains the only outside power with any degree of influence in Pyongyang, which it uses to try to encourage the DPRK to “relinquish its nuclear weapons and moderate its foreign and defence policies” (Weitz, 2013, p69). The fear is that North Korea's weapons might encourage South Korea and Japan to develop their own nuclear deterrent, as they are the only two of the Six Party states without nuclear weapons. Further, Beijing fears that North Korea's shows of improved missile capabilities might encourage Japan and Taiwan to develop anti-missile systems of their own.

China's great fear is of a sudden collapse of the North Korean regime, which remains a worse option than having to deal with the Kims. The Chinese leadership worry that collapse would send a vast wave of refugees pouring over the border, and depending on how such a situation where to play out, might involve a conflict on the peninsula which would see South Korean and American forces occupying the North. “To prevent these adverse

outcomes, PRC policy makers continue to take steps to avert state failure in North Korea... China still provides the DPRK with essential supplies of food, weapons, and other economic and political support” (Weitz, 2013, p70). For China, the DPRK is something an embarrassment, a hold-over from a different era. China's preferred view seems to be that the North should reform along Beijing's model, but there is increasingly an acceptance that the North may not survive in the long run, evidenced by the fact that China “has openly backed South Korean President Park Geun-hye’s new initiative that aims to ease the eventual reunification of the two Koreas” (Keck, 2014a). China has been far more critical of North Korea under the leadership of Kim Jong-un, partly out of the way the DPRK harms China's efforts to be taken seriously as a great power, and also from shock at the brutality of the new regime, such as its treatment of Jang Song-taek, Kim Jong-un's uncle and mentor. “Jang was widely known as North Korea’s most experienced interlocutor with Beijing and his death signaled a broader move away from China” (Panda, 2014).

Relations between South Korea and China have been improving since the 1990s. China has become the primary source of South Korean foreign direct investment, which has “overtaken that of Japan” (Raghavan, 2008, p166). Political ties also indicate a closer relationship, such as the fact that “President Xi was the first Chinese leader ever to visit South Korea before the North in June 2014” (Haenle and Sherman, 2014). Economically to, the two countries are building closer ties, with a “burgeoning trade relationship between Seoul and Beijing that is larger than the combined value of South Korea’s trade with the United States and Japan” (Snyder, 2014). For South Korea, the obvious pay-off for closer links with Beijing is Chinese support for a Seoul-led reunification of the Korean peninsula. For the time being, however, “a strategic sense of common purpose and shared common interest between the two countries remains lacking” (Snyder, 2014). China remains primarily interested in maintaining stability on the peninsula, and is unlikely to move its goal in line with the American goal of de-nuclearisation or with South Korea's aim of reunification.

The main challenge that China poses to the US position in Korea then is something rather more long term. While the current political situation on the peninsula binds South Korea tightly to the United States, a reformed North Korea, or a unification under the

South would likely not be in the best interests of the United States. Without the need for protection from the DPRK, Seoul may feel popular pressure to “remove American troops from Korea” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p374). This however, is dependant on several factors, including that the repressive North Korean regime should fall, which has been frequently predicted to be imminent for over twenty years. It also assumes that South Korea would adopt a band-wagoning strategy as opposed to its current hedging with China due to mistrust of Japan.

### **The South China Sea States**

The final area of challenge presented by China to the United States that we shall consider is the South China Sea and the states surrounding. China's actions here are significant, in that it can demonstrate how it would behave as a true hegemon, due to the vast superiority of power it has over other states in this region. Kaplan notes that “China's most advantageous outlet for its ambitions is in the direction of the relatively weak states of Southeast Asia” (Kaplan, 2012, p207). It is also an area considered essential if a Sinosphere, or “Greater China is to be realized” (Kaplan, 2012, p220). Our discussion here shall focus on territorial disputes with Vietnam and the Philippines, as the states doing most to resist China's claims.

China has a long history with Vietnam, in some respects similar to that of Korea. It was part of the 'tribute system', but unlike Korea was subject to repeated invasions and periods of Chinese domination. Huntington observes that “Vietnam has a largely Confucian culture, but historically has had highly antagonistic relations with China” (Huntington, 1996, p235). Part of the reason for antagonistic relations between China and Vietnam, was that unlike Korea, Vietnam does not have clear physical boundaries with China, “there are few natural impediments separating China from parts of Burma, and from Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam” (Kaplan, 2012, p207). The most recent outbreak of hostilities between the two was in 1979 which ended indecisively, to be followed by skirmishing until 1990. Since then Vietnam has been “hedging its bets by improving its relations with the United States and India” (Khalilzad et al., 2001, p40). It may seem strange to consider an alliance between the United States and Vietnam, given their history, but as Kaplan has observed, “precisely by defeating America in a war means Vietnam is a con-

fidant country with no chip on its shoulder” (Kaplan, 2012, p220). Greater political freedom to align with a state from a different civilisation would be something Huntington would understand as deriving from Vietnam's confidence in itself.

Relations between China and the Philippines have traditionally been primarily about economics. The Philippines is home to a community of Overseas Chinese who are an integral part of the 'bamboo network' that played a major role in the development of the Chinese economy. The bamboo network is a network of ethnic Chinese living outside China in countries such as Singapore who have “family and personal relationships and a common culture” (Huntington, 1996, p170) which gives them significant advantages in doing business in mainland China. In the early 1990s “Chinese made up 1% of the population of the Philippines but were responsible for 35 percent of the sale of domestically owned firms” (Huntington, 1996, p169). Huntington defines the Philippines as a 'cleft country', which is to say one caught between two different civilisations. The traditional Chinese-influenced Asian has been heavily mixed by a long history of colonial rule from Spain, and later the United States. The result has been to create an intensely Catholic country which uses English and Filipino as its first language. While a dip in relations led to the closure of American bases in the country in 1991, relations had improved again before the decade was out. The United States guarantees the Philippines security through a mutual defence pact, and a visiting forces agreement sees US ships visit and the two countries hold regular military exercise. President Bush named it a major non-Nato ally in 2003. In surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center, the Philippines reported the most favourable public opinion of the United States of any country.

China's disputes with these countries occur over the competing claims in the South China Sea, concerning the Spratly and Paracel Islands and the Scarborough Shoal. There are many overlapping claims competing with each other. Vietnam claims the Spratlys and Paracels on the basis of historical claims, while the Philippines claims the Spratlys and Scarborough Shoal based on proximity. “China claims by far the largest portion of territory - an area defined by the 'nine-dash line' which stretches hundreds of miles south and east from its most southerly province of Hainan. Beijing says its right to the area comes from 2,000 years of history where the Paracel and Spratly island chains were regarded as integral parts of the Chinese nation.” (BBC, 2014b).



**Figure 6: Map of China's nine-dash-line (Source: <http://cfr.org> )**

The Nine-Dash Line claim would make virtually all of the South China Sea into Chinese territory and would severely diminish the EEZs of the other countries on its shores and turn the sea into a “Asian Mediterranean” (Kaplan, 2012, p220) dominated by China. The seabed is believed to contain vast quantities of oil and gas which China hopes could be a “second Persian Gulf” (Kaplan, 2012, p220). As important, if not more so is the location of the sea and the narrow escapes from it, which make it “the gateway to the Indian Ocean – the world's hydrocarbon interstate” (Kaplan, 2012, p219). In many ways, the South China Sea hold parallels to the Caribbean for the United States, which did not become a true great power until it expelled the Spanish in 1898, paving the way for the building of the Panama Canal.

Since the time of Deng Xioping, Chinese foreign policy has been guided by the principle of “hide brightness and cherish obscurity” (Economy, 2010), more or less a Chinese adaptation of Theodore Roosevelt's famous injunction to 'speak softly and carry a big stick'. However, in the South China Sea, this has been more or less abandoned and China acts belligerently seemingly without care for the effect on its own image, “following a deliberate policy of bullying and intimidating its smaller neighbors into recognizing its sovereignty over large swathes of the sea” (Glaser, 2012). To give one example, the Philippines and China both claim the Scarborough Shoal, which lie around 120 miles

(200km) off the Philippines. In answer to reports of Chinese fishing boats in the lagoon, Manila dispatched a frigate. China was apparently enraged by this and sent naval surveillance vessels to cover the fishing boats. Manila withdrew the frigate and replaced it with a coast guard vessel, while Beijing built up a flotilla of over 80 ships. Manila's staunch refusal to withdraw was met with additional Chinese intimidation: Beijing began to quarantine tropical fruit imports from the Philippines and apply other forms of economic pressure. "Quiet diplomacy produced a verbal agreement in early June that both sides would pull out their ships and end the standoff, but only Manila complied. After the Philippines withdrew, China roped off the mouth of the lagoon to prevent Filipino and other fishermen from entering, and stepped up patrols around the shoal" (Glaser, 2012). This action shows that Beijing does not value its word and does not care how it is perceived by weaker states, and that it has no intention of abiding by international norms. It means that any state in the region cannot trust an agreement with China.

China's approach to diplomacy in this region means that fait accompli like this are very difficult to overturn. China refuses to enter multilateral negotiations, instead preferring bilateral arrangements, which maximise its own power and minimise the power of the other party, while preventing effective organisation against it. The Philippines has submitted the matter to international arbitration under UNCLOS. China states that it is its "firm position not to accept or participate in the arbitration" (Hong Xu, 2014), making it more likely that the Philippines will win its case but China insists that the "unilateral initiation of the present arbitration by the Philippines will not change the history and fact of China's sovereignty over the South China Sea Islands and the adjacent waters; nor will it shake China's resolve and determination to safeguard its sovereignty and relevant maritime rights and interests" (Tiezzi, 2014a). China refused to take part in arbitration "because it involved both claims to sovereignty arising from land territory and not just purely maritime territory" (Aning, 2014), which it regards as beyond the authority of the tribunal. Even if the Philippines does win its case, it is clear China will not accept the ruling, but "it would be a PR victory for the Philippines, allowing Manila to claim its position is internationally sanctioned" (Tiezzi, 2014a). While China may not care about its image amongst smaller powers, being perceived as a bully will hurt its relations with other ma-

major powers, and will work against its efforts to be taken seriously as a responsible power, and will undermine its efforts to be accepted as a leader within its own cultural sphere.

China's efforts to enforce its claims rely on changing the facts on the ground, and convincing other countries to accept their claims, or at least not opposing as it makes good on those claims. One of the ways it can do this is by making international business view it as the partner of choice for the region. Another is by deploying its superior capabilities to establish permanent facilities on the islands.

First I will mention the dispute between Vietnam and China over the deployment of an oil rig into Vietnam's EEZ. This incursion “15 miles off one of the southern Paracel Islands that China seized from Vietnam by force in 1974 and 120 miles off the main coast of Vietnam” (Shirk, 2014) is significant in that unlike disputes with Japan or the Philippines, Beijing could not claim to be reacting to another country, but instead was making a move without provocation. This signals a dangerous development, that China is willing to be more explicit in its willingness to pursue claims, and a lack of concern that “such high-profile assertions of sovereignty will provoke a backlash among China’s worried neighbors” (Shirk, 2014). China escorted the rig with a large flotilla, including naval vessels, and through ramming sank a Vietnamese ship. The rig was withdrawn a month ahead of schedule, having “already achieved its primary goals of broadcasting to its neighbors that a rising Vietnam alone could not stop it and the U.S. would not intervene. Keeping the rig in place thereafter offered only diminishing marginal returns, but would have further cemented China’s appearance as a bully and weakened Vietnam’s pro-China faction.” (Leaf, 2014). While incidents like this instill fear in SEA countries, and undermine the credibility of America as a security guarantor in the region, the more significant development is a permanent Chinese presence in the Sea. On Woody Island, the largest of the Paracel Islands, China has built Sansha City, a “prefecture-level city China created in June 2012 to strengthen its ability to administer the surrounding island chains” (Keck, 2014b), which in October 2014 was announced as possessing “a runway for military aircraft” (Agence France – Presse, 2014). This gives China an unsinkable aircraft carrier within the disputed territory, and makes its claims more realistic than any of its rivals. It also allows China to contest this area of the Rimland with the United States; if China can

assert dominance over the sealanes here, it makes it much more feasible for it to build a presence in the Indian Ocean. China has also begun a process of island building.



**Figure 7: Satellite image of Chinese island building (Source: BBC)**

In this way, China can make the disputes over territory meaningless by effectively colonising the whole of the South China Sea, which is especially dangerous since Beijing regards “offshore waters as “blue national soil”... it envisions exercising the absolute territorial sovereignty at sea that governments exercise within their land frontiers. It would reserve the right to infringe on freedom of navigation” (Holmes, 2013). This would be disastrous for the United States as “\$5.3 trillion of global trade passes through the South China Sea each year, \$1.2 trillion of which passes through U.S. Ports” (Haddick, 2012). In addition, it would place the Strait of Malacca under Chinese power, greatly complicating American access to the Indian Ocean and the Middle-East.





Figure 8: Strait of Malacca (Source: Google Maps)

### ***Section 3: American Policy Options***

As we can see, the relationship between China and the United States has many areas of conflict. This is not to say that the relations between the two powers are purely adversarial, on the contrary trade between the two is growing, reaching US\$632 billion in 2013 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013), making it America's second largest trading partner after Canada, and its largest source of imports. The two countries also cooperate on climate change action, with a joint announcement of new climate change targets in 2014, with a “long history of U.S. bipartisan support for clean energy research and development (R&D) cooperation with China” (Joffe, 2014). Both countries are members of the East Asia Summit and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, which include annual meetings of heads of government. Further, the US and China are also pursuing, as former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates put it, “sustained and reliable military-to-military contacts at all levels that reduce miscommunication, misunderstanding, and miscalculation... they are essential to regional security – and essential to developing a broad, resilient U.S.- China relationship that is positive in tone, cooperative in nature, and comprehensive in scope” (Gates, 2010). While these contacts have not been close enough to prevent encounters such as the USS Cowpens incident, where a USN cruiser shadowing the Chinese Liaoning carrier-group was almost in a collision with a Chinese ship, there is still reasonable evidence “of a modestly improving relationship” (Tiezzi, 2014b) in the words of Rear Admiral Mark Montgomery. Since 2012, the two nations defence ministers and military

chiefs of staff have exchanged visits, with the meetings moving from a political tool that China would cancel to demonstrate disapproval of US actions, to becoming regular and regarded as equally serious by both sides.

As we have seen though, these ties are not enough to prevent a growing tension and unease in the Pacific between the two powers. The reason for this is simple, a rising China is the “principal great-power rival of the United States in Northeast Asia” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p375). Offensive realism dictates that because great powers fear each other, and we have seen how China fears a rearmed Japan and the United States, that they will amass as much power as possible to achieve security. For China, this security includes reuniting what it considers Chinese territory outside of its borders and securing the sealanes on which its economy depends. China has the potential to be a hegemon, and will seek this position “because no other state can seriously threaten such a mighty power” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p3). This will by necessity oppose it to the United States, because it cannot be a hegemon if another power has its assets deployed in the region, and especially when it is allied with the states that China considers to be local rivals. For the US, a Chinese rise is inherently threatening. First, Mearsheimer tells us that states are power maximisers, the rise of another power by its nature upsets the balance of power.

Worse still, China's rise threatens the basis of America's global power. The United States is an off-shore sea power which, by virtue of possessing the world's mightiest fleet, commands all of the global ocean. As Spykman tells us, he who “controls the Rimland rules Eurasia, who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world” (Spykman, 1942). China, by its location, and interest in claiming territory on the Asian Rimland threatens these foundations. China's stated belief in 'blue national soil' attacks the principle of freedom of navigation on which American power is built, so “the United States has a strong interest in preventing any power from unilaterally rewriting well-established international maritime law to its liking” (Haddick, 2012). We can expect China to “seek to become the most powerful state in Asia and dominate that region the way the United States dominates the Western Hemisphere. China is unlikely to pursue regional hegemony so that it can conquer other Asian countries... It is more likely that Beijing will want to be in a position where it can dictate the rules of behavior to its neighbors, as the United States does in the Western Hemisphere. A rising China is also likely to try to push America out of

Asia, similar to the way the United States pushed the European great powers out of the Western Hemisphere.” (Mearsheimer)

For the Americans, a meek acceptance of China's primacy in the region means admitting the end of the American global role and limiting themselves to their own hemisphere. Such a retreat would surely encourage other great powers to try and displace the United States in Latin America. In the face of such a clear lack of confidence, erstwhile American allies in East Asia would have to accept Beijing's terms to settle disputes, because without a clear commitment to stay in the region, “the credibility of the U.S. alliance system and its reliability as a security partner will be at stake” (Haddick, 2012). If China decided to use force to settle the Taiwan issue, or island disputes with Japan there is little the Americans could do about it.

Huntington points out that the success of China since Deng Xiaoping's reforms has encouraged confidence and assertiveness. As a result of this “China's history, culture, traditions, size, economic dynamism, and self-image all impel it to assume a hegemonic position in East Asia. This goal is a natural result of its rapid economic development” (Huntington, 1996, p229).

The effort to assert dominance sees them pursue policies opposed to each other's core interests. The Americans “sold 150 F-16s to Taiwan, designated Tibet an “occupied sovereign territory”, denounced China for its human rights abuses, denied Beijing the 2000 Olympics, normalized relations with Vietnam... China, according to the Americans, violated understandings on missile exports, intellectual property rights and prison labor” (Huntington, 1996, p223).

So having established this forecast for future Chinese-US relations, what can the Americans do? It is obviously in their interests to maintain the global order that they have created, but this does not mean that America should set itself up as a true adversary of China and indulge in all-out containment or a new Cold War. The best outcome for the United States is to continue political cooperation, and deepen economic ties so that both sides benefit from China's expanding power. However, this alone will not make peace more likely. Rather, the Americans need to make clear which issues they care most about and maintain a consistent stand over these. The United States will also need to learn to accept

that China does have needs and that it should not be drafted into every disagreement against China.

The most important issue for the Americans is to assert with absolute clarity its commitment to defend Japan and maintain its alliance come what may. It should be made abundantly clear that the United States regards the Senkaku islands as an integral part of Japan, and support the Japanese position that there “exists no issue of territorial sovereignty to be resolved concerning the Senkaku Islands” (Mofa Japan, 2014). Japan is arguably the United States' most important ally, and certainly the only power in North Asia who can seriously help the Americans against China. Beijing's provocations, and unease at the changing political balance see Tokyo “tilting against China” (Kelly, 2014a). If Japan believes that the United States intends to “maintain its presence in Asia and actively combat China's effort to expand its influence” (Huntington, 1996, p236) then it is likely to place a premium on its friendship with the United States and work alongside it. If Japan feels alone and does not trust in Washington's backing it “is likely to accommodate China” (Huntington, 1996, p236). Washington is having its work done for it at the moment by the Chinese, who picked three separate disputes with neighbours in the space of 9 months. China acting like a bully makes it much easier for the Abe government to convince the Japanese people to accept rearmament, and more importantly allays the fears of other Asian countries who remember the Japanese militarism of the 1930s.

The United States must also face the fact that the first island chain is not going to be available to a staging ground for power projection. The danger posed by Chinese ballistic missiles is too great to allow a large build up so close to the shore. Instead, the United States should draw down large concentrations of troops in the first islands, but disperse smaller numbers more evenly across the Japanese portion of the first islands who have the equipment and facilities necessary to establish their own A2/AD and “deny China's navy and merchant fleet access to their own waters” (Holmes, 2014b) in event of the worst case scenario where China attacks Taiwan. Smaller coastal ships and planes could continue to be based in and patrol the islands during peacetime, providing resistance to China's ADIZ, while the major forces of marines and carrier groups are withdrawn to Guam and new bases in the American allied states of Oceania which because of their further distance “are not unduly provocative... [and] the United States can make enormous

defense investments in some of these places without fear of being evicted” (Kaplan, 2012, p234). In short, the Americans should not cede the first island to China by default, but should recognise the shifting value of the islands and take steps to protect their valuable carriers and air bases by moving them far enough away to be safe from missile bombardment, but keeping them close enough to exert influence. Further, the Americans can arrange defence agreements like the one with the Philippines, allowing American soldiers to move around the Rimland, denying easily targeted bases, and reassuring other nations of the reality of America's presence.

With regards to Taiwan, American policy here should be straightforward, and in effect a continuation of what has gone before. Namely, that the United States should continue to guarantee the island against attack, but discourage it from declaring independence. Taiwan increasingly emphasizes its “separate cultural identity, its relatively brief period under Chinese rule, and its local language incomprehensible to Mandarin speakers” (Huntington, 1996, p173) to make the case for independence. The United States should not support this, as it would invite Chinese aggression. Rather, the current security agreement should remain until such a time as China has reformed politically enough to accept Taiwan's secession or the people of Taiwan vote to reintegrate.

American options with regards to South Korea depend very heavily on what happens in North Korea. A sudden complete collapse would require intervention, while an attack would need to be defeated and followed by some form of occupation. The existence of the DPRK in its current form means that the ROK remain inseparably tied to the US and that American forces will stay in place for the long term. However, the politics of the peninsula have changed. No longer is it the case that the DPRK and China stand together in enmity to the ROK and the US. Rather, China has increasingly good relations with the South and “disappointment and anger at North Korea” (Chen D., 2014) and the two enjoy strong economic ties, China being South Korea's largest market. While the ROK is in no position to change partners now, in the event of the Kim regime collapsing or reforming, there would be public pressure in Korea to remove US bases which no longer serve any purpose. If Seoul were to end up ruling a reunified Korea, this would be even more likely due to the fear that having US troops stationed on their doorstep would inspire in Beijing. Without the common threat of the DPRK, Seoul would likely obey its civilisational kin-

ship with China against its fear of Japan, despite their shared nature as “open, liberal democratic state[s]” (Kelly, 2014b). The “continuing inability of Japan and Korea to work together obviously benefits American challengers in the region” (Kelly, 2014a), as the two states continue to provoke each other over the crimes committed in World War II, and South Korea also claims the Senkaku islands. If the Japanese and South Koreans could be convinced to work together, then it would make for a powerful alliance of democracies in North Asia.

The final area to consider policy for in our discussion of China is the South China Sea. Here, the key goals for the United States are to support the Philippines, and to uphold the principle of free navigation and open seas. To do this, the United States should encourage cooperation within ASEAN to prevent these states being picked off alone. It should also document Chinese settlement and support cases brought to arbitration. While unlikely to reverse Chinese gains, it may induce China to be more cautious for risk of isolating itself. By encouraging collective action over bilateral deals, the US can hope to dilute Chinese power in negotiations. It should protest egregious breaches such as the oil rig in Vietnam's EEZ, and with more defence agreements, rotational deployments of US forces will increase American visibility here. Apart from the Philippines however, none of the countries here are closely linked to the US, so Washington should take care not to get dragged into disputes by the likes of Vietnam who have few options with China other than “to get along with it” (Kaplan, 2012, p210). The United States prime interests here are to protect the character of the South China Sea as an international waterway and to provide reassurance to the states of the region so they do not balance against it.

## CHAPTER IV: The United States and India

### Introduction

In this chapter we shall now turn to discussion of the other Asian titan, India. Located in South Asia, India's borders are for the most part neatly formed by its geography a land-mass bound by the sea and by mountains. Unlike China, India's borders are or the most part visible from its geography.



**Figure 9: Map of Sino-Indian Geography (Source : Wikimedia Commons)**

The anomalous parts of India's borders are the religiously-defined borders with Bangladesh and Pakistan, and the state of Aksai Chin, which is located on the Tibetan plateau and is occupied by China. All of these borders are the legacy of foreign empires ruling India and affecting its otherwise obvious outlines. India has a unique culture which is shared only by Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka, and a majority religion of Hinduism which for the most part is only found in the sub-continent and the Indian diaspora. India has also significant Islamic influence, owing to the various Muslim dynasties that ruled there,

most notably the Mughal Empire. This is the origin of India's large Muslim population, and the modern states of Pakistan and Bangladesh. India also inherited a Western political structure and the use of the English language from the British rule there which lasted until 1947. It was from the British Raj, and the partition that it carried out, that India received its borders. These, as a result, are not quite where seems geographically obvious, such as the lack of physical boundaries between India and Pakistan. The subcontinent as a physical and cultural whole can be taken to include India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, the Western edge of Burma (Myanmar), Indian islands in the Bay of Bengal, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. “Only in the Western view is Afghanistan part of Central Asia; to Indians it is part of their subcontinent” (Kaplan, 2012, p242).

Since independence, India has been plagued by poverty and recurring violence between castes, religions and Naxalite insurgencies. However, despite this, India has since its constitution of 1950, India has maintained a secular, liberal, democratic republic. It is the world's largest democracy, with a population that, in the space of '52 years... grew from 345 million to 1 billion persons' (UN Population Division, 2014a). After economic liberalisation, India “emerged as a major power in the 1990s” (BBC, 2014c). Because of the effects of China's 'One-Child Policy', it is “projected that India will have a larger population than China by the year 2045” (UN Population Division, 2014b). As such, India's latent power is potentially greater than China's. To date, India's growth has been slower than China's, its economy is around one third of the size by GDP PPP, although this still places it in third place, ahead of Japan (Central Intelligence Agency, 2013).

### ***Section 1: India in South Asia***

India is the core state of Huntington's Hindu civilisation, but India has not been a major player on the world stage, other than its contribution to UN peacekeeping missions being “the largest number from any country” (PMI New York, 2014). The reasons for this low international profile stem from the partition at the end of the Raj. As independence approached, the Muslim League became increasingly unwilling to work with the INC, and its leader Muhammed Ali Jinnah insisted on a separate Muslim state. With British political will fading, and growing distrust of the Indian Army, the British rushed towards inde-



pendence, accepting partition as the quickest way out. Partition was immediately followed by an outburst of violence in which up to half a million people die and an “estimated 14 million people were displaced” (Boutroue et al., 2000). This bloody birth set the tone for relations between India and Pakistan. We shall here discuss the relations between India and Pakistan, and India and Bangladesh, the most significant other powers on the subcontinent.

Since partition, India has fought four wars against Pakistan, all but one of which have been primarily about Kashmir, the exception being the 1971 war which saw East Pakistan become the independent state of Bangladesh. The effect of this then, has unsurprisingly been to focus Indian attention firmly on its neighbour to the west. The two nations are in many ways the antithesis of each other. India traditionally rejects religious politics, while Pakistan's definition of itself as a Muslim state “is in some ways an affront to the very liberal fundamentals on which India is based” (Kaplan, 2012, p241). India has a proud tradition of democracy, while Pakistan has been afflicted by coups and military rule. India embraces its ethnic diversity, to the extent of having had three Muslim presidents, while in Pakistan “Baluch and Sindhis continue to see Pakistan as a foreign entity overlorded by the Punjabis, with the Pashtuns in the northwest drawn into the Taliban-infected politics of the Afghan-Pakistani border area” (Kaplan, 2012, p243).

Pakistan is, in many ways an army with a country, rather than the other way round. The Punjabi dominated military bought into British colonial theory about 'martial races', and believed itself stronger than its larger neighbour. After the crushing defeat in 1971, Pakistan was disabused of these notions. Pakistan then set about working on ways to counter India's evident conventional superiority.

The most serious aspect of this for states outside of the region is the nuclear arms race that exists between the two. Pakistan began a nuclear weapons programme in 1972. “India first tested a nuclear explosive device in 1974. That test spurred Pakistan to ramp up work on its secret nuclear weapons program” (Kimball and Collina, 2014). Pakistan maintained a degree of deniability around its programme until tit-for-tat nuclear tests in 1998. India maintains a strict 'no first use' policy, stating that it keeps the weapons solely as a deterrent. Pakistan on the other hand reserves the right to conduct a first strike “not only to deter a nuclear attack but also a conventional attack by compensating for its con-

ventional disadvantages through nuclear means” (Ahmed, 2011). Pakistani doctrine involves “the oft-discussed scenario of a strike on an advancing Indian armoured column” (Ahmed, 2011), which makes tension between the two states particularly threatening because of the low threshold for tactical use of nuclear weapons. The Pakistani military relies on India's own restraint, and greater interest in economic development to prevent a nuclear stand-off escalating.

The other angle of Pakistan's unconventional approach has been, as Indian Chief of the Army Staff General Singh observed, to support and develop “terrorist networks such as Haqqani and Jaish-e-Mohammad... [with a ] strategy of ‘terrorist brinkmanship’” (Attre, 2014). ISI has record of involvement with Islamic terrorism in Kashmir, creating “six major guerrilla groups to operate against India in Kashmir” (Cole, 2008) as a way of asserting its claims to the area, and to sap Indian strength by forcing it into a military occupation of its part of Muslim-majority Kashmir by feeding anti-Indian sentiment.

Pakistan's fear of encirclement as also involved t heavily in the politics of Afghanistan. From the mid-1990s “the ISI backed the Taliban in the quest to take over Afghanistan... Elements in the ISI favored a hard-line form of fundamentalist Islam and so were pleased to support the Taliban on ideological grounds. Others were simply being pragmatic, since the Taliban, from the Pushtun ethnic group... were pro-Pakistan, while many of the warlords had become clients of India, Iran or, ironically, Russia” (Cole, 2008). This would place Pakistan in a very precarious position after the US invasion of Afghanistan. Worse was to come as the militant groups grew stronger and the Pakistani state grew weaker, as they began to fight against Pakistan itself. Because of the government's loose control of ISI and the military, it also destroyed trust between the United States and Pakistan, reaching the height of absurdity when the world's most wanted man, Osama Bin Laden, was found living less than a kilometre away from the Pakistan Military Academy. The complete infiltration by terrorist groups has brought the Pakistani state to the brink of collapse, and while it currently has a civilian government which is opposed to the militants, it is clear that not all elements within the shadowy network of spies, retired officers and the military are relinquishing ties. Hopes of improving relations between India and Pakistan were badly hit by a terrorist assault on Mumbai. One of the gunmen who was captured,” Amir Ajmal Qassab, appears to have told Indian interrogators that his group was

trained in Pakistani Kashmir by retired Pakistani officers. It is certain that President Zardari, Prime Minister Gilani, and Army Chief of Staff Ashfaq Kiyani were uninvolved in the terrorist strike on Mumbai” (Cole, 2008) but the same cannot be said for other elements of Pakistan's security apparatus.

While Pakistan is by far the most important bilateral relationship. It has others. To India's East lies the populous state of Bangladesh, which is nearly completely encircled by India. The border between the two is a crazed mess of enclaves dating back to feudal fiefdoms in the Mughal era, it includes the world's only third-order enclave. Huntington identifies Bangladesh as belonging to the Islamic civilisation, but it is important to note that Bangladesh belongs to a different tradition of Islam than the Arab world or Pakistan. Unlike Pakistan, Bangladesh does not use the Persian alphabet, and its language is shared with the Indian state of West Bengal. In addition to cultural links, they also share historical friendly ties, not least because of India's support for Bengali nationalists during their war of independence. Although Bangladesh faces problems of population and climate change, India is “keen for relations with Bangladesh to be solid, emphasising economic ties and a common front against Islamist militants” (Article in *The Economist*, I don't know how to reference that). A sign of the strength and maturity of their relationship is their willingness to submit a maritime dispute to international arbitration, the result of which both sides accepted, while the “rhetoric from both sides has praised and emphasized the fact that both countries were able to come an understanding on this dispute via international arbitration and peaceful methods” (Panda, 2014a), while a bilateral deal between them is in its final stages to clarify the two states' borders, by which “India will acquire 51 enclaves and 2,777 acres of land and transfer 111 enclaves and 2,267 acres to Bangladesh” (Pillalamarri, 2014). As this example shows, inter-civilisational relations can be peaceable and friendly.

## ***Section 2: India and China***

Here we shall now turn our attention to the most important and potentially most unstable element of politics in the twenty-first century; namely that the other great powers have relations and goals of their own amongst each other. Multipolar systems, Mearsheimer tells us, have “more potential conflict situations than does a bipolar order... multipower

systems are less firmly structured... both major and minor powers are less likely to be closely tied to a great power” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p339-40). We shall then look at relations between the major powers, and the role played by other states in the region in Indian and Chinese strategy.

The bilateral relationship between India and China is destined to be hugely important. As the only states with populations over a billion people, their latent power is vastly greater than any other state. China has become India's biggest trading partner, but India's trade is far less important to China (Observatory of Economic Complexity Atlas, 2014), meaning that deep economic ties and cooperation are far less of a priority for China than they are for India. The two countries fought a war in 1962 over ownership of Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh, which saw India defeated and Aksai Chin occupied by China. India still claims the lost territory. The Chinese historically claimed the state of Sikkim, although they now only claim its northernmost point.

It has become a truism in India that “India and China are to an extent destined by geography to be "rivals"” (Hindustan Times, 2012). The two states are neighbours with giant populations who look to be regarded as the natural leader in the area. Their competition for influence and security on their borders drives them towards rivalry. This rivalry shows in different ways, directly over their borders, in asserting primacy in South Asia, in relations with other Asian countries, and with their goals for the Indian Ocean.

The border conflict between them surfaces periodically through incursions of Chinese troops into Indian claimed territory, before withdrawing. China has made good its claims on Tibet and Aksai Chin by building new roads and rail links, as well as airbases. India, by contrast has lagged behind; just 1”8 of the 73 ``strategic" roads (totalling 3,812-km) identified for construction along the LAC for better troop mobility almost a decade ago” (The Times of India, 2014). The cause of China's seizure of Indian Territory in the first place was the invasion of Tibet in 1959. Because a Tibet that was “even vaguely pro-Indian would make Chinese strategists exceedingly nervous” (Kaplan, 2012, p249), China sought to eject the Indians from their territory on the Tibetan Plateau. For the same reason, China strongly opposes India's hosting of the Tibetan government-in-exile. Their border rivalry is to an extent limited because the Himalayas provide an insurmountable barrier. In the more open eastern border, however, India is exceedingly vulnerable, espe-

cially in the Siliguri Corridor, where there is less than 80 miles (130km) between China and the Bangladeshi border. This would effectively cut-off the Indian north-east states and Bhutan.

India views itself as the natural leader of South Asia, due to its sheer size compared to its neighbours. In fact, what is remarkable is the “diminishing role of India and the rapidity with which New Delhi is ceding strategic space to Beijing on the sub-continent. Even as China is becoming the largest trade partner of most states in South Asia, including India, New Delhi is busy repeating the old mantra of South Asia being India’s exclusive sphere of influence” (Pant, 2014). While China's relations with Pakistan are no shock, India should be alarmed by the opinions of Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. India is paying the price for its long period of protectionism during its period of seeking autarky, while China has entered the role of providing development assistance to the other South Asian states. The SAARC group was formed to build economic and political ties, but was largely ineffective, which was blamed on the inability of India and Pakistan to work together. China was admitted as an observer against India's wishes, and many member states now wish to make it a full member. China has adeptly exploited the fact that “India’s structural dominance in South Asia makes it a natural target of resentment among its smaller neighbors” (Pant, 2014). Making effectively using a 'divide and conquer' strategy, China prevents India from achieving leadership in its own civilisation and amongst its much weaker neighbours.

On the Northern frontier of India stand Bhutan and Nepal, two small countries perched on the Himalayas. Nepal is overwhelmingly Hindu and firmly part of the same civilisation as India. Bhutan is Buddhist, and thus is civilisationally distinct to both China and India, although it does possess a sizable Hindu minority. However, Bhutan is yet another country which finds that Beijing claims its territory. As a result, it is an Indian ally, and indeed the “first foreign state visit by India’s newly elected Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, was to Bhutan, underscoring the importance of Bhutan’s frontier with China, and the strategic vulnerability it represents if China and India were to go to war” (Lee, 2014). In the Himalayas, China seeks to apply the same salami-slicing principle that has worked well in the South China Sea. Here the reasons are not to secure resources or control sup-

ply lines, but rather to threaten India. One of the areas claimed, The Doklam Plateau lies to the “immediate east of Indian defences in Sikkim. Chinese occupation of Doklam would turn the flank of Indian defences completely. This piece of dominating ground not only has a commanding view of the Chumbi Valley but also overlooks the Siliguri Corridor further to the east” (Katoch, 2013). Until 2007, Bhutan was constitutionally bound to “be guided by the advice of the Government of India in regard to its external relations” (UNHCR, 1949). New Delhi has several advantages over the PRC in competing for influence in Bhutan, “in addition to its lengthy diplomatic relationship, India is far and away Bhutan’s most important economic and trading partner, accounting for nearly 60 percent of Bhutan’s exports, and 75 percent of its imports” (Benedictus, 2014). In this case, India does well to continue providing economic assistance to build faith in it and ensure that Bhutan continues to fight it as its best foreign policy choice, while providing reassurance to prevent China working its way into India’s most vulnerable quarter.

The case of Nepal is important in India foreign policy, as it is one of the few countries to possess the same religion and culture as India, making it a natural ally according to Huntington’s theories. Geographically, “Nepal resembles a wedge sticking into India dangerously close to its heartland in the Gangetic Plains, home of some of India’s largest cities. Thus for India, it is exceedingly important to not cede influence in Nepal to any other country. Its location also cuts into the middle section of India’s northern border, preventing India from having a border there that encompasses the natural defense of the Himalaya Mountains” (Pillalamarri, 2014a). Therefore, it is of paramount importance that India ensures friendly relations with Nepal, and especially to keep China out to prevent Beijing negating the defensive rampart of the Himalayas.

Nepal is currently a society in transition, as it attempts to transition from an unitary monarchy to a federal republic. For both China and India this is a matter of great interest, as they seek to influence the country, and their capacity to do so will vary based on how the country’s federalisation is organised. “Geography, history, and culture all make it unlikely that Nepal will ever lean closer to China than it does to India. However, Nepal continues to play India and China off against each other” (Pillalamarri, 2014a). It seems then, that Huntington is correct that Nepal will hew to its cultural kin, but civilisational ties

should not be presumed upon, and Chinese economic incentives and can woo states, and its threats can coerce them.

A major issue previously alluded to is China's relations with Pakistan. Pakistan played the politics of the Cold War well, achieving support from both China and the United States to counter-balance India's pro-Soviet policies. For the United States, this alliance served its strategy of containment of the USSR. For China, it filled a simpler need; it distracted India. Because of this, China's relations with Pakistan have remained strong into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The alliance was built on “American neglect and a powerful shared antagonism with India” (Kabraji, 2012). The major advantage for China has been that because the Indian military has been primarily concerned with Pakistan, it has placed a premium on developing its land forces rather than its naval power, and India has been firmly oriented north-west rather to its south or east, preventing it from taking a wider role in the Rimland. As Pakistan has unravelled in recent years however, its ability to perform this function is declining.

However, Pakistan still figures prominently in Chinese strategy, particularly the port of Gwadar. This is a project to build a large port in the Pakistani region of Balochistan, which would have enormous potential as an oil transit. The Chinese paid for eighty percent of the construction costs, and were finally granted control of operations there in 2013. This led to wildly exaggerated claims in India that it was being encircled. While Gwadar is well located from the sea “just 200 miles from the strategically important Strait of Hormuz” (Yousaf, 2013), its land position is rather less impressive, in one of Pakistan's more restive and under-developed regions, making it very unlikely that Gwadar will ever be a major transit location. India's reaction to it though, is a useful indicator of the fear and suspicion with which China is viewed.

While the confrontations between China and India along their Himalayan frontier are serious, they are limited by the sheer harshness of the terrain. The more general competition between the two powers is to be acted out in the Indian Ocean. This area is an obvious target for both, for India the improvements in “technology that have compressed oceanic geography, and with the development of the Indian economy, which can finance ma-

jor shipbuilding and acquisitions” (Kaplan, 2012, p250) encourage it to become a sea power and take control of the Indian Ocean and its littoral. India's geography offers little room for it to project power over land, with the Hindu Kush, Himalayas and Arakan Mountains forming a continuous barrier around the sub-continent. It also has very few countries that share its civilisation, which limit its ability to build a sphere of influence amongst cultural kin. Pakistan is exceedingly unlikely to ever accept India as a regional leader, so if India seeks a sphere of its own, as Mearsheimer predicts it should, it will have to look to the sea.

For China too, the Indian Ocean is of supreme importance. It contains the sealanes by which it receives oil from the Middle-East, food and resources from its investments in Africa, and along which it sends its manufactured goods to European markets. This is an incredibly important artery for China. As a result, it is clear why Beijing should want to expand its influence in the Indian Ocean, providing security to its supply lines against both states and non-state actors. Pirate attacks against ships have been common in the Indian Ocean, especially off the coast of Somalia between 2005 and 2010.



**Figure 10: Reported pirate attacks in 2011 (Data from IMO, International Maritime Organization)** Although piracy has declined in the Gulf of Aden after the deployment of an international taskforce (in a remarkable show of cooperation, this saw Europeans, Americans, Russians, Indians and Chinese working together, revealing the scale of the problem), and in



the Strait of Malacca due to cooperation between the Straits states. Piracy still remains a threat and could explode back into life if the international effort should be scaled down. We shall primarily focus on two states, Sri Lanka and Vietnam

Relations between India and its southern neighbour Sri Lanka have long been poor. This stems in large part from the long running civil war in Sri Lanka, where the Buddhist Sinhalese government faced a Hindu Tamil insurgency. The “Indian government originally provided substantial support to the insurgents” (Huntington, 1996, p275) and later in 1987 made an implied threat that it would intervene when the government had the Tamil Tigers near defeat, leading to negotiations and the deployment of Indian troops to the island, so that the Tigers could surrender their weapons in exchange for autonomy. The Tigers did not disarm, and were fighting Indian troops before their withdrawal. The outcome could hardly have been worse for India, it had decided to train its own Tamil militants in “camps in southern India as part of a strategy to project Indian power into Sri Lanka” (Lee, 2012), but they were swiftly co-opted by the Tigers and turned against India. The ultimate expression of the failure of the policy was the assassination of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi by an Indian-trained Tamil. Nonetheless, the government of the state of Tamil Nadu “allowed the Tamil Tigers to operate in their state” (Huntington, 1996, p275) against the express wishes of the New Delhi government. This shows that for states with civilisational ties, connections run deeper than simply government contacts, and exist at state and individual levels. The Tamil Nadu government supported the Tigers because they have a shared ethnicity, a closer tie than the civilisational link for India as a whole. Indeed, Tamil Nadu's government merely reflected the broad sympathy and support for the Tigers across the state's population.

Partly as a result of this increased strategic depth, the Tigers were able to continue their struggle until a ceasefire in 2001. Fighting had resulted in stalemate, so the two faces maintained an uneasy peace until 2006, at which point a new government in Colombo came to power committed to crush the Tigers at any cost. At the same time “the LTTE lost almost all financial support from expatriates in the West” (Smith, 2010) due to greater restrictions imposed following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, and by general revulsion towards the Tigers' tactics. From 2005 onwards, China began to provide significant quantities of military and financial aid, freeing Sri Lanka from dependence on Western

sources, with the attached requirements on avoiding civilian casualties and respecting human rights. Sri Lanka's defence expenditure grew by 40%, and its army increased by 70%. “In exchange for the aid, China received development rights for port facilities and other investments. These actions enabled China to increase its influence in South Asia against its regional rival India and secure stability on its southern flank” (Smith, 2010). In this way China was able to, at relatively low cost, ensure that Sri Lanka entered its sphere of influence, gain itself a potential naval foothold in the Indian Ocean, and continue its encirclement of India. With currency reserves equivalent to US\$4 trillion, China gained disproportionately well for a modest outlay.

Because of China's growing dependence on energy imports from the Middle-East and Africa, it has been anticipated that China might seek to build military air bases along the perimeters of the Indian Ocean to secure its sea lanes. One predicted development is that China will build a 'string of pearls', a series of naval bases along the Ocean's littorals to allow the PLAN to operate freely as far as the Persian Gulf. This makes Indian strategists nervous about the Chinese development of the ports of Gwailor and Colombo. The debate has swung between extremes of fear of China building a military presence outright to control the Indian Ocean, and back the other way to disregarding the development of deep water harbours as being purely commercial and therefore of no threat. In trying to understand what China is doing, we should remember that “sea power isn't an either/or proposition. Its mercantile and military components overlap and reinforce each other. Mahan discerns a symbiotic relationship between commercial and naval pursuits. Indeed, he pronounces the propensity to trade the chief trait qualifying a society for sea power. Forward bases are one of the struts on which seagoing enterprises rest” (Holmes, 2013a). Explicitly building naval bases would significantly raise tensions greatly, for little benefit given that China does not yet possess a high-seas fleet. Although China is engaged on a ship-building programme, including the construction of aircraft carriers, it still remains weaker than the Indian navy, which has a carrier-building programme of its own, and if Gwadar or Colombo were to serve a purely military purpose, they would require significant hardening due to their close proximity to Indian missiles and aircraft. More likely is “a “Dual Use Logistic Facility” strategy, in which overseas bases will provide “medical facilities, refrigerated storage space for fresh vegetables and fruit, rest and recreation

sites, a communications station, and ship repair facilities.” This would entail a far leaner and less overt military and security presence than the “String of Pearls” (Thomas, 2014). Such a strategy would allow China to pursue its goals of protecting against piracy while avoiding alarm in India, and serving its purpose of building up trade capacity and economic integration for its 'Maritime Silk Road' initiative. However, as Mahan observed, a country can exert its sea power without sending battle fleets to enforce its will. The fact that China is building and operating ports on India's doorstep shows an adept use of economic soft power by China to penetrate India's neighbourhood.

The final area we will talk about in Indian-Chinese relations is Vietnam. Vietnam, as was previously mentioned, is part of the Sinic civilisation, but due to its long history of conflict China, is currently hedging against China. India has for years had a 'Look East' policy intended to involve it with its SEA neighbours. However, there was little more than lip-service to the policy and it went nowhere. With the new Modi administration, there is a new policy of 'Act East', meaning actually engaging meaningfully with countries in SEA, as well as others such as Japan and Australia. Here, then, is a test case for how India might act as a great power beyond its own doorstep. It is also significant in that it brings India into the South China Sea disputes. This will tell us much about whether India seeks to balance against China.

India and Vietnam have ties going back to the 1980s, but the relationship really began to become important after “November 2007 when India and Vietnam raised their bilateral relations to a strategic partnership during the official visit to India by Vietnam’s Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung” (Thayer, 2013).

For India, this relationship is eminently sensible. Frequent naval visits to Vietnam serve as a demonstration of the merging of two separate oceans into the Indo-Pacific, and provide an equivalent to China's involvement in Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Furthermore, “India and Vietnam have convergent security interests, including maximizing their room for maneuver in dealing with China and other major powers within their respective regions. India’s relations with Vietnam provide a basis for a larger Indian role in East Asia, particularly in the maritime domain” (Thayer, 2013).

After the BJP victory in India's elections, India embarked on a flurry of diplomatic activity. Just before President Xi Jinping visited New Delhi, India's figurehead President visited Hanoi to sign a deal extending US\$100 million to the Vietnamese for defence procurement. New Delhi also offers Hanoi training programmes for submariners and pilots, intelligence sharing and is moving towards the sale of hypersonic cruise missiles. By building up Vietnam's military capacities, it can serve some of the same roles as Pakistan does to China. India also pledges to assist with economic development in the region, with the goal to achieve US\$100 billion of trade with ASEAN countries by the end of 2015. Breaking long-standing tradition, the “prime minister has also been voicing India’s concerns over the tensions in the South China Sea. While India has always maintained that freedom of navigation through international waters is crucial, New Delhi usually refrains from making a direct comment on disputes outside of its territories.” (Cronin and Baruah, 2014), providing valuable diplomatic support for the countries affected by China's efforts to make real their claims on the nine-dash line.

The growing ties between India and Vietnam demonstrate that civilisational links between states, while obviously important, are not the final word in international politics. India and Vietnam's relations are built on realist calculations and an awareness of relative gains. Otherwise, we cannot explain why democratic Hindu India would align itself with authoritarian Sinic Vietnam. Hanoi has seen that Beijing does not respect that integrity of its territory so will make common cause with India. India, for its part, has more to gain from a friendship with Vietnam than the United States would, which makes India a safer bet from the perspective of Vietnam. India does not carry the risks of hegemon disinterest carried by balancing with the United States, or the territorial risks of bandwagoning with China. India gains from the sale of military equipment, platforms, technology and services to Vietnam. India too benefits from relations with Vietnam. It builds ties with one of the 'Next Eleven' economies, and new markets for its growing arms industry. It also gains an ally with whom it has no outstanding issues. India has a deep interest in the South China Sea, but is too far from Vietnam for there to be territorial disputes. While a Western democracy would struggle to be openly aligned with Hanoi's repressive regime, Indian democracy does not have a missionary world view, according to Huntington. Furthermore, by aligning together, India escapes from its mountainous cage, and its fractious

relations with civilisationally different neighbours. “India also benefits from Vietnam’s political support including dialogue partner status with ASEAN, membership in the ASEAN Regional Forum and India’s candidature for permanent membership on the UN Security Council” (Thayer, 2013).

### ***Section 3: Proposals for American Policy***

For the United States, the emergence of India as a world power can largely be taken as a positive. They have shared democratic values, and far fewer areas of contention than exist between it and China. As America draws down its long war in Afghanistan and sets about making its 'pivot' to Asia, the issues that do exist between the two states will decline.

First and foremost, as the Afghan war ends, the United States will no longer need a close relationship with Pakistan. Throughout the war the Americans had to deal with Pakistan's duplicity as it was officially a partner in the 'War on Terror', while at the same time the ISI continued to aid the Taliban. The border between the two countries was so porous that Coalition forces refer to the theatre as AfPak. American trust in their Pakistani 'allies' sank to such extents that they did not inform them before moving against Bin Laden's compound, for fear of the ISI tipping him off. Indeed, elements with the Pakistani military have been “so friendly to the other side that when the opportunity comes up they will fire on Afghan and coalition troops” (Townsend and Beaumont, 2008). Pakistan has had to be placated through the conflict because of NATO's dependence on supply lines running from the Port of Karachi through the Khyber Pass to Afghanistan, so NATO has been unable to go after the Taliban safe havens inside Pakistan, which are tacitly accepted by Islamabad. Now, however, Pakistan heads towards being a failed state, as the militants raised to fight in Afghanistan bring their terror back to Pakistan. The Pakistani government has still not managed to bring the army or the ISI to heel, and refuses to even acknowledge the existence of a problem. In 2014, Pakistan summoned the US ambassador to protest a Pentagon report that claimed ““unsubstantiated allegations” of the existence of terrorist sanctuaries in Pakistan or that proxy forces are operating against Afghanistan and India from inside Pakistan” (Haider, 2014). Pakistan is an ally the

Americans can do without. While the needs of counter-terrorism dictate that the “United States needs to maintain an effective relationship with Pakistan, building a more durable partnership with India will bring much greater strategic benefit in the long term” (Burns, 2014, p9)

A further difficulty in US-Indian relations has been India's close ties with Russia. However, since India no longer is trying to build itself as a socialist state, and the universal ideology of the Soviet Union has been replaced by Russian nationalism, the links have been diluted. With Russia's increasingly close ties to China and primary focus on Europe, it should be clear to the Indians that Russia is not a choice partner for their own needs. The traditional preference for Russian military hardware is being diluted by the decline of the Russian arms industry, and the increasing preference of India for Indian made items. When it does buy abroad, as in the case of replacing its carrier-borne fighters, it increasingly buys Western.

While the relationship with Russia is less all-encompassing than before, “India will insist... on retaining its strong military ties to Russia” (Burns, 2014, p10). The Americans will simply have to accept this. While the United States is used to issuing commands to its treaty allies, the India relationship will be one of informal partnership. The two great powers will be “informal allies” (Tellis, 2010, p125). As another great power, the United States will have to become accustomed to treating India and China as equals.

With regards to China, India could potentially be a major player in helping the Americans resist revisionism in the China Seas. India fears China due to its military advantages, so it seeks friendly relations with other countries who share its interests. This has led to improving relations between India and Japan. After winning the election, Prime Minister Modi undertook a visit to Japan where he “not only secured unprecedented economic investment from Tokyo but also found a partner for economic growth. India’s need for a financial boost for its economy cannot be overstated and the trip has clearly bolstered bilateral ties” (Arun, 2014). This serves the needs of both countries, Japan receiving a stark warning about over-reliance on a single market during the Chinese boycott. The two states also formalised bilateral ‘two plus two’ meetings of foreign and defence ministers, a level of intimacy only granted by Japan to the U.S., France, Russia and Australia, “amidst other deals, such as sea lane cooperation, joint drills between India’s navy and the Mari-

time Self-Defense Forces, and the export of the Japanese US-2 amphibious aircraft” (Richards, 2014). What the Japanese and Indian diplomats leave unsaid is “the aim to achieve convergence in security matters to counter an increasingly belligerent China bent on asserting itself in long-standing issues with not just India and Japan but with other smaller nations in Asia as well. New Delhi, inherently leery of becoming part of any alliance or bloc, is hoping to create enough synergy with Tokyo and other ASEAN nations to deter China” (Gokhale, 2014). While the diplomats maintain a discrete silence, Japan's media has been quick to seize on the notion that a “Japan-India democratic axis, with U.S. support, can potentially reshape the Asian strategic landscape” (Chellaney, 2014).

These are developments the United States should welcome across the board. Closer ties between Japan and India may reduce Japan's feeling of isolation, encouraging it not to accommodate China and to remain closely linked to the US. The Americans should also be pleased by India's friendship with Vietnam as a way of reinforcing that country from drifting into the Chinese orbit, without requiring America commit itself to guarantee an authoritarian regime far from its shores.

In the two countries' direct relationship, there are many reasons for the United States to be optimistic.

Mearsheimer writes that “a regional hegemon might someday face a local challenge from an upstart state, which would surely have strong incentives to ally with the distant hegemon” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p142). If we view China as a potential regional hegemon, then we can consider India as a local upstart, who would be interested in aligning with the distant hegemon, the United States. In fact in “the century ahead, U.S. Strategic interests will align more closely with India's than they will with those of any other continental power in Asia” (Burns, 2014, p1)

It serves the United States well to support the emergence of India onto the world stage, in this it is entirely correct for the United States to promote India's interests where they do not harm America's own. For example, it is entirely correct for President Obama to have stated his support for India's bid to gain a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

The United States should recognise that, because of China's increase in power, it is necessary to not only accept, but also encourage the development of Indian power for “a partnership that aids in the preservation of the balance of power in Asia” (Tellis, 2010,

p131). Despite trade disputes, and the resurfacing of a visa ban that Modi had received from the US while governor of Gujarat, Modi set a dignified tone by not mentioning the visa issue and announcing that he would visit Washington, rather than “insisting Obama visit first” (Burns, 2014, p5).

The key to American-Indian cooperation will be the economy. Trade disputes have caused the exclusion of India from the soft power centrepiece of the pivot to Asia, the Trans-Pacific Partnership. The United States should not attempt to pursue formal alliance ties, and would stand little to gain from them even if they could be achieved. Military-to-military links, regular political contact, and verbal support for each other, plus trade links and direct investment should suffice. The United States should be outspoken in its support for India's territorial integrity, and the two should act together to counter Chinese salami-slicing tactics. A good example of how their relationship is the links between the two countries' navies. The “assistance offered to the Indian Navy by the U.S. Navy underscores the developing partnership and commitment of the two navies to trouble shoot problems in the Indian Ocean region and beyond” (The Diplomat, 2012). They can effectively work together in anti-piracy and maritime patrol roles, and if in the future China should become an outright more aggressive power, the United States could draw down its Indian Ocean commitment in the same way Britain withdrew its forces in the Western Hemisphere after tensions grew with Germany. The importance of the Indian Ocean to the United States is set to decline with the shale oil revolution reducing America's dependency on Middle-East oil, and therefore America's appetite for intervention in the Middle East. Even with American forces reduced to a minimum in the region, India's rise does not pose the same threat to the United States as China's efforts to become a sea power because it does not threaten American bases or allies. There is no essential American interest in the Indian Ocean as there is in the Pacific, and accepting India's place in the ocean surrounding it does not affect America's ability to navigate throughout the Rimland in the same way that China aims “to organize the region around itself, and to keep the United States out” (Fukuyama, 2008).



## CHAPTER V: Conclusion

While there are many areas of dispute, and I have said much about them in this study, particularly between China and the other two, it should be emphasised that “unlike either Nazi Germany or the former Soviet Union, present-day China is not an imperialist power with unlimited global ambitions, nor is it driven by a millenarian, universalistic ideology” (Fukuyama, 2008). Neither India nor the United States need to completely orient themselves in opposition to China, nor countenance any sort of new Cold War. Rather they should be open about their rivalry, which is inherent to their natures as great powers. They must also be open and forthright in defence of their core interests, and not be afraid of challenging China or each other over these. The Americans must make absolutely clear their resolution to uphold the treaty alliances and freedom of navigation on which their power depends. For India, defending its territory and preventing encirclement forms its core concern. China's core interest is that the regime should survive, and that it continues to receive the raw materials it craves without interference.

The relations between the great powers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are primarily driven by fear of each other's strength, and the desire to build capabilities to match each other. Although open warfare between them is unlikely on anything but the smallest scale, they seek through a mixture of persuasion and coercion to align the smaller states that neighbour them and to prevent them aligning with neighbours. The strongest and the weakest of the three great powers, India and the United States, to an extent balance with each other against China due to fear of China's great power potential. While India and the United States will not become formal allies, they have a less conflictual relationship due to political similarities, a non-conflicting view of the ideal order in their respective immediate neighbourhoods, geographical distance and non-adjacent spheres of influence, and due to the greater threat they both feel from China than from each other.

From this study we have seen that warfare is not considered a realistically usable tool, but that intimidation is intended to convince countries they cannot fight, and thus should accommodate the great power's wishes. China's ballistic missiles for example are mostly to make it clear to Washington and Taipei that Taiwan cannot be defended. Open fighting

between the great powers is only likely to occur in very small scale skirmishes between India and China, or in an unintended dramatic escalation in the China Seas.

At the beginning of this study, I set out to answer the question what twenty-first century great power relations would look like, and whether the theories of Offensive Realism, the Clash of Civilizations and the Rimland would be good tools for explaining them in Asia.

The essential point of Offensive Realism is that great powers inherently fear each other, and thus will attempt to amass as much power as possible with the greatest relative gains. As we have seen, the power of fear is great. Not only do the United States and India both fear China, but China also fears the United States. This is manifested in the desire of both America and China to rule the first islands, as a way of keeping the other power as far away as possible. The obvious incompatibility of these wishes serves to increase tension, but for the United States there exists the possibility of a partial accommodation by drawing its strength back to the second islands, which in part explains China's willingness to use more belligerent means as they believe that the first islands are less important to the Americans than to themselves.

The same fear of the unknowable intentions of another great power serves to make India very nervous of Chinese movements on their northern border, especially in the vulnerable north-east, and jittery when Chinese officials visit their neighbours. India, still weaker than China and far weaker than the US, does not exert the same fear on China or America because they know their own power is greater. India's accelerating development and recent involvement in South-East Asia however, worries China because in this area there is the risk of smaller states bandwagoning with India, and in a purely naval contest away from China's superior army the power gap is far smaller and possibly even tilts in India's favour.

Huntington observed that “the predominant American inclination will be to act as a primary balancer and prevent Chinese hegemony” (Huntington, 1996, p232). China's potential is far greater than any other rival the United States has ever faced. As the existing hegemon, and therefore the only status quo power in the system according to Mearsheimer, we would expect the Americans to seek defend the order that has been established by

encouraging smaller states to join with them. Again, with the increasing ties between the US and the smaller states of East Asia, we see this as the theory predicts.

Huntington predicts that states within the same civilisation will bandwagon to the core state. We see this to an extent. We have observed that Bhutan attaches itself primarily to India, using flirtation with China primarily to elicit greater gains from India. Similarly, we have seen a situation where if South Korea's more immediate threat from North Korea were removed, it might seek to bandwagon with China. The same principle also applies to the United States, which is why we see the Philippines and Australia being eager to deepen their ties with the US. However, while civilisational bonds make it easier for countries to get along, they do not preclude disagreement, and will come second to power calculations where the core state is more of a danger than an external hegemon. In this we can see the efforts of Vietnam and Taiwan to balance against China, and Sri Lanka to balance against India.

Huntington also predicts that the increasing self-confidence of non-Western civilisations as a result of their growing economic and military strength will make them more assertive and resistant to Western values. This is certainly a major factor in China, where there is strong and virulent nationalism, and popular demands that China redress the wrongs suffered during the 'Century of Humiliation'. Beijing deliberately stokes this nationalism as a source of legitimacy. The belief in an inherent superiority of China has been a factor in its bullying behaviour towards weaker neighbours.

In India, popular nationalism manifests itself in the person of Narendra Modi, and the landslide election of his Hindu nationalist party. The confidence levels resulting from India's growth in power and wealth are relative to its main rivals; "an unstable, fading but dangerous Pakistan; a swaggering and intimidating China. One invokes feelings of superiority close to contempt, the other inferiority and envy." (The Economist, 2013).

The Rimland theory dictates that America's power rests on its mastery of the sea, and especially its control over the Rimland. This theory clearly holds influence within the United States naval establishment, and in the PLAN. The alarm with which the United States and India regard Chinese expansionism in the South China Sea clearly show the danger that loss of the freedom to navigate this section of sea would spell for the US Navy's ability to operate worldwide. With India and China both located in the Rimland and

the United States in the Exterior Islands, the importance of controlling the seas and small states of the Rimland is only going to grow.

This study has been written as a general overview of the situation in the Asia-Pacific. Clearly there have been many issues here which could not be addressed in full in this overview. A fuller picture could be established with future studies, particularly regarding the states on the littoral of the South China Sea and the role of civilisations. A further study could also investigate why India is ineffective in establishing true leadership in South Asia. Many of the flashpoints covered here could merit their own in-depth study, but in this study they were secondary to the main focus which was examining the interaction of great powers with each other directly, and through proxies.

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