

**Geopolitics of the Major Indo-Pacific Region  
under Examination of  
PRC's Bid for Regional Hegemony**

**Prof. Dr. Ilias Iliopoulos**

**Taiwan Fellow (2021)**

**Taiwan Center for Security Studies**

**Institute of International Relations**

**National Chengchi University**

**July 29, 2021**

**This report is the result of a Taiwan Fellowship generously provided to  
the author by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan)**

## **Table of Contents**

### **Acknowledgements**

### **Preface**

### **Chapter 1: Definition of fundamental terms and concepts**

- 1.1. Geography, Geopolitics, Geostrategy
- 1.2. On Great Powers, Regional Powers, and Hegemony

### **Chapter 2: The Regional Hegemonic Aspirant: The People's Republic of China**

- 2.1. The Land Power – Sea Power dichotomy  
and its implications for authoritarian continental states
- 2.2. A Land Power goes to Sea: Turning Blue  
as a precondition of Regional Hegemony
  - a. Establishing Control over the South China Sea
  - b. The East China Sea Dispute

### **Chapter 3: The Sea Power – Land Power rivalry: Ruling Power U.S. vs. Rising Power PRC**

### **Chapter 4: The Republic of China (Taiwan): The keystone of Indo-Pacific Geopolitics**

**Chapter 5: Regional and extra-Regional Middle Powers**

5.1. India: PRC's Key Rival in the Indo-Pacific

5.2. Japan

5.3. Vietnam

5.4. Australia

5.5. Britain as an Indo-Pacific Power

5.6. France as an Indo-Pacific Power

**Conclusions**

**Bibliography**



## Acknowledgements

Whatever the weaknesses of this research paper, they would have been far greater without the kind help of the persons and institutions listed below.

It has been a privilege to be briefed into a great variety of issues relating to the geopolitical developments and currents of the Republic of China (Taiwan), and of the major Indo-Pacific region in general by H.E. the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of China (Taiwan) *Dr. Harry Tseng*; President of the Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of China (Taiwan) *Ms. Anna A. Kao*; Deputy Director-General of the Department for European Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of China (Taiwan) *Ms. Kendra Yung-shoa Chen*; Director of the Training Division of the Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs *Ms. Christine Liao*; Chief of Section South European Affairs, Department of European Affairs, *Ms. Irene Yaoling Wang*; *Hon. Edwin Laurent*, Ambassador of Saint Lucia in the Republic of China (Taiwan); H.E. *Hervé Denis*, Ambassador of the Republic of Haiti; H.E. *Dilmei L. Olkeriil*, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Palau in the Republic of China (Taiwan); H.E. *Andrea Bowman*, Ambassador of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; and Mr. *Charles Cheng*, Deputy Editor of the *Taipei Times*. I deeply appreciate the insightful thoughts and recommendations these experienced statesmen and diplomats provided.

I am particularly and extremely grateful to two senior, and most distinguished Colleagues, Professor *Fu-Kuo Liu*, Director of the Taiwan Center for Security Studies, and Research Fellow, Institute of International Relations of the National Chengchi University, and Professor *Yuan I*, Adjunct Research Fellow, Institute of International Relations, NCCU, for the most warm welcome and the stupendous and sustained support and encouragement they provided me as well as for enthusiastically and repeatedly getting me to meet and talk with several excellent academic Colleagues, but also former diplomats, senior Officers of the ROC's Armed Forces, business experts, and other opinion multipliers – thus greatly helping me obtain a more accurate and complete picture of the issues related to my study.

My sincerest thanks go to distinguished Colleagues Professor *Hsuan-Hsiang (Sean) Lin*, Department of Political Science, Chinese Culture University; Professor *Chien-min Chao*, Dean of the College of Social Sciences, CCU; Professor *Bih-rong Liu*, Department of Political Science, Soochow University; Professor *Tai-lin Tsang*, Department of European Languages and Cultures, and EU Research Centre, NCCU; Associate Professor *Cho-hsin Su*, Department of Diplomacy, NCCU; Associate Professor *Chia-Yu Chou*, Department of Political Science, NCCU; Associate Professor *Ruei-Lin (Willy) Yu*, Captain, ROCN, Director of the Graduate Institute of Strategic Studies, National Defence University; Assistant Professor *Hon-Min Yau*, Lt.-Col., ROCAF, Graduate Institute of Strategic Studies, NDU – who all most kindly invited me to present my ideas at their respective institutions and classes, heard me give guest lectures on several subthemes, and provided references, much-needed criticism, and encouragement. It has been a great honour, and a pleasure indeed.

The Staffs at the Center for Chinese Studies of the National Central Library, the Taiwan Center for Security Studies, and NCCU's Library were of the greatest assistance. For their stupendous efforts, from the very first moment of my study trip – and in point of fact, even long time before I departed for Taiwan – to the end, I am indebted to *Ms. Elaine Wu*; *Ms. Mélodie Wu*; *Ms. Chien-Yu Wang*; *Mr. Richard Wei-Yi Chen*; *Mr. Jia (James) He Song*; and most certainly, I owe my very special and warmest thanks to *Ms. Sally Fang*, Professor Liu's Assistant, TCSS, for her strong commitment and tremendous help in constantly and effectively dealing with all organizational aspects and day-to-day issues.

At this point, I wish to express my profound thanks to certain persons, without whose encouragement, throughout the previous years, I would hardly have been able to “discover” Taiwan: H.E. *Ambassador Sherman S. Kuo*, Representative of the Republic of China (Taiwan) in Greece; H.E. *Ambassador Paul Kuoboug Chang*, former Representative of the Republic of China (Taiwan) in Greece; *Mr. Shiuh-min Yu*, Director of Press, Academic and Cultural Affairs, Taipei Representative Office in Greece; *Ms. Eugenia Yu-chin Yun*, former Director of Press, Academic and Cultural Affairs, Taipei Representative Office in Greece; *Ms. Chun-hsin (Claire) Wu*; and *Mr. Hao (Arthur) Fan-Chiang*, who had served in the Taipei Representative Office in Greece in previous years.

Last, but not least, I remain utterly grateful to the *Department of Policy Planning, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan)*, the *Center for Chinese Studies, National Central Library*, and the *Taipei Representative Office in Greece* for generously providing my *Taiwan Fellowship* to assist me in the research and writing of this report. At the same time, I owe very sincere gratitude to *EFA Ventures* – notably *Mr. Athanasios Potsis*, Director of Business Development – and to my former Commandant at the Hellenic Naval Academy, Vice-Admiral (Ret.) *Kyriakos Kyriakidēs, Hellenic Navy*, for their valuable support.

This work is dedicated to my late father, *John (Iōannēs [Ἰωάννης]) Iliopoulos (Ηλιόπουλος)*, to whom I owe so much. Being a senior Officer of the then Hellenic Gendarmerie, and coming from a family that had been fighting totalitarian Communism for the most part of the 1940s and until August 1949 – when the armed Communist bands were eventually defeated by the National Army – from Peloponnese in the South to Greece’s northern borders with the so called People’s Republics and/or Socialist Republics of Albania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria, and even far beyond (up to the Korean peninsula in the early 1950s), my father felt during lifetime a kind of particular affinity with Taiwan (*Nationalist China*, as he knew it). I remember him speaking of Taiwan in the warmest words when I was a five or six year old boy although he had never in life been to Taiwan – if truth be told, he never travelled outside Greece, except for one time, when he was so proud to visit me at the Ludwig-Maximilian University of Munich, twenty-five years ago. He passed away on the fourteenth day of November of the year 2018.

## Preface

It was a senior Officer of the Navy of the *Republic of India*, Captain Dr. Gurpreet S. Khurana, former Executive Director of the *National Maritime Foundation of India* and a Visiting Professor at the *Naval War College, Goa*, who re-discovered the term ‘*Indo-Pacific*’ in early 2007<sup>1</sup> – most commonly ascribed to Japan’s former Prime Minister *Shinzō Abe* nowadays, but if truth be told, first coined by another intellectual soldier, *Karl Haushofer*, almost eight decades ago.<sup>2</sup> Then, in 2013, the same term would be included in Australia’s *Defence White Paper*.<sup>3</sup>

However, it was only when the former President of the United States of America *Donald Trump* used the term “*Indo-Pacific*” in his opening speech at the *Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum* in *Da Nang*, Vietnam, as well as during his Asia tour in November 2017, that this term officially became a strategic doctrine.<sup>4</sup> It was in that historical speech that President Trump declared his vision for a “*Free and Open Indo-Pacific*.”<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Khurana, Gurpreet S., “Security of Sea Lines: Prospects for India-Japan Cooperation”, *Strategic Analysis*, Volume 31, No. 1 (2007), pp. 139–153. The spirit of the term was indeed picked up by Japan’s then Prime Minister *Shinzō Abe* a few months later, as reflected in his speech to the Indian Parliament in August 2007 that talked about the “Confluence of the Indian and Pacific Oceans” as “the dynamic coupling as seas of freedom and of prosperity” in the “broader Asia”, see “*Confluence of the Two Seas*”. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan. August 22, 2007. Speech by H.E. Mr. Shinzō Abe, Prime Minister of Japan at the Parliament of the Republic of India*. Retrieved from <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0708/speech-2.html>

<sup>2</sup> Haushofer, Karl, *Deutsche Kulturpolitik im indopazifischen Raum. Mit einem biographischen Anhang von Hans Roemer* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1939).

<sup>3</sup> Australian Government, Department of Defence, *Defence White Paper*, released on 3 May 2013, pp. 7-8. Retrieved from [https://www.defence.gov.au/whitepaper/2013/docs/WP\\_2013\\_web.pdf](https://www.defence.gov.au/whitepaper/2013/docs/WP_2013_web.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Sevastopoulos, Demetri, “Trump gives glimpse of ‘Indo-Pacific’ strategy to counter China,” *Financial Times*, November 10, 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.ft.com/content/e6d17fd6-c623-11e7-a1d2-6786f39ef675>. See also Reeves, Jeffrey, and Wallis, Joanne, “A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Strengths, Weaknesses, and Opportunities for Engagement (Introduction),” *Asia Policy*, Vol. 15, No. 4, October 28, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.nbr.org/publication/a-free-and-open-indo-pacific-strengths-weaknesses-and-opportunities-for-engagement-introduction>.

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

In May of the following year, the U.S. Armed Forces announced the renaming of what had been traditionally known as the *U.S. Pacific Command* to the *U.S. Indo-Pacific Command*.<sup>6</sup> Evidently, the new American Strategy is directly related to the planned transformation of Mainland China into a maritime Power, particularly to the “*Maritime Silk Road*” (i.e., the maritime component of the “*Belt and Road Initiative*”, also known as “*One Belt, One Road [Initiative]*”)<sup>7</sup> and consequently to Beijing’s bid for Regional Hegemony in the major Indo-Pacific geopolitical region.

Indeed, it is an undeniable fact that, in an international system undergoing dynamic transformation, few regions on earth are experiencing changes as rapidly as the Indo-Pacific. The centrality of this geopolitical supra-region to trade, resources and energy renders its stability and security critical. In recent years, two regional developments of major significance have altered the global economic and strategic balance. First, the “Indo-Pacific” has replaced the “Euro-Atlantic,” as the new financial and strategic *centre of gravity* of the world system. And this very same major region has witnessed the impressive rise of a determined and ambitious *hegemonic aspirant*, and of several other *secondary* maritime Powers too. In the post-World War II era, the United States had filled in the *strategic vacuum* created by the British withdrawal from East of Suez. But nowadays, the sharply divergent interests of regional and extra-regional states, their contradictory strategic imperatives despite the unprecedented *interdependence* – notably, Beijing’s bid for *Regional Hegemony* and its consequences for American *world primacy*, combined with the signs of Japanese resurgence and Vietnamese assertiveness, and remarkably, the emergence of India as a maritime Power – make for increased *strategic uncertainty*, and even turbulence in the major Indo-

<sup>6</sup> “US Pacific Command renamed as US Indo-Pacific Command,” *The Economic Times*, English edition, June 2, 2018. Retrieved from <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/us-pacific-command-renamed-as-us-indo-pacific-command/articleshow/64398189.cms?from=mdr>

<sup>7</sup> On the “*Belt and Road Initiative*”, a.k.a. “*One Belt, One Road Initiative*” see Yamei (Ed.), “Work Together to Build the Silk Road Economic Belt and The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China, At the Opening Ceremony of The Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, 14 May 2017,” *Xinhua Net*, 2017-05-14. Retrieved from [http://www.xinhuanet.com//english/2017-05/14/c\\_136282982.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com//english/2017-05/14/c_136282982.htm). See also Johnson, Christopher K., “President Xi Jinping’s “Belt and Road” Initiative. A Practical Assessment of the Chinese Communist Party’s Roadmap for China’s Global Resurgence,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Report*, March 28, 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.csis.org/analysis/president-xi-jinping-%E2%80%99s-belt-and-road-initiative>. See also Cavanna, Thomas P., “Unlocking the Gates of Eurasia: China’s Belt and Road Initiative and its Implications for U.S. Grand Strategy,” *Texas National Security Review*, Vol. 2, Issue 3 (May 2019), <http://dx.doi.org/10.26153/tsw/2927>.

Pacific region. As stated in an October 2020 report for the *Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)*, “No region will be more important to global peace and prosperity in the coming years than the Indo-Pacific, which has more geopolitical hotspots, emerging powers, overlapping political and economic partnerships, and risks of conflict than any other. Northeast Asia, especially North Korea and the East China Sea, continues to be the region’s epicenter of security risks. While Southeast Asia is an engine of regional and global economic growth, border disputes in the South China Sea likewise threaten regional stability.”<sup>8</sup>

Hence, not from nowhere is the Indo-Pacific becoming the principal theatre of geostrategic antagonism between *established* and *emerging* Great Powers; this is, after all, a region which hosts *sea lanes* truly vital to some of the world’s most vibrant economies and industries, and to the *global maritime order* as a whole. Mainland China’s *Belt and Road Initiative* (or *one Belt, one Road*) also increases the geopolitical, geo-economic, and geostrategic importance of the Indian Ocean and the *Strait of Malacca*. Led by President *Xi Jinping*, the *People’s Republic of China* has moved into a new era. President Xi declares, *urbi et orbi*, that his country stands “tall and firm” and should now “take centre stage in the world.”<sup>9</sup> The deepening competition between the United States and the *People’s Republic of China* has further complicated the existing geopolitical tensions. There is, therefore, “a distinct possibility that complex maritime challenges could overwhelm the international and regional community’s ability to maintain stability in a sustained and effective manner.”<sup>10</sup>

Evidently, the *keystone* of Indo-Pacific Geopolitics is *Taiwan*. Within the next few years, the world will witness a major attempt of Mainland China to absorb the island republic. This development will pose a severe *dilemma* for the global ruling Power United States. For, unlike the recent developments in *Hong Kong*, Taiwan’s seizure would be of a significantly greater order of magnitude.

---

<sup>8</sup> Suzuki, Hiroyuki, “Japan’s Leadership Role in a Multi-Polar Indo-Pacific,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Report*, October 23, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.csis.org/analysis/japans-leadership-role-multipolar-indo-pacific>

<sup>9</sup> Cited in Feith, Douglas J., “China’s Maritime Strategic Challenge,” *National Review*, October 18, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.hudson.org/research/15404-china-s-maritime-strategic-challenge>

<sup>10</sup> Kaushiva, Pradeep, and Singh, Abhijit (Eds.), *Geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific* (New Delhi: KW Publishers Pvt Ltd in association with the National Maritime Foundation, 2011), pp. xi-xii.

In the light of the above, it remains to be seen, in the years to come, whether the strategic antagonism between the *planetary* maritime Power U.S. and the *rising* Power PRC, the territorial disputes between the emerging *Regional Hegemon* and other regional actors in the South and the East China Seas, and eventually the quest to change the *status quo* in the region at large, and most significantly in Taiwan, are merely the *prelude* to a major armed conflict of global scale – as had been the strategic rivalries among the ruling and the rising European Great Powers, and the territorial disputes among the various regional actors in the Balkan peninsula and the Ottoman Orient more than a century ago.

## 1. Definition of fundamental terms and concepts

### 1.1. Geography, Geopolitics, Geostrategy

Geography is said to be the most fundamental factor in the foreign policy of states because it is “the most permanent.”<sup>11</sup> Geography is important not just because of its “relative stability,” but also “because of its role in shaping the dynamics of opportunities and risks.”<sup>12</sup>

Geography (from Greek “*γαῖα*” [gaïa]>“*γῆ*”[gê], i.e., “earth”, “land”, and “*γραφῆ*” [graphê], i.e., “writing”) is about the physical reality, composed of land, sea, rivers, mountains, valleys, deserts, wind patterns, and so on and describing the geological characteristics of the earth. Geopolitics (from Greek “*γαῖα*” [gaïa]>“*γῆ*”[gê], i.e., “earth”, “land”) and “*πολιτική*” [politiké], i.e., “policy” and “politics”) is about the human factor within geography. It is the study of geographical factors in world politics and inter-state relations, and subsequently of the spatial distribution of centres of resources, trade and transportation routes, lines of communication, and strategic roads, assigning value to places according to their strategic significance. Or, in another scholar’s terms, Geopolitics is “the study of the influence of geographical factors on state behaviour – how location, climate, natural resources, population and physical terrain determine a state’s foreign policy options and its position in the hierarchy of

<sup>11</sup> Gray, Colin S., *The Geopolitics of the Nuclear Era: Heartland, Rimlands, and the Technological Revolution* (New York: Crane, Russak, 1977), p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Starr, Harvey, “On Geopolitics: Spaces and Places,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 57, No. 3 (September 2013), pp. 433–439, here p. 433.

states.”<sup>13</sup> The geopolitical situation of a state, or a region is the result of the interaction of the geographical environment and the human factor, which alters the economic and strategic value of places – see, for example, the discovery of new maritime routes in late mediaeval and early modern times.

In terms of foreign policy, geography is a geopolitical reality to which states respond by drafting out and implementing a geostrategy. The most effective state actors have always proved to be those that achieved to match their applied geostrategy to the underlying geopolitical situation. States that have stable borders, then achieve to gain control of resources, and also manage to secure routes connecting them with locations of resources, safeguard and increase their power. Geostrategy is about the direction and intensity of the potential lines of Geopolitics; in other words, it deals with the study, and notably the practice of the spatial orientation of the foreign policy of a sovereign state actor. Geopolitics is often confused with geostrategy, particularly in the context of the day-to-day talk about rivalries between States for the control of territory, resources, notably energy resources, and transportation routes.

Yet, while both concepts have similar approaches, they are distinguishable in their objectives: Geopolitics serves Political Science, making it more insightful and analytical, and is aimed at defining models of power; Geostrategy on the other hand serves a state’s Strategy, making it more dynamic and instrumental, describing where a sovereign state actor should concentrate its political and diplomatic efforts and project its military power.<sup>14</sup>

Though the study of geography and its relation and importance to state affairs can be traced as far back as Ancient China and Greece, many authors agree that our understanding of geopolitical and geostrategic thought stems from *Political Geography*, particularly from the contributions of authors such as *Friedrich Ratzel*

---

<sup>13</sup> O’Callaghan, Terry, “Geopolitics,” in: Martin Griffiths (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of International Relations and Global Politics*, 1st ed. (Oxon, England: Routledge, 2005), pp. 308-310, here p. 308.

<sup>14</sup> Pezarat Correia, P., “Derivações Semânticas da Geopolítica,” *Geopolítica*, No. 2 (2008), pp. 13-42; cited after Pinto da Costa, Gerhard Ferrão, *China and India’s Maritime Geostrategies: Implications for International Maritime Security and Scenarios for 2030*, Dissertação para obtenção de grau de Mestre em Estratégia, Universidade de Lisboa, Lisboa 2015, p. 29.

(1844-1904), *Rudolf Kjellén* (1864-1922), *Alfred Thayer Mahan* (1840-1914), *Sir Halford Mackinder* (1861-1947), and *Karl Haushofer* (1869-1946).<sup>15</sup>

Sir Halford Mackinder, who is considered the founding father of the classic, Anglo-Saxon school of Geopolitics, strongly believed that geography determines the fate of nations with a limited input of human actions; remarkably enough though, Mackinder added, “I have no wish to stray into excessive materialism.”<sup>16</sup>

In his seminal book *Democratic Ideals and Reality* Mackinder argues that “the groupings of lands and seas, and of fertility and natural pathways, is such as to lend itself to the growth of empires, and in the end of a single world-empire.”<sup>17</sup> His starting point is that the disposition of continents establishes a central landmass – Eurasia, or the “World Island” – around which all the other continents revolve. If Eurasia (“Euro-Asia” in Mackinder terms) falls under the control of one Power, she will generate enough resources, securely produced in its landlocked geographic core, to master the oceans and dominate the world. “The oversetting of the balance of power in favor of

---

<sup>15</sup> See Mackinder, Halford J. Sir, “The Geographical Pivot of History”, *Geographical Journal*, Vol. XXIII, No. 4 (1904), pp. 421-437. Mackinder, H. J. Sir, *Britain and the British Seas* (London: William Heinemann, 1902). Mackinder, H. J. Sir, *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1919). Mackinder, H. J. Sir, “The Round World and the Winning of Peace”, *Foreign Affairs*, 21 (July 1943). Mahan, Alfred Thayer, *The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793-1812* (Vol. I, Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1892). Mahan, A. T., *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1965). First publication 1890. Mahan, A. T., *Der Einfluss der Seemacht auf die Geschichte, herausgegeben und bearbeitet von Gustav Adolf Wolter* (Herford, 1967). Ratzel, Friedrich, *Politische Geographie*, Neudruck der 3. Auflage von 1923. Durchgesehen und ergänzt von Eugen Oberhummer (Osnabrück, 1974). Ratzel, F., *Lebensraum* (Tübingen: H. Laupp, 1901). Ratzel, F., *La Géographie Politique: Les concepts fondamentaux* (Paris: Fayard, 1987). Ratzel, F., “La géographie politique”, in Chaliand, Gérard, *Anthologie mondiale de la stratégie* (Paris: Laffont, 1990). Ratzel, F., “Die Gesetze des räumlichen Wachstums der Staaten”, *Petermanns Mitteilungen*, 42 (1896), pp. 97-107. Kjellén, Rudolf, *Staten som Lifform* (Stockholm, 1916). German edition: *Der Staats als Lebensform* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1917). Haushofer, Karl, *Der deutsche Anteil an der geographischen Erschliessung Japans und des süd-japanischen Erdrumes und deren Forderung durch den Einfluss von Krieg und Weltpolitik* (München: Mitteilungen der Geographischen Gesellschaft in München, IX, Nr. 1, 1914). Haushofer, K., *Südostasiens Wiederaufstieg zur Selbstbestimmung* (Berlin-Grunewald: Kurt Vowinckel Verlag, 1923). Haushofer, K., *Geopolitik des Pazifischen Ozeans* (Berlin-Grunewald: K. Vowinckel Verlag, 1925). Haushofer, K., *Grenzen in ihrer geographischen und politischen Bedeutung* (Berlin-Grunewald: K. Vowinckel Verlag, 1927). Haushofer, K.; Obst, Erich; Lautensach, Hermann; Maull, Otto (Hrsg.), *Bausteine zur Geopolitik* (Berlin: Grunewald, 1928). Haushofer, K., *Macht und Erde. 2: Jenseits der Großmächte* (K. Haushofer, Hrsg., 1932).

<sup>16</sup> Mackinder, “The Geographical Pivot of History,” p. 422.

<sup>17</sup> Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, p. 2.

the pivot state, resulting in its expansion over the marginal lands of Euro-Asia, would permit of the use of vast continental resources for fleet-building, and the empire of the world would be then be in sight.”<sup>18</sup>

Mackinder’s theory exercised a huge impact on Geopolitics and International Relations. His work actually initiated the study of the aforementioned fields that were further developed in the United States and significantly shaped, although with different accents, by Nicholas Spykman and Hans Morgenthau.

It is true that *Geopolitics* had long disappeared from the study of *Politics* in general, and *International Politics* in particular, for two reasons. First, the increasing abstraction of the *Theory of International Relations* led to a devaluation of *Geography*. Second, Geopolitics has often been misperceived as *environmental determinism* which apparently left no space for human action. More importantly, “classic” geopolitical theory suffered from its extensive use by German academics, strategists and policy practitioners in the inter-war era and during the Second World War. Especially Karl Haushofer’s “*Geopolitik*” was regarded as a first class tool to provide the German expansionist programme a certain theoretical and scientific legitimacy; according to the concept of “*Lebensraum*” (i.e., vital space), Germany had to expand and acquire territories that were considered necessary for her economy and her growing population<sup>19</sup> – which was precisely what the United States of America had been doing throughout the entire nineteenth century, by the way.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, after the Second World War, the study of Geopolitics was laden with the odium of its association with *National Socialism*, and Geopolitics as an academic discipline seemed to have become a sort of “war casualty,” as *Ladis Kristof* so well said.<sup>21</sup> Geopolitics was discredited and in certain cases, most notably in then “West”-Germany, it was very much a “*taboo issue*”, to put it in *Heinz Brill*’s most accurate

---

<sup>18</sup> Mackinder, “The Geographical Pivot of History,” p. 436.

<sup>19</sup> Haushofer, K., *Grenzen in ihrer geographischen und politischen Bedeutung*.

<sup>20</sup> Stratfor, *The Geopolitics of the United States, Part 1: The Inevitable Empire*, July 4, 2016, retrieved from <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/geopolitics-united-states-part-1-inevitable-empire>

<sup>21</sup> Kristof, Ladis K. D., “The Origins and Evolution of Geopolitics,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1960), pp. 15-51, here p. 20.

terms.<sup>22</sup> In the long term, however, the criticism that Geopolitics received in the postwar era proved helpful in so far as it made scholars and analysts aware of the problems resulting from extreme forms of geographical determinism and their use, or misuse for political purposes.

Two brilliant scholars coming from the field of *Political Science*, not of Geography, the aforementioned Nicholas Spykman and Hans J. Morgenthau, who established International Relations as an academic field, achieved to re-introduce Geography into the study of International Politics and, at the same time, carefully avoid any notion of physical determinism by placing increased significance on human factor. In their monumental works Morgenthau and Spykman,<sup>23</sup> the founding fathers of the school of *Classic*, or *Political Realism*, distinguish three geographic features: size, borders, and location. The larger a state's territory, the harder is to conquer it, for instance. Drawing the right lesson from historical experience, notably Russian history, Morgenthau pointed out that the size of a state offers a passive form of power that makes conquest more difficult "by virtue of being."<sup>24</sup>

It seems that the study of Geopolitics tends to witness a revival in times of major geopolitical shifts. It is not by chance that Halford Mackinder's *magnum opus*, *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, was first published in 1919, i.e., after the end of the First World War, and reprinted in 1942, during the Second World War. Significant changes in the geographic distribution of power reasonably require an analytical framework that offers appropriate tools to interpret them. But because such changes are generally rare, the appreciation of Geography seems to be cyclical falling into a sort of academic oblivion during times of relative international stability.

---

<sup>22</sup> Brill, Heinz, "Geopolitik in der Diskussion," *Zeitschrift für Politik – Neue Folge*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (1998), pp. 205-219, here p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Spykman, Nicholas, *The Geography of the Peace* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1944). Spykman, Nicholas, "Geography and Foreign Policy, I," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (1938), pp. 28-50. Morgenthau, Hans J., *Politics Among Nations, The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948). Morgenthau, Hans J., *In Defense of the National Interest* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951). Morgenthau, H. J., "The Problem of the National Interest", *Dilemmas of Politics* (Chicago: University Press, 1958). Morgenthau, H. J., *Macht und Frieden. Grundlegung einer Theorie der internationalen Politik* (Gütersloh, 1963).

<sup>24</sup> Spykman, Nicholas, "Geography and Foreign Policy, I," p. 32. Morgenthau, Hans J., *Politics among Nations*, pp.151-152.

The geopolitical shifts that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the *Eastern Bloc* instigated a return to geopolitical thought. The apparently *unipolar*, yet in actual fact *multipolar* international system that has emerged after the end of the Cold War era has led to an increasing awareness of power differentials in the world. Power is concentrated in specific major geopolitical regions, and sub-regions (e.g., North America, Eurasia, Indo-Pacific, Western Europe), and their relation to one another depends predominantly on their respective location.

Two analytically distinct questions are of significance within such a context. First, there is the genuinely geopolitical question about the new map of power differentials, the question, in other words, which regions of the earth are strategically relevant and subsequently, where are the potential zones of conflict in the international system. The second question is more clearly related to policy since it is about the geostrategic imperatives of states. Where should state actors focus their attention on? Which regions of the world deserve, or require their projection of power? In other words, an understanding of Geopolitics helps states distinguish what is important from what isn't.

In recent years, the U.S. position of seemingly peerless power led to a revision of American geostrategic priorities. There has been much talk of a shift of American geostrategic interest from the Euro-Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific regions, in order for the United States to be able to deal with new challenges and potential threats in the latter.<sup>25</sup> The Pacific and the Indian Oceans, and the broader Asia-Pacific and/or Indo-Pacific geopolitical regions present geographic constraints which are quite different from those of Europe and therefore require a different set of military technologies, force structure, strategies and tactics. Due to the ongoing shift in the distribution of world power and the new, emerging theaters of action, Geopolitics experiences a triumphal comeback.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> See for example Tow, William T. (Ed.) and Stuart, Douglas (Ed.), *The New US Strategy towards Asia: Adapting to the American Pivot* (Routledge Security in Asia Pacific Series, Routledge, 2014), 1st Edition; Campbell, Kurt, *The Pivot: The Future of American Statecraft in Asia* (Grand Central Publishing, 2016), Nook Book (eBook); Huang, David Wei Feng (Ed.), *Asia Pacific Countries and the US Rebalancing Strategy* (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2016); Fels, Enrico, *Shifting Power in Asia-Pacific? The Rise of China, Sino-US Competition and Regional Middle Power Allegiance* (Springer International Publishing, 2017).

<sup>26</sup> See for example Brill, Heinz, *Geopolitik heute; Deutschlands Chance* (Berlin: Ullstein Verlag, 1994); Jordis von Lohausen, Heinrich, *Denken in Völkern: Die Kraft von Kultur, Sprache und Raum in der*

## 1.2. On Great Powers, Regional Powers, and Hegemony

There seemed to be, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, only one great Power in the world, which fully and truly deserved the description “*planetary*” (i.e., global): the United States of America – being the only Power which had at its disposal a dense and worldwide strategic-military network as well as the complete spectrum of logistics and weapons which permits interventions in every situation and every position on the planet with each and every respective suitable means. The foundations of this mighty construction were already laid during the nineteenth century; the World Wars and the Cold War led to the zenith of American power.<sup>27</sup>

Evidently, the United States will remain a formidable military power and, even more significantly, such extraordinary historical constellation will not be repeated in the foreseeable future; because of that it is plausible to assume that no other great Power – even if it would have the economic potency – will so quickly come into possession of such strategic advantages, unless it decides to go on a direct collision course with the United States *and* can also prevail over it.

Yet, three decades after the end of the (last) Cold War and the eclipse of the previous (bipolar) international system, the United States may well be the sole planetary Power, but it is certainly not the sole major Power of the international system. In the meantime, the world has been witnessing the gradual emergence of the new multipolar system of the twentieth-first century consisting of at least four Great Powers, i.e., the United States, post-Soviet Russia (*the Russian Federation*), Mainland China (*the People’s Republic of China*), and India. It remains to be seen in the decades to come whether a South American country (notably, Brazil) will eventually manage to rise to the rank of a major Power. Finally, it goes without saying that any reference to the “*European Union*” has deliberately been omitted, since that hybrid supranational

---

*Weltgeschichte* (Graz: Leopold Stocker-Verlag, 2001); Mead, Walter Russel, “The Return of Geopolitics,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 93, No. 3 (May/June 2014). In point of fact, a very few highly interesting books and articles pointing out a rebirth of Geopolitics, or the need for it had even appeared before the collapse of the Soviet empire and the arrival of the post-bipolar system; see Hepple, Leslie W., “The revival of Geopolitics,” *Political Geography Quarterly*, Vol. 5, issue 4, supplement 1, October 1986, pp. 21-36.

<sup>27</sup> Kennedy, Paul, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers. Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987), pp. 178-179, 242-247, 357-361.

construct *sui generis* is definitely not a Great Power for the time being, nor will it ever become a “traditional strategic power.”<sup>28</sup>

Generally speaking, *Regional Powers* can be distinguished by three pivotal criteria: strategic ambition or claim to leadership, power resources and capabilities, and full scale use of foreign policy instruments, including the use of force. It can be reasonably assumed that at least certain Regional Powers, which already have at their disposal their own relatively closed economic and political unfolding *space*, will go their own way, at whose end would be the formation of *large spaces* with a ban on intervention in respect of other, extra-spatial Powers.

Such thoughts came into being gaining huge popularity in the age of *Imperialism*, as the division of the earth into large geopolitical and geo-economic spaces was for the most part reality.<sup>29</sup> Remarkably, a division of the world into large spaces was likewise reality throughout the Cold War era, although there was no public talk of Geopolitics and large space *expressis verbis*, since both terms were discredited by the burdens of the past. Interestingly, this idea gains increased popularity nowadays, as clearly shown in the talk of a *multipolar* system, because it seems to satisfy a certain need for order and for symmetry and moreover it allows for articulation of the national interests of this or that Power in a major geopolitical region in an objectively sounding legal or political language.

One often sees today a real basis for the emergence of geopolitical large spaces in the development of the highly technicised economy which breaks out of national borders, yet during its internationalisation it does not spread aimlessly, but shows tendencies towards the formation of a chain of massed points of concentration inside of certain *regions* and supra-regions.

The trade carried out inside such geo-economic spaces is beneficial to both, the Regional Power with the strongest national economy as well as the other state actors with the weaker or smaller national economies, at least in theory, since weaker or

---

<sup>28</sup> Bertram, Christoph, “Europe’s Best Interest: Staying Close to Number One,” *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft* (International Politics and Society), Vol. 6, No. 1 (January 2003), [https://www.fes.de/ipg/IPG1\\_2003/ARTBERTRAM.HTM](https://www.fes.de/ipg/IPG1_2003/ARTBERTRAM.HTM)

<sup>29</sup> For the Age of Imperialism see Kinder, Hermann and Hilgemann, Werner, *dtv-Atlas zur Weltgeschichte* (Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 25. Ausgabe, 1991), Band (Vol.) II, pp. 376-377.

smaller economies can prosper - not despite, but precisely - because of their dependence on the strongest one, given that the quantitative and qualitative growth of this latter economy creates new possibilities of work and an increasingly complicated division of labour delegating tasks to third parties. For instance, “regional integration in East Asia is, largely considered, driven by the momentum of [Mainland] China’s economic rise.”<sup>30</sup> An outstanding expert in the field, Professor *Fu-Kuo Liu*, has made the observation that [Mainland] China’s “*charm offensive*” has become “an integral part of its overall strategy to shape a new regional structure, which is more conducive to [Mainland] China’s evolving strategic interests in the region.” Moreover, [Mainland] China-ASEAN cooperation “has spearheaded a new type of intra-Asian regional cooperation with China at its apex.” Evidently, “the progress of regional integration is very much in line with the pace of China’s economic advancement in the region.” The renowned scholar estimates, therefore, that this “new Asian regionalism stimulated by the China-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) would dominate the future economic landscape of Asia...”<sup>31</sup>

It is true that such economic developments tend to bring about results and consequences which, in the long term, may provide a major geostrategic actor’s bid for hegemony a broader quasi normative legitimacy. For, as two distinguished scholars, *John G. Ikenberry* and *Charles A. Kupchan* have pointed out, “like primacy or preponderance, hegemony entails superior power, but it also implies acknowledgement of a state’s authority by most of the other members of the international system.”<sup>32</sup> Yet, the path which leads to such geopolitically clear-cut large spaces is not at all so *linear* as economistic thinking suggests – and as hegemonic aspirants in this or that major geopolitical region wish. To begin with, economic integrations are still not advanced to such an extent that the political emergency brake could not be pulled at any given

---

<sup>30</sup> Liu, Fu-Kuo, “Beijing’s Regional Strategy and China-ASEAN Economic Integration,” *The Jamestown Foundation: China Brief*, Volume 8, Issue 10, May 13, 2008. Retrieved from <https://jamestown.org/program/beijings-regional-strategy-and-china-asean-economic-integration>

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Ikenberry, John G., and Kupchan, Charles A., “Socialization and Hegemonic Power,” *International Organization*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (Summer 1990): 283–315, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002081830003530X>

moment; new editions of the revocation of the *Edict of Nantes*,<sup>33</sup> this time against foreign capital, would nowadays – without religious, and yet with strong ideological quasi legitimacy, and even under consideration of the economic consequences – be conceivable, as demonstrated by the economic sanctions imposed by the United States and the European Union on the Russian Federation, for instance. More significantly, resistance against the formation of geopolitical large spaces under the direction of this or that rising Regional Power must come from the outside, namely from a great Power which already possesses its own large space, and over and above that, means and capabilities of global action which it does not want to see limited by bans on intervention in this or that region imposed by other major Powers.

In our days, this great Power – *the Global Power par excellence*, in point of fact – is the United States of America. A major Regional Power which would attempt to build its own closed geo-economic and geopolitical large space would have to literally cut from the global political-military network of the United States a fairly large piece and then not merely replace this piece with its own political-military potential, but furthermore be in a position to make its presence felt beyond the bounds of its own geopolitical supra-region; a power which would achieve to rise as a Regional Hegemon would have to therefore also more or less be, or become a global Power. Yet, if there is one lesson we learn from history since the age of the *Peloponnesian War* between Athens, Sparta, and their respective allies, twenty-five centuries ago, then it is that whenever an *emerging* Power threatens to displace a long-established *ruling* Power, conflict is the inevitable result, and most often an armed one – this is the proverbial “*Thucydides trap*”, to put it in Professor *Graham Allison*’s most famous terms<sup>34</sup> – with the astonishing exception of the *translatio imperii* from “mother” *Old Albion* to her “daughter” *New England* after the end of the Second World War.

---

<sup>33</sup> See Prestwich, Menna, “The revocation of the Edict of Nantes,” *History*, Vol. 73, No. 237 (February 1988), pp. 63-73.

<sup>34</sup> Allison, Graham, *Destined for War: Can America and China escape the Thucydides’s Trap?* (Mariner Books, 2017). See also Allison, G., “The Thucydides Trap. Are the U.S. and China Headed for War?” *The Atlantic*, September 24, 2015. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/09/united-states-china-war-thucydides-trap/406756/>

## 2. The Regional Hegemonic Aspirant: The People's Republic of China

### 2.1. The Land Power – Sea Power dichotomy and its implications for authoritarian continental states

For most of her history, China has been a classic *continental* Power. Compared with its counterparts in the West, China historically has taken a narrower view of Geopolitics, one that reached scarcely farther than its borders. Part of the reason for her *Sinocentric* perspective is the country's sheer geographic scale and diversity. China's borders encompass a territory as immense and varied as that of the entire European continent.<sup>35</sup> Though for the most part she has held together as a cohesive nation, the country is a collection of regions, each with its own geo-cultural and economic characteristics.

Initially a sedentary agricultural society on the northern plain along the *Yellow River*, China faced threats from both nomadic tribes to the north and west, as well as seafaring raiders along the east and southern coasts. Successive Chinese dynasties fought externally to secure buffer states and protect against outside powers, as well as internally to consolidate the fractious ethnic *Han* core, which stretched south to the *Yangtze River* and the rich rice land's beyond.<sup>36</sup>

During the *Tang* dynasty (618–907 AD), most notably under *Tai-tsung* (627–649 AD)<sup>37</sup> China took her position as the “*Middle Kingdom*,” establishing suzerainty relationships with eighty-eight Asian peoples around her expanding periphery, and engaging in international trade and diplomatic delegations across the Asian continent. Up until the tenth century, political power was concentrated largely in the *Guanzhong*

---

<sup>35</sup> Zhixing Zhang, “China Takes an Expansionist View of Geopolitics,” *Real Clear Defence*, 1 November 2017, originally published at *Stratfor.com*. Retrieved from [https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2017/11/01/china\\_takes\\_an\\_expansionist\\_view\\_of\\_Geopolitics\\_112566.html](https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2017/11/01/china_takes_an_expansionist_view_of_Geopolitics_112566.html).

<sup>36</sup> Rodger Baker, “China’s Amphibian Dilemma: Straddling Land and Sea Ambitions,” *Stratfor.com*, 7 September 2020. Retrieved from <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/china-s-amphibian-dilemma-straddling-land-and-sea-ambitions>.

<sup>37</sup> Kinder, Hermann, and Hilgemann, Werner, *dtv-Atlas zur Weltgeschichte* (Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1991), 25. Ausgabe (25th Publication), Band (Vol.) I, p. 177.

*Plain* in northwestern China (and sometimes around the Central Plain), as were the conflicts and land acquisitions aimed at expanding the central power. Eventually, the power drifted eastward as the North China Plain gained increased economic and cultural importance, linking up with the fertile *Yangtze Plain*. In Mackinder's famous words, "it was upon navigation of oceanic rivers that was based the Potamic [Greek for "riverine"] stage of civilization, that of China on the Yangtse, that of India on the Ganges, that of Babylonia on the Euphrates, that of Egypt on the Nile."<sup>38</sup> But while trade and international connections expanded, China remained heavily focused *on the continent*, not at sea.

Yet, China has flirted with a *maritime* focus in the past, often when power was centered in the south. It is true that navies were not the exclusive property or the invention of Europeans, anyway; many of the navigational advances made in the late Occidental *Middle Ages* derived from contact with the *Arab* world, after all.<sup>39</sup> Across the other side of the world, the *Koreans* deployed the first armoured warship while China of the *Song* dynasty boasted "the world's most powerful and technologically sophisticated navy."<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, the *Southern Song* dynasty (1127-1279)<sup>41</sup> had a large navy for coastal defence and riverine operations. Remarkably, when the *Mongols* conquered Korea and Southern Song's China, they turned that maritime power briefly against *Japan*, although their two successive invasions eventually failed. During the early *Ming* dynasty (1368-1644),<sup>42</sup> where the capital was initially in southern China at Nanjing, the legendary diplomat, navigator and fleet admiral *Zheng He* (aka *Cheng Ho*, c. 1371-1433 AD) helped extend the maritime and commercial influence of China throughout the regions bordering the Indian Ocean. He embarked on several voyages around Asia and Africa in his famed treasure fleets commanding seven naval expeditions almost a century before the *Portuguese* reached India by sailing around the southern cape of

---

<sup>38</sup> Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," p. 432.

<sup>39</sup> An additional indicator for such influence might be the use of the word "admiral", which in Arabic once meant the "prince at sea".

<sup>40</sup> Forage, Paul C., "The Foundations of Chinese Naval Supremacy in the Twelfth Century" in Jack Sweetman *et al.* (Eds.), *New Interpretations: Naval History 10<sup>th</sup> Symposium* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991), p. 6; cited after Till, Geoffrey, *Sea power: A Guide for the Twenty-First Century* (London and Portland: Frank Cass, 2006), p. 19. First publication 2004.

<sup>41</sup> Kinder and Hilgemann, *op. cit.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227.

Africa.<sup>43</sup> His vessels loaded with trade goods and high-value gifts reached such far-flung places as *Hormuz* in the Persian Gulf and *Mogadishu* off shore of East Africa. Zheng He is widely regarded as the greatest ever Chinese explorer; more importantly, he is celebrated as the founding father of a modern Chinese navy, so to speak.<sup>44</sup> His expeditions though were mainly about asserting the power of the Celestial Throne through diplomatic and tribute collection delegations – however not lasting –, rather than establishing trade routes or a long-term naval presence.

Yet, with the capital shifted back north to Beijing and internal troubles once again arising, China disposed of the fleet and *turned continental* once again – and she did so quite deliberately. *Why* did the emperor and the ruling bureaucratic elite act in this way? *Why* banning the construction of all sea-going ships and all foreign travel after nearly five hundred years of deeply impressive maritime endeavor? By the way, something similar occurred in Japan during the *Tokugawa shogunate* (1603-1867), when the *Shogun* (i.e., Field marshal) achieved in depriving the *Tenno* (Emperor) from his substantial powers, and went on to turn Japan's back upon the sea, basing the social and political system entirely on land economy and a severe feudalistic structure characterized by the five classes: *kuge*, *daimyo*, *samurai*, *heimin* and *eta/hinin*.<sup>45</sup> Thus, Japan fell further and further behind global developments until her self-imposed isolation was shattered by *U.S. Navy Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry* in 1853/54.<sup>46</sup>

The only reasonable explanation for such decisions to drastically ban any maritime activity is that the ruling elite did not know *where it would all end*. In point of fact, History provides us with strong evidence for the assumption that some political systems, in view of the *risk* inevitably associated with *sea power*, have deliberately pulled up the drawbridge against its apparent advantages and opportunities. For, what was distinctive about the European approach to sea power at that time was, first, the huge advantage derived from the close association between the military and the mercantile aspects of sea power; and second, the association of maritime supremacy

---

<sup>43</sup> Cartwright, Mark, "The Seven Voyages of Zheng He," *World History Encyclopedia*, 7 February 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1334/the-seven-voyages-of-zheng-he>.

<sup>44</sup> Office of Naval Intelligence (Publisher), *The People's Liberation Army Navy: A Modern Navy with Chinese Characteristics*, August 2009, p. 6

<sup>45</sup> Kinder and Hilgemann, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 369.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 393.

with a certain system of beliefs and, consequently, a specific style of government. The argument goes like this: “Seafaring and trade produce merchants. Merchants accumulate wealth, and then political power in order to defend and develop it. Often they will prevail in government, and enforce their ideas on others. These are the ideas that encourage trade in the first place: freedom of information and therefore of opinion, open and responsive government, fair taxation, social enterprise – all the liberal values so familiar today.”<sup>47</sup>

*Richard Harding* has argued that, historically, sea power depended on a number of related factors, both inside and outside the navy: “The actual strength of a navy was heavily dependent upon finance, the capability of central administration, the quality and quantity of real maritime resources, the ships, seamen and officer corps, the maritime infrastructure and the quality of political and naval decision-making.”<sup>48</sup> *Peter Padfield* deals with the virtues of the kind of community produced by a maritime economy;<sup>49</sup> he claims that it creates the conditions in which countries can be influential and in which navies will prosper. Specifically a maritime community:

- Encourages an awareness of the importance of maritime trade in society and government, helping thereby to produce the conditions in which that trade will flourish.
- Elevates the merchant class socially and politically, encouraging thereby the development of a value system and a style of government that fosters trade.
- Facilitates the development of naval power partly because it is simply more efficient at raising the resources navies need and partly because the merchant classes naturally see navies as a means of protecting maritime trade, both directly and indirectly.

The argument has brilliantly and concisely been summarised by a distinguished historian like this:

---

<sup>47</sup> Till, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>48</sup> Harding, Richard, *Sea power and Naval Warfare, 1650-1830* (London: University College Press, 1999), p. 121.

<sup>49</sup> Padfield, Peter, *Maritime Supremacy and the Opening of the Western Mind* (Woodstock and New York: Overlook Press, 1999), p.3.

- Absolutist monarchy was essentially a system of government for mobilising manpower rather than money. More efficient in its way than the mediaeval constitutions, it was poorly adapted to meet the much greater strains imposed on state and society by a modern navy.
- For that, what was needed was a system of government which involved the participation by those interest groups whose money and skills were indispensable to sea power – not just the nobility and peasantry whom absolutism set to work, but the shipowners and seafarers, the urban merchants and financiers, the industrial investors and managers, the skilled craftsmen; all the classes in short, which absolutist government least represented and least favoured.<sup>50</sup>

In the light of the above facts and reflections one may explain why the Chinese ruling elite *deliberately* turned continental once again. And as China pushed her frontiers farther to the north and east, the North Plain's gained significance. The Yangtze Plain, by contrast, produced dynasties that quickly succumbed either to their own weaknesses, as the Southern Song did in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, or to their northern competitors, as the short-lived *Nationalist* government did in the twentieth century.<sup>51</sup>

Modern China has largely retained that continental focus. Like peasant rebellions in previous times, the Chinese *Communist* revolt took root in the interior in the 1930s and 40s, whereas the Chinese Nationalist (“*Kuomintang*”) government had a “maritime outlook from its southern base in Nanjing.”<sup>52</sup> And while Mainland China’s ruling state and party elite have never ceased to refer to the need for Taiwan’s “liberation”, or later on “re-unification” with the Mainland, the consolidation of the *Maoist* régime first focused on the western regions, securing Xinjiang in 1950 and Tibet in 1951. *Mao Zedong* (1949-1976) focused heavily on China’s interior, at times with disastrous results, as in the “*Great Leap Forward*.”

---

<sup>50</sup> Rodger, N. A. M. (Nicholas Andrew Martin), *The Safeguard of the Sea: A Naval History of Britain*, Vol. I (London: HarperCollins, 1997), p. 433.

<sup>51</sup> Zhang, op. cit.

<sup>52</sup> Baker, op. cit.

In the light of historical evidence it seems indeed that, throughout the ages, various Chinese factions were aware of the fact that control of the ‘*Heartland*’ would be the key to control of the entire country’s territory. As Sir Halford Mackinder’s might have put it, paraphrasing his most celebrated (Eurasian) ‘*Heartland*’-principle, “*Who rules the Central Plain commands the heartland; who rules the heartland commands the Middle Kingdom.*”<sup>53</sup>

Even as Mao’s successor, *Deng Xiaoping* (1978-1989) moved to shift Mainland China’s economic policies and open the country to more trade, his Government prioritised managing internal ethnic and social issues, as well as the country’s numerous disputes along its vast land borders. During this time, the PRC’s national security was focused on maintaining a large, land-based “*People’s Liberation Army*” (PLA), with “infrequent attention to naval power.”<sup>54</sup>

Today, the People’s Republic of China is still largely a continental *land* Power. Domestically, around two-thirds of her population live in the interior, though much of the nation’s economic activity occurs along the coast. Since the 1990s, the country has started *going to the sea*. This *dichotomy* has the potential to stir political instability when bearing in mind the assumption made above that traditional Continental Powers are more prone to *autocratic* leadership to meet their security challenges, while Maritime Powers lean toward more political and economic *liberalism*. Indeed, the observation deserves consideration that, throughout history, an authoritarian régime based on military could sustain itself by force, but a navy had to earn public support. Or, to put it in other words, autocracy was adequate for an army, but navies needed consensus.<sup>55</sup> For this reason, both absolutist monarchies *Spain* and *France* finally failed the *maritime test*, in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries respectively, though they had been major naval powers for a long time; similar may be said about the despotic *Ottoman Empire*. And it was for the same reason that both *Czarist Russia* and the *Soviet Union* eventually failed the maritime test, despite they both managed to build formidable fleets and even produce brilliant naval minds such as the Admiral of the Imperial Fleet *Fyodor Fyodorovich Ushakov* (Russian: Фёдор Фёдорович Ушаков,

---

<sup>53</sup> Zhang, op. cit.

<sup>54</sup> Baker, op. cit.

<sup>55</sup> Rodger, op. cit., pp. 433-434.

1745 – 1817) and the Admiral of the Red Fleet *Sergei Georgyevich Gorshkov* (Серге́й Георгиевич Горшков, 1910 – 1988), respectively.<sup>56</sup>

Astonishingly, Beijing’s state and party ruling elite of today seems to follow the successful historical European, or Western example described above; the People’s Republic of China evidently *integrates* both the commercial and the geostrategic aspect of maritime power – and she even does so “to a much greater extent than do Western governments.”<sup>57</sup> In point of fact, one of the most significant features of PRC’s geostrategy is what Beijing calls the *Military-Civilian Fusion Policy*. President Xi Jinping is said to speak in enthusiastic terms of PRC’s “commitment to taking advantage of civilian business activities to strengthen China’s military power.”<sup>58</sup>

On the other hand, maritime historians have drawn clear distinctions between organic sea power which almost develops naturally (see, for instance, the ancient Greek or the mediaeval Italian maritime city-states, the Netherlands, England, Sweden, Norway, etc.) from the artificial variety that is the product of the edict of an *Emperor, Czar, Khan, Sultan, or Capudan Pasha* (i.e., the Arch-Admiral of the Ottoman Fleet). The latter is often said to be shallow-rooted and unlikely to last; the former is seen as preferable. In fact, effective navies throughout history have emerged from authoritarian states and systems: the *Armada Real* of Spain, the French Navy of Louis XIV or that of the Napoleonic France, the galley fleets of the Ottoman Sultans, the Soviet *Red Navy*, the *Kriegsmarine* of the *Third Reich*. Yet, as Mahan put it, “despotic power ... has created at times a great sea commerce and a brilliant navy with greater directness than can be reached by the slower processes of a free people. The difficulty in (such a) a case is to ensure perseverance after the death of a particular despot.”<sup>59</sup>

Indeed, the Russian Imperial Navy was the product of a Czarist *ukase* (i.e., decree) usually issued out of a particular dynastic will, and so lacked permanence when circumstances changed. *Peter the Great*, for example, built a navy specifically to attract trade and occidental ideas, and even moved his capital to *Saint Petersburg* in order to

---

<sup>56</sup> See Polmar, Norman; Brooks, Thomas A.; Fedoroff, George E., *Admiral Gorshkov: The Man Who Challenged the U.S. Navy (Blue & Gold)* (Naval Institute Press, 2019).

<sup>57</sup> Feith, op. cit.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Cited in Till, op. cit., p. 80.

accommodate all this. His navy was full of foreigners; he personally learned about shipbuilding in *Amsterdam* and *Deptford*. He did everything in his power to turn the continental, land Power Russia into a naval Power and a sea trade nation.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, for many of his subjects and his successors this was all too much. Despite its periodic glory (at the end of the eighteenth century under Empress *Catherine the Great* and the brilliant Admiral Fyodor Ushakov, for instance), the navy was considered by the ruling elite as essentially *un-Russian*, and a source of ideas dangerous to the existing authoritarian system as well – which, indeed, it was. By the way, when Stalin shot most of his admirals in the late 1930s he was in one sense conforming to an ancient Russian tradition of eliminating possible sources of political, social and intellectual insurrection.<sup>61</sup>

Besides, in the seventeenth century, European diplomats marvelled at the freedoms of the *Dutch* and reported on that “Strange freedom that all men took in boats and inns and all other common places, of talking openly whatever they thought upon all public affairs both of their own state, and their neighbours.”<sup>62</sup> The use of words reminds us of the way in which politicians and writers of ancient Greece used to report on Athens; remember, in particular, the famous words of the Athenian statesman *Pericles*, cited in *Thucydides’ “Epitaph”* (i.e., Funeral Speech),<sup>63</sup> praising the freedom of spirit then characterizing the predominant Maritime Power (*thalassocracy*) Athens and explained the supremacy of Athenian sea power, within the state system of that time, in terms of political system and culture. Similarly, in the eighteenth century, the famous French philosopher Montesquieu (*Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu*, 1689-1755) said much the same thing about England, calling it “the freest country in the world.” That freedom was both a product of naval, maritime

<sup>60</sup> See, for example, Wittram, Reinhard, *Peter I., Czar und Kaiser. Zur Geschichte Peter des Grossen in seiner Zeit* (Göttingen: Verlag Vandenhoeck, 1954). Massie, Robert K., *Peter der Grosse. Sein Leben und seine Zeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1992). Hughes, Lindsey, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

<sup>61</sup> It is not at all surprising that, “under Stalin, the lethal effects of political incorrectness and the depressing impact of the political officers (the *zampolits*) forced Soviet naval personnel to ‘go by the book’” (Till, op. cit.). Tactical and operational initiative was limited and performance uninspired. In general, the Soviet case provide us with strong evidence of the “disastrous effects of trying to impose land-oriented strategic and operational concepts on naval forces”, according to Stuart Slade. Cited after Cable, J., *The Political Influence of Naval Force in History* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 22-23.

<sup>62</sup> Cited in Padfield, op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>63</sup> Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, Book II, Chapter 34.

enterprise and something that facilitated it. *Nicholas Rodger* makes the essential point:<sup>64</sup>

- Autocracies manage armies well enough, because that is primarily a matter of simply mobilizing manpower and the equipment it needs;
- On the other hand, Navies need consensus because they require the maximum involvement of seafarers, ship-owners, urban merchants, financiers and investors.

Hence, the connection between maritime power, liberalism, free markets and prosperity:

- To the extent that they could profit from the sea as a medium of commercial transportation and trade, the economies of the sea powers would boom;
- To the extent that they could exploit the strategic advantages of deploying decisive military power at sea and then projecting it ashore against the land-bound, continental enemies, their strategies would succeed.
- Because, therefore, the sea powers would generally prosper in peace and prevail in war, they would inevitably become great.<sup>65</sup>

In consideration of the above, it may reasonably be said that the demonstrated will of the PRC state and party ruling elite to achieve economic liberalism and full integration into the global financial system and markets *while*, at the same time, maintaining and safeguarding their own monopoly, and apparatus of political power seems like *squaring the circle*; and yet, it appears to be managing to do so – though some Western analysts have described this development in the following, pretty vivid terms: “President Xi has killed the longstanding *theory* that China would have to

---

<sup>64</sup> Rodger, op. cit., pp. 432-433.

<sup>65</sup> That is the only reasonable explanation for the success of small countries with limited land areas, populations and resources such as the ancient Greek *polis* (i.e., city-states, most notably Athens), the late mediaeval Italian city-states (notably, *La Serenissima Repubblica di Venezia*, i.e., Venice), *the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands*, Sweden, England, and a few others. In *Sir Julian Corbett's* view only sea power explained how it was “that a small country (like Britain) with a weak army should have been able to gather to herself the most desirable regions of the earth, and to gather them at the expense of the greatest military powers” (Corbett, Julian Sir, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy. Classics of Sea Power. With an introduction and notes by Eric Grove* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988), p. 49. First publication 1911.

liberalize as it grows its economy.”<sup>66</sup> In point of fact, Beijing is bringing an essentially *continental* mindset to a world system which is profoundly *maritime* in its nature.

The *One Belt, One Road*, also known as *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI),<sup>67</sup> launched in the fall of 2013, seems to continue that *continentalist* strategy, in the first place,<sup>68</sup> by seeking to re-direct attention from domestic socio-economic gaps to economic opportunities across the borders to the west and south; yet, as indicated by the use of the second code word (“road”), the aforementioned strategy has an equally strong maritime component (read the “*Maritime Silk Road*”). In point of fact, the BRI/OBOR’s two main branches, the *Maritime Silk Road* and the *Silk Road Economic Belt*, initially radiated in six directions:

- the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,
- the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor,
- the China-Mongolia-Russia Corridor,
- the China-Central Asia-Western Asia Corridor,
- the China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor, and
- the New Eurasian Land Bridge.<sup>69</sup>

As formalised in March 2015, Beijing intends to develop transport, energy, and telecommunication infrastructure to bolster commerce, financial integration, policy coordination, and “people-to-people bonds.”<sup>70</sup> On the other hand, albeit all the talk about regional integration, it must be reminded that the People’s Republic of China has territorial claims, both on land and at sea, against, at least, seventeen of her twenty-four neighbors: *India, Nepal, Bhutan, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar, Tibet, the Republic of China (Taiwan), The Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Japan, the Republic of Korea* (commonly known as South Korea), *Singapore, Brunei*, and even the *Democratic People’s Republic of Korea* (commonly known as North Korea), her only

---

<sup>66</sup> Feith, op. cit.

<sup>67</sup> On the Belt and Road Initiative, a.k.a. One Belt, One Road Initiative see Yamei, op. cit.; Johnson, op. cit.; Cavanna, op. cit.

<sup>68</sup> Lampton, David M.; Ho, Selina Ho; Kuik, Cheng-Chwee, *Rivers of Iron: Railroads and Chinese Power in Southeast Asia* (University of California Press, 2020).

<sup>69</sup> “Xi Says Belt and Road Vision Becoming Reality,” *Xinhua*, May 14, 2017, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/14/c\\_136281676.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/14/c_136281676.htm).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

ally. Even more significantly, in the PRC's relations with all of them, the potential use of force was and remains an important factor. Here, one may point to Beijing's geopolitical doctrine of "vital space", or "*Lebensraum*" in *Friedrich Ratzel's* classic term, which extends far beyond a state's borders, and includes land, sea, air, underwater, and space.

While Mainland China's neighbours, *nolentes volentes*, generally tend to acquiesce to her demands, which have been proceeding step-by-step, there remain many outstanding disputed areas such as:

- *Aksai Chin* in the disputed territory of *Kashmir*, at the junction of Pakistan, Tibet, and India. India claims the 38,000-square-kilometre territory, currently administered by the People's Republic of China.<sup>71</sup>
- *Arunachal Pradesh*, a state of India, bordering on *Bhutan*, *Bangladesh*, *Myanmar* (former *Burma*), and the People's Republic of China, which calls the 90,000-square-kilometre area *South Tibet*.
- The *Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands*, five unpopulated islands in the *East China Sea*, which are under Japanese control. The People's Republic of China and the Republic of China (Taiwan) both claim them. In legal and historical terms though, the *Diaoyutai Islands* belong to the Republic of China.<sup>72</sup>
- Portions of China's western border with *Tajikistan*.
- A section of the boundary between the People's Republic of China and North Korea (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea) in the *Baitou Mountain* area.
- The *Shisha (Paracel) Islands* in the *South China Sea*, administered by the People's Republic of China, but claimed by both the Republic of China (Taiwan) and the *Socialist Republic of Vietnam*, and the *Nansha (Spratly) Islands* in the *South China Sea*, claimed by the PRC, the ROC (Taiwan), the Republic of the Philippines, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and Malaysia.

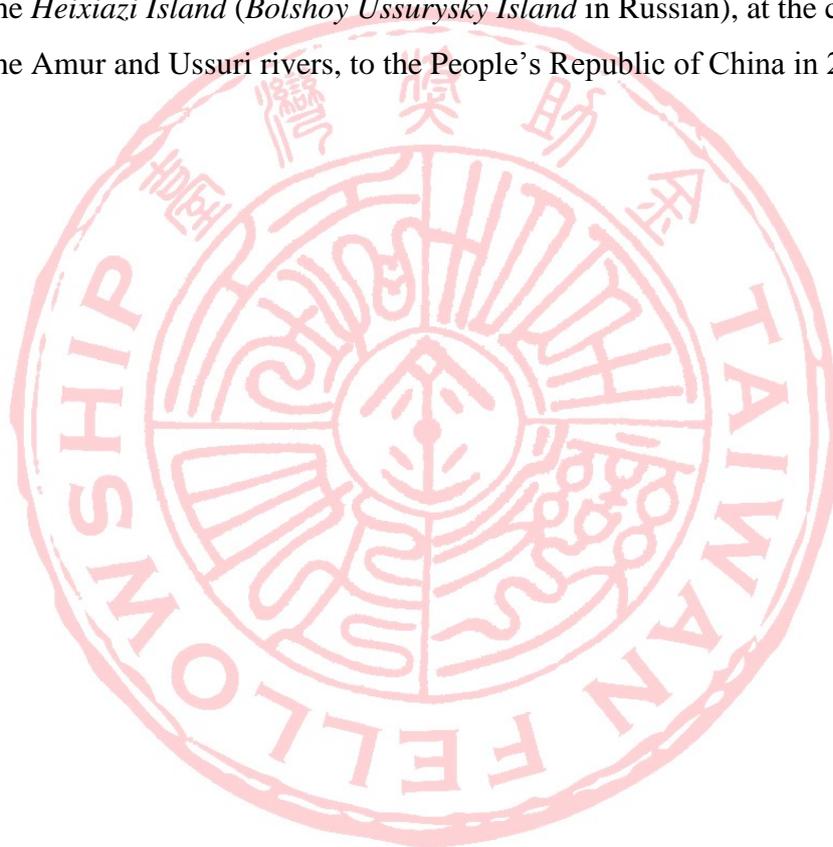
Whether from the perspective of history, geography, or international law, the

<sup>71</sup> Kinder and Hilgemann, op. cit., Bd. (Vol.) II, p. 542.

<sup>72</sup> See MOFA ROC (Taiwan), *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) strongly demands that the Japanese government refrain from taking any unilateral action that violates the ROC's sovereignty over the Diaoyutai Islands, so as to avoid damaging bilateral cooperative relations and generating tension in East Asia*. Press Release, No. 230, Date: 2012-09-12, Data Source: 公眾外交協調會. Retrieved from [https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News\\_Content.aspx?n=1329&s=32537](https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News_Content.aspx?n=1329&s=32537).

Shisha (Paracel) Islands as well as the Nansha (Spratly) Islands, *Chungsha Islands (Macclesfield Bank)*, and *Tungsha (Pratas) Island* (together known as the *South China Sea Islands*), as well as their surrounding waters, are an inherent part of ROC territory and waters.<sup>73</sup>

- Russia's dispute with the People's Republic of China centred around the control of *Zhenbao Island (Damansky in Russian)* on the *Ussuri River* and islands on the *Amur* and *Argun* rivers. These disputes led to shooting conflicts during the 1960s. Moscow and Beijing reached a compromise, now supposedly settling all disputes with China in regard to boundaries, included Russia handing over half of the *Heixiazi Island (Bolshoy Ussurytsky Island in Russian)*, at the confluence of the *Amur* and *Ussuri* rivers, to the People's Republic of China in 2004.<sup>74</sup>



---

<sup>73</sup> MOFA ROC (Taiwan), *ROC Government reiterates its position on South China Sea issues*. No. 240. Date: 2015-10-31. Data Source: Public Diplomacy Coordination Council.

<sup>74</sup> Shen, Wenwen, "China and Its Neighbours: Troubled Relations," *EU-Asia Centre*, 1 March 2012, [http://www.eu-asiacentre.eu/pub\\_details.php?pub\\_id=46](http://www.eu-asiacentre.eu/pub_details.php?pub_id=46).

## 2.2. A Land Power goes to Sea:

### Turning Blue as a precondition of Regional Hegemony

Mainland China's spectacular economic growth from the mid-1990s exercised significant impact on her Geopolitics creating a new pressure point on the country's political system. For the largest part of its long history, the *Middle Kingdom* enjoyed a high degree of autarky, provided the ruling elite avoided mismanagement of the country's resources. But "economic growth increasingly linked China into extended supply chains, for raw materials and for overseas markets. With most outward-focused economic activity taking place along the coast or along rivers connected to the coast, China's international trade was largely by sea, and vulnerable to the key maritime chokepoint of the Strait of Malacca."<sup>75</sup>

The emerging rivalry with the global Power United States seemingly increased China's trade risk. At this point, one should bear in mind that, speaking in purely geopolitical terms – albeit all talk about economic interdependence of the United States and the People's Republic of China – America's (formal and/or informal) allies in the Indo-Pacific region seem to present a kind of "*cordon sanitaire*", or a bulwark of a potential *containment* strategy, in form of a geographical *crescent*, surrounding the Chinese Mainland's coast, from South Korea and Japan through the Philippines and down through Southeast Asia and Australia; the cornerstone of this geopolitical bulwark is, clearly, Taiwan.

In view of this geopolitical reality, Mainland China had three options:

- a. Accept American *Command of the Seas*, as most other state actors did;
- b. Discover, or build *alternative* trade and transport routes to reduce her *vulnerability* to the *chokepoints* along her maritime frontier, or
- c. Create her own *closed geopolitical large space* in the Indo-Pacific to completely secure her *supply chains* throughout the region and beyond, while, at the same time, limiting, and ideally, eventually banning interventions by any *extra-spatial* Power – in other words, achieve *Regional Hegemony*.

---

<sup>75</sup> Baker, op. cit.

The People's Republic of China evidently chose the latter two options, one through the *Belt and Road Initiative* and the other via the impressive and rapid build-up of her naval capabilities, coupled with air and sea defence missiles and territorial acquisitions in the South China Sea.

#### **a. Establishing Control over the South China Sea**

The South China Sea has become an *apple of discord* between several neighbouring states in the last decades. The Shisha (Paracel) Islands in the South China Sea are currently administered by the People's Republic of China, but claimed by both the Republic of China (Taiwan) and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam; the Nansha (Spratly) Islands in the same maritime area are claimed by the PRC, the ROC (Taiwan), the Republic of the Philippines, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and Malaysia.

In terms of historical rights, Geography, or International Law, the Nansha (Spratly) Islands, Shisha (Paracel) Islands, Chungsha Islands (Macclesfield Bank), and Tungsha (Pratas Island), together known as the South China Sea Islands, as well as their surrounding waters, are *an inherent part of ROC territory and waters*.<sup>76</sup> Therefore, as the Republic of China (Taiwan) enjoys all rights to these islands and their surrounding waters in accordance with International Law, the ROC Government does not recognise any claim to sovereignty over, or occupation of, these areas by other countries, irrespective of the reasons put forward or methods used for such claim or occupation.

Historically, the South China Sea islands were first discovered, named, and used, as well as incorporated into national territory, by the Chinese. The Republic of China (Taiwan) has on numerous occasions re-affirmed her sovereignty over these islands. So did she after the end of the Second World War and the subsequent termination of the Japanese occupation of the islands (1947). Furthermore, in terms of International Law, the *San Francisco Peace Treaty*, which entered into effect on April 28, 1952, as well as the Treaty of Peace between the *Republic of China* and the *Japanese Empire*, which was signed that same day, together with other international legal

---

<sup>76</sup> MOFA ROC (Taiwan), *ROC Government reiterates its position on South China Sea issues*. No. 240. Date: 2015-10-31. Data Source: Public Diplomacy Coordination Council.

instruments, re-confirmed that the islands and reefs in the South China Sea occupied by Japan should be returned to the Republic of China<sup>77</sup> – i.e., to Taiwan, where the legal and rightful Chinese Government, led by the President of the Republic *Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek*, had moved after the armed Communist rebels seized power in the Mainland.

Thus, both the San Francisco Peace Treaty and the ROC–Japan Peace Treaty re-affirmed that the Nansha, Shisha, Chungsha and Tungsha Islands had to be returned to the Republic of China. In the years that followed, the Chinese Nationalist Government in Taipei exercised effective control over these islands. Nevertheless, Communist China, but also several other regional state actors, notably Vietnam, have increasingly attempted to draw profit from the extremely peculiar situation that the ROC (Taiwan) has been facing since the 1970s by raising claims over the South China Sea islands.

The prevailing basis for PRC’s historic claims to the South China Sea is the so called Chinese map of the “*nine-dash line*” that appears to enclose an area covering roughly 80% of the South China Sea.<sup>78</sup> That famous U-shaped line (originally an “*eleven-dotted-line*”) had officially been drawn-up by the then-Chinese Nationalist Government in 1947. After the Chinese Communist Party seized power over Mainland China and formed the People’s Republic of China in 1949, the line was adopted by the newly established régime in Beijing and revised to ‘nine-dots’ as endorsed by the first Prime Minister of the PRC, and Vice-Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party *Zhou Enlai*.<sup>79</sup> The line, which has been called a “traditional maritime boundary line,” encloses the main island features of the South China Sea: the Tungsha (Pratas) Island, the Shisha (Paracel) Islands, the Chungsha Islands (Macclesfield Bank), and the Nansha (Spratly) Islands. In historical and legal terms though, the PRC’s claiming the U-shaped line for herself is an *act of usurpation* at least as much as the illegal Communist take-over of power on the Mainland. *Only the Government of the Republic of China* (i.e.,

---

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> O’Rourke, Ronald, Specialist in Naval Affairs, “Maritime Territorial and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) Disputes Involving China,” *Congressional Research Report*, April 9, 2013, Congressional Research Service 7-5700, R42784. Retrieved from file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/20130409\_R42784\_8126199b4dd0793ecb346279fd198bfbe123526d.html

<sup>79</sup> Nong, op. cit., p. 64.

Taiwan) – being the *legal successor* of the rightful and legitimate Government of the Republic of China of the years 1947 and 1952 – is entitled to exercise sovereignty over the aforementioned islands.

Nonetheless, by the late 1990s, the People’s Republic of China started building bases and airstrips on contested reefs and rocks in the South China Sea. Since then, Mainland China is making gradual progress toward achieving her objectives concerning her territorial claims in that area. Each decade sees a further increase in her territorial demands. During the 1970s, per instance, Beijing had only raised limited claims on the Shisha (Paracel) Islands, which lies in the northern part of the South China Sea, closer to Mainland China. Later on, during the 1990s – in order for her to take advantage from the latest developments in the field of the International Law of the Sea – Mainland China moved southwards and went on to implement her plan of a creeping grab of the largest part of the Nansha (Spratly) Islands, exemplified by the makeshift structures built on the *Mischief Reef*. Since 1999, Beijing began attempting to impose bans on fishing in the South China Sea, making the case that it alone has the lawful administrative control over the archipelago.

Since the early 2000s, there has been a series of *incidents* of confrontation between the *U.S. Navy* on one hand, and the *PLA Navy (PLAN)* and *PLA Air Force (PLAAF)* on the other hand, in and over the South China Sea. On 23 March 2001, the hydrographic survey ship *USNS Bowditch (T-AGS 62)* was conducting routine military survey operations in Beijing’s claimed *Exclusive Economic Zone* when it was “aggressively confronted” by a *PLAN Jianheu III*–class frigate and ordered to leave the area.<sup>80</sup> Being an unarmed naval auxiliary vessel, *Bowditch* changed course and left the area as instructed. A few days later, the *U.S. Department of State* filed a strongly worded diplomatic protest with the *Ministry of Foreign Affairs* of the People’s Republic of China, and the American hydrographic survey vessel returned to the area of the encounter, this time with an armed U.S. escort, to continue its mission.<sup>81</sup>

A week later, tensions rose again amid the *Hainan Island Incident*. On Sunday 1 April 2001, a United States Navy EP-3 surveillance plane collided with a PLAAF F-

---

<sup>80</sup> Pedrozo, Raul, *Close Encounters at Sea*,” *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 62 (2009), No. 3, <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol62/iss3/8>

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

8 fighter jet over the same area. The incident occurred approximately seventy nautical miles south-east of the Hainan Island which is under PRC's rule, in the airspace above Beijing's claimed two hundred nautical miles Exclusive Economic Zone. The damaged PLAAF airplane crashed into the sea causing the death of pilot *Wing Wei*. After surviving the near-fatal accident, the U.S. crew made an emergency landing of their damaged airplane onto the PLA's *Lingshui* airfield on Hainan Island, and PRC's authorities detained the twenty-four crew members for eleven days. Washington and Beijing disagreed over the cause of the accident, the release of the crew and plane, whether Washington would "apologise," and the PRC's right to inspect the EP-3.<sup>82</sup>

The *Hainan Island incident* was the third in a series of "major troubling difficulties" since the mid-1990s that could have "serious implications" for U.S.-PRC relations.<sup>83</sup> While Beijing backed off at the time, due both to its own recognised weaknesses and the U.S. shift in attention to the war against terrorism, it redoubled its shipbuilding efforts and rapidly proceeded with modernization of the PLA, notably PLAN capabilities.

Another serious incident would follow in March 2009, when a clash between Mainland Chinese vessels and an American ocean surveillance ship (USNS *Impeccable*) occurred. According to the U.S. Department of Defense, five [Mainland] Chinese ships, including a PLAN vessel, had harassed the USNS *Impeccable* in international waters; thereupon, Washington had urged Beijing to observe international maritime rules.<sup>84</sup> The Mainland Chinese vessels "shadowed and aggressively maneuvered in dangerously close proximity" to the USNS *Impeccable*, an unarmed ocean surveillance vessel, with one ship coming within 25 feet, a Pentagon statement said.<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> Donnelly, Eric, The United States – China EP-3 Incident: Legality and "Realpolitik," *Journal of Conflict & Security Law*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Spring 2004), pp. 25-42.). Kan, Shirley A. (Coordinator); Best, Richard; Bolcom, Christopher; Chapman, Robert; Cronin, Richard; Dumbaugh, Kerry; Goldman, Stuart; Manyin, Mark; Morrison, Wayne; O'Rourke, Ronald, Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division; and Ackerman, David, American Law Division, "China-U.S. Aircraft Collision Incident of April 2001: Assessments and Policy Implications," *Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report for Congress*, Order Code RL30946, Updated October 10, 2001, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30946.pdf>

<sup>83</sup> Kan, et al., op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>84</sup> Buckley, Chris, "China says U.S. naval ship broke the law," *Reuters*, 10 March 2009, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-idUSPEK9458120090310>

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

For its part, Beijing denounced U.S. surveillance activities in the area it claimed as its own Exclusive Economic Zone as fundamentally improper.<sup>86</sup> “The U.S. claims are gravely in contravention of the facts and confuse black and white and they are totally unacceptable to China,” the spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China *Ma Zhaoxu* told a regular news briefing.<sup>87</sup>

In the following years, a series of military (air-naval) exercises took place in the South China Sea, both among ASEAN Member States and between the United States and ASEAN Member States. On the occasion of the seventeenth ASEAN Regional Forum in Hanoi in July 2010, the then Secretary of State of the United States Hillary Clinton made a statement that the disputes over the highly sensitive South China Sea were a “leading diplomatic priority” for the United States and “pivotal to regional security.”<sup>88</sup>

Clinton’s declaration raised concerns in Beijing, where it was interpreted as a move aimed against the People’s Republic of China. Her observations were regarded by some commentators as a response to the Western media’s reports on Beijing’s own declaration on the South China Sea being one of its “core interests”; Mainland Chinese researchers make the point though that the PRC never officially confirmed this statement and they also claim that the term “core interest” was “misinterpreted by the [Western] media.”<sup>89</sup>

The tensions in the South China Sea continued to escalate in 2011 and 2012 with a series of events. In May 2011, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam accused the

---

<sup>86</sup> Parry, Richard Lloyd, “Analysis: so much more than a naval water fight. If the nightmare scenario of a superpower war in Asia were to materialise, the South China Sea could be where it all starts,” *The Times*, March 10, 2009. Retrieved from <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article5879033.ece#cid=OTC-RSS&attr=797093> on 10 March 2009.

<sup>87</sup> Buckley, op. cit.

<sup>88</sup> “U.S. Signals to China It Won’t Keep Out of South Sea,” *Bloomberg*, retrieved from <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2010-07-23/u-s-says-settling-south-china-sea-disputes-leading-diplomatic-priority-> on 23 July 2010. See also Bower, Ernest Z., “Hillary Clinton—A Secretary of State Fluent in ASEAN,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Newsletter*, 20 July 2010, retrieved from <https://www.csis.org/analysis/hillary-clinton%E2%80%94secretary-state-fluent-asean> on 20 July 2010.

<sup>89</sup> Nong, Hong, “Maritime Disputes in the Asia-Pacific – A Chinese View,” in Kaushiva and Singh (Eds.), *Geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific*, pp. 60-62.

People's Republic of China of "deliberately" cutting the exploration cables of an oil survey ship "in Vietnamese waters", thus "increasing regional tensions."<sup>90</sup>

There had been a long history of *Sino-Vietnamese* maritime disputes, anyway. In 1984 Beijing set up the Hainan administrative area to control the Paracel and Spratly Islands. In 1988 Mainland Chinese and Vietnamese ships clashed over *Johnson Reef*. In 1992 there were further incursions into Spratly. In 2000 Hanoi made concessions to Beijing over the territorial waters off *Tonkin Bay*. During 2004 there were over a thousand Mainland Chinese incursions into alleged Vietnamese waters, with a large number of Vietnamese fishermen being detained. Mainland China's oil drilling in alleged Vietnamese waters began in 2005. That year the PLA Navy fired at Vietnamese fishermen in the *Gulf of Tonkin*. In 2007 the PLAN fired on Vietnamese fishermen off the Paracels while conducting exercises in the area. Beijing ratified a plan to build *Sansha*, a large city to serve as the axis for merging three archipelagos, including the Paracels and Spratly under its control.<sup>91</sup>

Back in June 2011, Hanoi claimed a Chinese fishing boat had "intentionally rammed" the exploration cables of another of its boats.<sup>92</sup> Beijing, meanwhile, insisted that its fishing boats were chased away by armed Vietnamese ships in the incident; it accused Hanoi of "gravely violating" its sovereignty and warned it to stop "all invasive activities."<sup>93</sup> Thereafter, Vietnam held live-fire exercises in the South China Sea amid high tensions with the People's Republic of China.<sup>94</sup> Tension somewhat eased after

---

<sup>90</sup> "Vietnam accuses China in sea dispute," *BBC News*, May 2011, retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-13592508>.

<sup>91</sup> Bolton, Kerry, *Geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific: Emerging Conflicts, New Alliances* (London: Black House Publishing Ltd, 2013), p. 18.

<sup>92</sup> Watts, Alex, "Vietnam accuses China of sabotage," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 June 2011. See also Nong Hong, "The South China Sea disputes. A review of history and prospects for dispute settlement" in: Kimie Hara (Ed.), *The San Francisco System and Its Legacies: Continuation, Transformation and Historical Reconciliation in the Asia-Pacific* (Routledge, 2015), p.87.

<sup>93</sup> "China accuses Vietnam in South China Sea row," *BBC News*, 10 June 2011, retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-13723443>

<sup>94</sup> Emeritus Professor Thayer, Carlyle A., "Background Briefing: Recent Naval Exercises in the South China Sea," *SAGE International*, 6/7/2011, retrieved from <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/131071/Background%20Briefing.pdf>. See also Hookway, James, "Vietnam Plans Live-Fire Drill After China Spat," *The Wall Street Journal*, 10 June 2011.

representatives of both states met in Beijing shortly after the naval manoeuvres and agreed to resolve their maritime territorial disputes “peacefully.”<sup>95</sup>

The year 2011 also saw maritime stand-offs between Chinese and Philippine vessels, upon which the then President *Aquino*’s office released a statement renaming the South China Sea as the “*West Philippine Sea*.”<sup>96</sup> The *Philippines Navy* soon began to remove foreign marker posts that were placed on reefs and banks, part of the much-disputed Spratly group of islands. The United States also waded into the dispute. In mid-June 2011, a Filipino presidential spokesperson stated that in the event of armed conflict with the PRC, Manila expected the United States would come to its aid. According to a *contingency planning memo* by the *Council on Foreign Relations*, statements by senior U.S. officials “may have inadvertently led Manila to conclude that the United States would provide military assistance if China attacked Filipino forces in the disputed Spratly Islands.”<sup>97</sup>

In the same document, that one-century old, and extremely influential American think-tank warned the United States could be drawn into a [Mainland] China-Philippines conflict “because of its 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty with the Philippines. The treaty states, ‘Each Party recognises that an armed attack in the Pacific Area on either of the Parties would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common dangers in accordance with its constitutional processes.’”<sup>98</sup> The memo notes that U.S. officials have insisted that Washington doesn’t take sides in the territorial dispute. On the other hand, it is a true that Hilary Clinton made a statement about “America’s desire to honour its mutual defence pact with Manila;” yet, the U.S. Secretary of State was explicitly talking about “offering the

<sup>95</sup> Nong, in Kaushiva et al., p. 60.

<sup>96</sup> “China, Philippines in Standoff: The standoff between a Philippine warship and Chinese ships is a reminder of South China Sea tensions,” *The Diplomat*, 11 April 2011, retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2012/04/china-philippines-in-standoff>; Heydarian, Javad, “Manila’s Balancing Act: The South China Sea dispute underscores the problems the Aquino has in balancing China and the United States,” *The Diplomat*, 4 October 2011.

<sup>97</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, Center for Preventive Action, “Armed Clash in the South China Sea,” *Contingency Planning Memorandum No. 14*, April 11, 2012, retrieved from <https://www.cfr.org/report/armed-clash-south-china-sea>. See also “China, Philippines in Standoff: The standoff between a Philippine warship and Chinese ships is a reminder of South China Sea tensions,” *The Diplomat*, 11 April 2011, retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2012/04/china-philippines-in-standoff>.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

Philippines affordable weapons.”<sup>99</sup> It thus becomes evident that “an apparent gap exists between American views of U.S. obligations and Manila’s expectations.”<sup>100</sup>

Mainland China’s trend of expanding the field of her territorial claims is culminating in the *Xi Jinping* era (i.e., from 2012/2013 onwards) wherein the PRC appears as a Great Power of global scale. Harassment of non-Mainland Chinese vessels engaged in fishing or resource extraction in the South China Sea, sometimes by ramming them, has become commonplace.<sup>101</sup>

To this end, Beijing’s régime uses both its Coast Guard and the commandeered Chinese fishing fleet in the South China Sea. According to a *Congressional Research Report* prepared for Members and Committees of the U.S. Congress and submitted by *Naval Affairs Specialist* Ronald O’Rourke in April 2013, the People’s Republic of China “increasingly is using ships from its paramilitary maritime law enforcement agencies, rather than ships from its regular Navy, to assert and defend its maritime territorial claims” while some observers believe [Mainland] “China also uses civilian fishing ships to assert and defend its maritime territorial claims.”<sup>102</sup>

At the same time, what used to be rickety makeshift platforms have been replaced by sizable bases of the People’s Liberation Army on man-made sandbars; these military bases give Beijing a permanent presence in the distant southern half of the South China Sea. Repeated complaints by the Republic of China (Taiwan) and several other neighboring states have proved to be in vain; the same may be said about the 2016 *Permanent Court of Arbitration* ruling which has largely been against Beijing, and in favour of Manila, although it must fairly be added that the Court’s award has been extremely and unforgivably one-sided and highly questionable;<sup>103</sup> moreover, the

---

<sup>99</sup> Nong, op. cit., p. 61.

<sup>100</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, “Armed Clash in the South China Sea,” op. cit.

<sup>101</sup> Roy, Denny, “How China Is Slow Conquering the South China Sea,” *The National Interest*, 7 May 2020, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/how-china-slow-conquering-south-china-sea-151811>

<sup>102</sup> O’Rourke, op. cit.

<sup>103</sup> The *Permanent Court of Arbitration* ruling on the South China Sea arbitration between the Philippines and Mainland China turned out to be extremely problematic, in more than one aspects. To begin with, although Taiping Island was not originally included in the Philippines’ submissions for arbitration, the tribunal took it upon itself to expand its authority, declaring ROC-governed Taiping Island, and other features in the Nansha (Spratly) Islands occupied by Vietnam, the Philippines, and Malaysia, all to be “rocks” that “do not generate an exclusive economic zone.” This decision severely jeopardizes the legal status of the South China Sea Islands, over which the ROC exercises sovereignty, and their relevant maritime rights. That the ROC is entitled to all rights over the South China Sea Islands

legal state of affairs created by the Court’s ruling poses a serious dilemma for Taiwan’s South China Sea policy, as a renowned expert in the subject, Professor *Fu-Kuo Liu*, has explained in a highly insightful analysis.<sup>104</sup>

Mainland China considers the largest part of the South China Sea to be her territorial waters—i.e., “an ownership level equivalent to that of land within mainland China’s borders.”<sup>105</sup> All her actions indicate therefore that she believes she owns the resources in and under the sea, and is entitled to exclude foreign military vessels – which is why she routinely condemns “*innocent passages*” of foreign, notably U.S. warships through the South China Sea.

Speaking in purely legalistic terms, PRC’s disagreements with the United States in the South China Sea seem to concern differing interpretations of the “*freedom of navigation*” principle that has resulted in the aforementioned, and several other incidents in the Asia-Pacific region. Sure, differences between Washington and Beijing, and between coastal states and user states in general, with regard to the interpretations

---

and their relevant waters in accordance with International Law and the Law of the Sea is beyond dispute. Worse, in a grave and unforgivable violation of the ancient and most holy Graeco-Roman principle “*Audi alteram partem*” and in blatant disregard of the elementary rule of impartiality and fairness and all the relevant international norms, the arbitral tribunal did not even formally invite the ROC (Taiwan) to participate in its proceedings, nor did it solicit the ROC’s views. Thus, the ROC Government has not been able to express views concerning issues affecting its rights and interests in an equal and fair manner. On top of that, in an award of unparalleled absurdity, the tribunal crossed the line of common sense when ruling that Taiping Island is not an island at all, but a “rock” (sic!), despite the obvious fact that the largest of the Nansha (Spratly) Islands hosts ROC’s security personnel and other public administration teams since long time, and evidently has a granular soil structure, which is rich in plant roots and gives Taiping Island a basic water- and nutrient-holding capacity, i.e., an agricultural basis which has not only allowed for indigenous vegetation, but also for the cultivation of 27 types of crops, and last but not least, drinkable freshwater. See MOFA ROC, *ROC reiterates position on South China Sea arbitration between Philippines, mainland China*. Press Release No. 115. May 13, 2016. Data Source: Public Diplomacy Coordination Council. Retrieved from [https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News\\_Content.aspx?n=1EADDCFD4C6EC567&s=C2834B14509069C4](https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News_Content.aspx?n=1EADDCFD4C6EC567&s=C2834B14509069C4). See also MOFA ROC, *ROC position on the South China Sea Arbitration*. Press Release No. 002. July 12, 2016. Data Source: Public Diplomacy Coordination Council. Retrieved from [https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News\\_Content.aspx?n=1EADDCFD4C6EC567&s=5B5A9134709EB875](https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News_Content.aspx?n=1EADDCFD4C6EC567&s=5B5A9134709EB875). See also MOFA ROC, “ROC Government reiterates its position on South China Sea issues.” Press Release No. 240. Date: 2015-10-31. Data Source: Public Diplomacy Coordination Council. Retrieved from [https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News\\_Content.aspx?n=1EADDCFD4C6EC567&s=F5170FE043DADE98](https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News_Content.aspx?n=1EADDCFD4C6EC567&s=F5170FE043DADE98).

<sup>104</sup> Liu, Fu-Kuo, “Reexamining Taiwan’s South China Sea policy dilemma,” *China International Strategy Review*, Volume 1, Issue No. 1 (2019), pp. 169-180. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42533-019-00015-w>

<sup>105</sup> Roy, op. cit.

of the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea are not unusual.

For example, there is a strong disagreement on the meaning of “freedom of navigation and overflight in and above the EEZ,” – i.e., whether such freedom can be limited by certain regulations – national, regional or international – or whether such freedom is absolute.<sup>106</sup> Indeed, the People’s Republic of China “is involved in a dispute, particularly with the United States, over whether China has a right under international law to regulate the activities of foreign military forces operating within China’s EEZ.”<sup>107</sup> American experts in Naval Affairs point out that the dispute appears to be “at the heart of multiple incidents between Chinese and U.S. ships and aircraft in international waters and airspace in 2001, 2002, and 2009.”<sup>108</sup>

In his Congressional Research Report O’Rourke stresses that whether the People’s Republic of China has a right under the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* (UNCLOS) to regulate foreign military activities in its EEZ is “related to, but ultimately separate from, the issue of maritime territorial disputes in the SCS and ECS.”<sup>109</sup> Still, the two issues “are related because China can claim EEZs from inhabitable islands over which it has sovereignty, so accepting China’s claims to islands in the SCS or ECS could permit China to expand the EEZ zone within which China claims a right to regulate foreign military activities.”<sup>110</sup>

On their part, several Mainland Chinese military officers and scholars have questioned the American understanding of “freedom of navigation.” A high-ranking PLA officer is said to have argued that freedom of navigation was never a problem in the South China Sea.<sup>111</sup> Noticeably, “contrary to the widespread external criticism of China for its growing assertiveness, the predominant view among Chinese analysts is that all the tensions and disputes are mainly attributable to the collusion between the

---

<sup>106</sup> Nong, op. cit., p. 61.

<sup>107</sup> O’Rourke, op. cit.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Xiaokun, Li, “Navigation in South China Sea ‘not a problem’,” *China Daily*, 23 October 2010.

United States and regional claimant states.”<sup>112</sup> *Wang Hanling*, a specialist in Maritime Law at the *Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*, said that the People’s Republic of China has never interfered in the normal activities of any ship crossing the South China Sea or any aircraft flying over it, especially those for commercial use; “what the U.S. calls ‘national interest’ is not freedom of navigation but rather its presence in the Western Pacific, or military superiority and political influence, to be more specific,” Wang elaborated.<sup>113</sup> His comment stands for that of the majority of Mainland Chinese scholars.<sup>114</sup>

Beyond legalism, this is, indeed, a typical re-edition of the old rivalry between a long-established, ruling Great Power and a rising Great Power – and what is perhaps even more important, this is an exemplary case of that eternal antagonism between a maritime Power exercising Command of the Seas at planetary scale on one hand, and a land Power which has decided to go to sea.

In the light of the above reflections and observations, it only makes sense that the global maritime Power U.S. increasingly “*shows the flag*” in the South China Sea whereas, at the same time, the regional hegemonic aspirant PRC strongly opposes the *internationalisation* of the maritime issues claiming that these are disputes over sovereignty about territory and maritime rights between the relevant countries, and not an international issue, nor even an issue between Beijing and the ASEAN as a whole.<sup>115</sup> As discussed in previous chapters, Regional Powers, which already have at their disposal their own relatively closed economic and political unfolding space, are inclined to go their own way, at whose end would be the formation of their own geopolitical large spaces with a *ban* on intervention in respect of other, *extra-spatial* Powers. The most *typical*, one is tended to almost say classic, example of a full scale and completely successful implementation of such geostrategy, from the part of a state actor, is the United States of America; the American ruling elite even went so far to

---

<sup>112</sup> Mingjiang, Li, “Chinese Debates of South China Sea Policy: Implications for Future Developments,” *RSIS Working Paper*, No. 239 (Li Mingjiang S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, 2012), p. ii.

<sup>113</sup> Xiaokun, op. cit.

<sup>114</sup> Nong, op. cit., p. 62.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

*theorise* their geostrategy, known as the “*Monroe Doctrine*” since its public declaration.<sup>116</sup>

For its part, Beijing does not reject participation in multilateral regional structures, especially when they are about so called *soft*, or *low* policy areas. On the contrary, Mainland China has been “leading the new wave of regional cooperation in Southeast Asia.”<sup>117</sup> When facing issues of state sovereignty and sovereign rights though, Beijing traditionally prefers entering direct negotiation with each one of the claimant states and solving disputes through “bilateral approaches,”<sup>118</sup> which “may work better for China, as it is the largest party in such territorial contests”<sup>119</sup> – this is a polite way to say that Beijing obviously expects to greatly benefit from the notorious right of the strongest.

Indeed, once the South China Sea agenda has been de-internationalised, so to speak, the quasi Regional Hegemon will be in a position to bear on the other states involved and impose his own rules, rather than be obliged to apply International Law on these waters. Beijing is applying a “*salami-slicing*” strategy<sup>120</sup> in the Indo-Pacific, extending its influence over numerous small but strategically situated littoral states and island nations through aid and economic development, followed by the opening or buying of port facilities. In doing so, it can well regard itself as a “good neighbour” when it gets everything its own way, softly, with occasional forays into disputed territories with *gunboat diplomacy* when those neighbours start getting complacent.

Completely achieving its objectives in the South China Sea would endow the People’s Republic of China with economic, political and strategic benefits. Beijing would have first rights to the resources in the sea, such as fish, and the resources in the seabed, such as oil and natural gas. The ruling state and party bureaucratic elite could

---

<sup>116</sup> Kinder and Hilgemann, *op. cit.*, p. 331.

<sup>117</sup> Liu, F.-K., “Beijing’s Regional Strategy and China-ASEAN Economic Integration.”

<sup>118</sup> Lai To, Lee, “The South China Sea: China and Multilateral Dialogues,” *Security Dialogue*, vol. 30, No. 2 (June 1999), pp. 165-178.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> Haddick, Robert, “America Has No Answer to China's Salami-slicing,” *War on the Rocks*, February 6, 2014. Retrieved from <https://warontherocks.com/2014/02/america-has-no-answer-to-chinas-salami-slicing>

bolster their political and ideological legitimacy by boasting to the Chinese public that they had blocked foreign attempts to “steal national territory.” More significantly though, the continental, land Power PRC would superbly improve her geostrategic position in the region and come closer to the status of the Regional Hegemon.

### **b. The East China Sea Dispute**

The dispute between the People’s Republic of China, the Republic of China (Taiwan), and Japan in the East China Sea has lasted over decades, involving continental shelf delimitation and the sovereignty of the *Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands*.

The East China Sea Basin covers about 300,000 square kilometres. Since the 1970s, at least, Mainland China adheres to the natural prolongation of land territory principle, holding that “The East China Sea continental shelf is the natural extension of the Chinese continental territory” and that “The People’s Republic of China has inviolable sovereignty over the East China Sea continental shelf.”<sup>121</sup> Beijing’s continental shelf claim extends all the way to the axis of the Okinawa trough, enclosing essentially all of the *petroleum potential* in the East China Sea.

However, in her efforts at offshore oil development since 1980, the People’s Republic of China has limited her exploration mainly to her side of the PRC-Japanese equidistant line. Beijing has prospected for hydrocarbons in the western part of the East China Sea, and has drilled successful gas wells outside the shelf area contested with Japan and adjacent to an equidistant line.<sup>122</sup>

Japan stands for the equidistant line for her continental shelf, and ignores the crucial *Dongdao Island* exposed at low tide seventy nautical miles off Shanghai. The equidistance line between the undisputed islands of Japan and the Chinese Mainland leaves an area of 9,000 sq. nm of the Asian continental shelf landward of the 200 mere isobaths on the Japanese side of the line.<sup>123</sup> Moreover, the ownership of the *Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands* further directly affects the boundary delimitation.

---

<sup>121</sup> Foreign Ministry’s Statement, “Seriously Protesting Japanese Government’s Infringement on China’s Sovereignty,” *Peking Review*, Vol. 20, No. 25, June 17, 1977, pp. 16-17, here p. 17.

<sup>122</sup> Nong, op. cit., p. 63.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

The Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands, which are under Japanese control, consist of five uninhabited islets and three barren rocks, located approximately 120 nautical miles northeast of Taiwan, two hundred nautical miles southwest of Okinawa. The total land area is about seven square kilometres. The sea areas around the Diaoyutai Islands are rich in fishery resources, and are assumed to be rich in oil and gas reserves.

Strategically, the islands are of major significance as they straddle the maritime routes in the East China Sea. The People's Republic of China and the Republic of China (Taiwan) both claim them. The PRC claims sovereignty over the Diaoyutai Islands on the ground that they had been part of Chinese territory until April 1895, when they were ceded to Japan after China's defeat during the *Sino-Japanese War*. In terms of historical rights and International Law though, the Diaoyutai Islands belong to the Republic of China.<sup>124</sup>

Japan has argued that the Diaoyutai Islands were *terra nullius* (ownerless land) and claimed sovereignty over these islands "by virtue of occupation." However, the Diaoyutai Islands were incorporated into China's coastal defence zone during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), and made part of the Chinese territory during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).<sup>125</sup> Therefore, the Diaoyutai Islands were clearly not *terra nullius*, and could not be claimed by other countries by virtue of "discovery" and/or "occupation" under International Law.

The earliest record of the Diaoyutai Islands was the 1403 monograph "*Seeing off with a Favorable Tailwind*" (順風相送).<sup>126</sup> *A Glimpse into Japan* (日本一鑒), written in 1556 by a Ming envoy to Japan, Zheng Shungong (鄭舜功), also acknowledged that "Diaoyutai Island is a small islet belonging to Xiaodong (小東;

<sup>124</sup> See MOFA ROC (Taiwan), *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) strongly demands that the Japanese government refrain from taking any unilateral action that violates the ROC's sovereignty over the Diaoyutai Islands, so as to avoid damaging bilateral cooperative relations and generating tension in East Asia*. Press Release, No. 230, Date: 2012-09-12, Data Source: 公眾外交協調會. Retrieved from [https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News\\_Content.aspx?n=1329&s=32537](https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News_Content.aspx?n=1329&s=32537).

<sup>125</sup> *The facts about the Diaoyutai Islands*. Retrieved from [https://www.roc-taiwan.org/public/BZ\\_en\\_localNews/61264211571.pdf](https://www.roc-taiwan.org/public/BZ_en_localNews/61264211571.pdf)

<sup>126</sup> MOFA ROC (Taiwan), *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) strongly demands that the Japanese government refrain from taking any unilateral action that violates the ROC's sovereignty over the Diaoyutai Islands*. See also *The facts about the Diaoyutai Islands*, op. cit.

ancient name for Taiwan)”;<sup>127</sup> it included a map indicating that geographically, the Diaoyutai Islands appertained to Taiwan. *The Records of the Imperial Mission to Ryukyu* (使琉球録), written by imperial envoys from the mid-16th century onward, also clearly noted the geographic location of the Diaoyutai Islands. Various other historical documents indicate that the Diaoyutai Islands were first discovered, named, and used by the Chinese, and thus incorporated into Chinese territory. Subsequent Chinese and foreign maps charted in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries also included the Diaoyutai Islands as Chinese territory.<sup>128</sup>

According to Japanese diplomatic and other official documents, the Japanese territorial ambitions for the Diaoyutai Islands sprouted in 1885. For, it was in that year that the Japanese Government ordered Okinawa Governor *Nishimura Sutezo* to survey the Diaoyutai Islands and plan to establish a national landmark on the islands afterwards. However, Nishimura reported in a confidential letter that these islands had long been discovered, named, and recorded in official documents by China, and the plan was postponed. More importantly, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Japanese Empire *Inoue Kaoru*, in a confidential document, also indicated that the *Qing* Government had already named these islands. Given that Japan lacked the strength to defend such actions, the Meiji Government did not dare to make any further move and decided to “wait for a more appropriate time.”<sup>129</sup>

On January 14, 1895, as victory in the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895)<sup>130</sup> became more assured for Japan, her Cabinet secretly instructed Okinawa Prefecture to establish a national landmark on Diaoyutai Island, thereby formalising her usurpation of the islands. Yet, this action was not promulgated by Japanese Imperial Decree or any official announcement as per standard practices. Therefore, the outside world knew nothing of the event. This proves that Japan’s decision to annex the Diaoyutai Islands after her victory in that war was an act of aggression that severely violates International Law. After all, the islands were at the time the territory of the Qing Dynasty under the jurisdiction of *Kavalan* Sub-prefecture (today known as *Yilan*), Taiwan Province, and not *terra nullius* as Japan currently claims. Furthermore, Japan’s occupation of the

---

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Kinder and Hilgemann, op. cit., Bd. (Vol.) II, p. 369.

islands was not promulgated by Japanese Imperial Decree either, meaning that the outside world was not informed of this decision. The occupation was therefore, according to International Law, null and void from the beginning. As a result, it had no binding effect on the Qing Dynasty at that time, which is still the case today with the Republic of China<sup>131</sup> – the legal successor state of the Chinese Empire.



---

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

### 3. The Sea Power – Land Power rivalry: Ruling Power U.S. vs. Rising Power PRC

According to the Senior Vice-President for Strategic Analysis of the American think tank “*Stratfor*” *Rodger Baker*, the PLA Navy “now [i.e., as of September 2020] outmatches the *Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force* and has more battle force ships than the United States”<sup>132</sup> (though in tonnage, “the U.S. Navy’s vessels still far outweigh those of the PLA Navy”).<sup>133</sup> Besides, Mainland China has significantly expanded its coast guard and other coastal defense forces; as discussed above, it has revived and expanded several airfields and small bases on artificial islands built on disputed reefs in the South China Sea; and last, but not least, it has fielded two aircraft carriers, with another under construction and several more planned.<sup>134</sup>

Indeed, since the release of the U.S. Department of Defense’s 2020 China Military Power Report in September 2020,<sup>135</sup> much has been made of China’s securing the title of the “world’s largest navy.” It is true that the *U.S. Office of Naval Intelligence* has confirmed that the *PLA Navy* (PLAN) “has surpassed the United States Navy in total battle force ships, approximately 360 to 297, with future projections expecting the gap to grow. By 2025, the PLAN is predicted to field as many as 400 vessels whereas the United States plans only to field 355.”<sup>136</sup> China’s future shipbuilding capacity appears robust, indeed, while that of the United States and Japan is curtailed by budgetary concerns and shifting priorities.

---

<sup>132</sup> Baker, op. cit.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2020*. Annual Report to Congress. Retrieved from <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF>

<sup>136</sup> Mainardi, Benjamin, “Yes, China Has the World’s Largest Navy. That Matters Less Than You Might Think,” *The Diplomat*, 7 April 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/04/yes-china-has-the-worlds-largest-navy-that-matters-less-than-you-might-think>.

Yet, “*The Diplomat*”-contributor Benjamin Mainardi has good reason to focus on the quantity-quality dichotomy. He believes that “the talk of China’s massive navy is rather out of proportion.”<sup>137</sup> For, it should be noted that China’s fleet relies disproportionately on smaller classes of ships, like the frigate and corvette, which are widely considered not to be major surface combatants. Even still, the bulk of its numbers advantage comes from its coastal patrol ships which, while not insignificant, have limited capacity to project power beyond China’s near seas: in order of descending size, the PLAN’s surface force is comprised of two aircraft carriers, one cruiser, 32 destroyers, 49 frigates, 37 corvettes, and 86 missile-armed coastal patrol ships. In addition, the PLAN’s submarine fleet includes 46 diesel-powered attack submarines, six nuclear-powered attack submarines, and four ballistic missile submarines. This is further supplemented by Mainland China’s Coast Guard (officially, “*The Chinese People’s Armed Police Force Coast Guard Corps*”), which fields roughly 255 coastal patrol ships. In sum, the People’s Republic of China has a surface warship fleet of 121 vessels, a submarine fleet of 56 platforms, and another 341 coastal patrol ships. For its part the United States Navy boasts a surface fleet of 11 aircraft carriers, 92 cruisers and destroyers, and 59 small surface combatants and combat logistics ships. Its submarine fleet is comprised of 50 attack submarines, 14 ballistic missile submarines, and four cruise missile submarines. As such, the United States maintains a surface fleet of about 162 vessels, depending on the inclusion of its small combatants and combat logistics ships, and a submarine fleet of 68 platforms.<sup>138</sup> Last, but not least, the U.S. Navy maintains a massive carrier advantage – and “wherever one falls on the debate over the continued viability of aircraft carriers, the fact remains that both states are interested in producing them.”<sup>139</sup>

*Stratfor*’s senior experts insist though that, “while China’s naval buildup focused initially on quantity, it has shifted in recent years to quality, testing numerous versions of ships before choosing preferred platforms, and coming close to its peer competitors in several areas of key naval technologies.”<sup>140</sup> They draw attention to the fact that the PLAN has tested its ability to operate for extended periods of time far from

---

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Baker, op. cit.

home, taking advantage of anti-piracy operations off the coast of Africa<sup>141</sup> to provide real-world training for its crews and even establishing a base in Djibouti.<sup>142</sup> Nonetheless, the PLAN is said to still “remain behind in some aspects, including anti-submarine warfare and multi-domain naval operations. It also has no culture of carrier battle group operations, and has not been tested in real combat experience since the 1970s.”<sup>143</sup> And yet, Beijing has gone a long way, indeed, to build a modern and professional navy that “by many accounts can now outcompete the U.S. Navy”<sup>144</sup> in the enclosed waters of the South China Sea, and beyond – particularly when bearing in mind that, still in the mid-1980s, American naval experts noted in the U.S. Naval War College Review that “the [Mainland] Chinese Navy is mainly a coastal defense force of poor sea-keeping qualities.”<sup>145</sup>

Remarkably, Beijing’s military outreach is directed more towards the Indo-Pacific, which is reflected in the type of weaponry it is amassing, including *Kilo-class* submarines and *Sovremenny* destroyers, *Luyang II* (Type 052C) class guided-missile destroyers with the HHQ-9 SAM (55-NM range) and YJ-62 antiship cruise missiles (ASCMs) (150-NM range), *Luyang III* (Type 052D) class guided-missile destroyers with an extended-range variant of the HHQ-9 SAM and YJ-18 ASCM (290-NM range), *Jiangkai II* (Type 054A) class guided-missile frigates<sup>146</sup> and, more importantly, destroyers of the Type 055 (*Renhai*) class, which was launched in June 2017<sup>147</sup> (while formally designated by the PLAN as a guided missile destroyer, its displacement and

<sup>141</sup> Dr. Kaufman, Alison A., *China’s Participation in Anti-Piracy Operations off the Horn of Africa: Drivers and Implications*, Center of Naval Analyses, Conference Report, MISC D0020834.A1/Final July 2009. Retrieved from [https://www.cna.org/cna\\_files/pdf/D0020834.A1.pdf](https://www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/D0020834.A1.pdf)

<sup>142</sup> LaGrone, Sam, “AFRICOM: Chinese Naval Base in Africa Set to Support Aircraft Carriers,” *USNI (United States Naval Institute) News*, April 20, 2021. Retrieved from <https://news.usni.org/2021/04/20/africom-chinese-naval-base-in-africa-set-to-support-aircraft-carriers>

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> Weiss, Kenneth G., “The Naval Dimension of the Sino-Soviet Rivalry,” *Naval War College Review*, January - February 1985, Vol. 38, No. 1 (January - February 1985), pp. 37-52, here p. 39.

<sup>146</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency, *China Military Power. Modernizing a Force to Fight and Win*, 2019, p. 70. Retrieved from [https://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/China\\_Military\\_Power\\_FINAL\\_5MB\\_20190103.pdf](https://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/China_Military_Power_FINAL_5MB_20190103.pdf)

<sup>147</sup> Tate, Andrew, “Chinese navy puts newest platforms on display”, *Janes*, 24 April 2019, <https://www.janes.com/defence-news/news-detail/chinese-navy-puts-newest-platforms-on-display>.

scale of armament makes comparison with the US Navy's *Ticonderoga*-class cruisers more appropriate than with the *Arleigh Burke*-class destroyers.)<sup>148</sup>

These weapons will not only serve the publicly declared goal of capturing Taiwan; they will also enable the People's Republic of China to gain control of the so called *First Island Chain*,<sup>149</sup> and therefore of vital sea-lanes through which eighty percent of its oil import pass, and to project power in the South China Sea and the major Indo-Pacific geopolitical region.

Mainland China's naval build-up has been spectacularly rapid, reflecting both her overall economic strength and her declared strategic ambition to take her appropriate place among the Great Powers of the international system in accordance with the People's Republic of China's strategy aiming at achieving "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" by 2049 – a strategy which can be characterized as "a determined pursuit of political and social modernity that includes far-ranging efforts to expand China's national power, perfect its governance systems, and revise the international order."<sup>150</sup>

But as it always been the case with so many rising Powers in human history, Mainland China faces the most serious and demanding challenge from the part of the ruling Power, the United States of America.

Indeed, the case of Mainland China being a continental, land Power, in the first place, which has decided to go to sea and therefore has to reach a balance between her traditional continental interests and her newer maritime tasks, and at the same time face a security challenge coming from the part of a ruling Power, have historical precedence in other emerging Powers. Bourbon's, Napoleonic, and republican France suffered permanently from the heavy financial and security burdens resulting from her role as

---

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> The "First Island Chain" refers to the archipelago stretching from Japan to Indonesia via Taiwan, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei. See 中国人民解放军军语 [PLA Dictionary of Military Terms] (Beijing: Academy of Military Science Press, September 2011), p. 952, cited after Martinson, Ryan D., and Dutton, Peter A., "China's Distant-Ocean Survey Activities: Implications for U.S. National Security," *China Maritime Report*, No. 3 (November 2018), China Maritime Studies Institute, U.S. Naval War College Newport, Rhode Island, p. 25.

<sup>150</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Military and Security Developments involving the People's Republic of China 2020*, p. v.

quasi hegemonic Power in continental Europe while, at the same time, building and maintaining a robust fleet to counter the *Royal Navy* at the English Channel, in the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans, and in the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>151</sup>

Germany, both *Kaiser Wilhelm's German Reich* and Adolf Hitler's *Third Reich*, also had to struggle with the dichotomy between her continental and maritime tasks – while dealing with the long established global maritime Power Britain. Evidently, both sets of tasks and priorities were of essence for German security, national economy, and last, but not least warfare. Yet, each also required a unique *geostrategy* with very different capabilities, theatres of operations, and alliances.

It appears true to claim that, in modern times, maritime Powers have persistently succeeded in solving the strategic problems posed by adversary continental powers. The British case, in particular, virtually selects itself as the very epitome of geostrategy of a sea-based power. In the words of *Sir Winston Churchill*: “For four hundred years the foreign policy of England has been to oppose the strongest, most aggressive, most dominating Power on the Continent, and particularly to prevent the Low Countries falling into the hands of such a Power... Observe that the policy of England takes no account of which nation it is that seeks the overlordship of Europe. The question is not whether it is Spain, or the French Monarchy, or the French Empire, or the German Empire or the Hitler regime. It has nothing to do with rulers or nations; it is concerned solely with whoever is the strongest or the potentially dominant tyrant.”<sup>152</sup>

Indeed, the British record in managing seapower – landpower relations is so instructive that it warrants particular attention. After having used France against the Dutch in the 1670s Britain now went on using France to accelerate the decline of Spanish naval power, gaining profit from the *Peace of Utrecht* in 1713. During the eighteenth century, Britain successively allied with Austria in the 1740s in the *War of Austrian Succession* (1740-48), and with Prussia in the *Seven Years War* (1756-63).<sup>153</sup>

After having persistently resisted, for more than 20 years, the emergence of a strong, unified European continental bloc dominated by Republican or Napoleonic

---

<sup>151</sup> See Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*.

<sup>152</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. 1: “The Gathering Storm”, London (Guild), 1985, first publ. 1948, pp. 186-187.

<sup>153</sup> Kinder / Hilgemann, op. cit., Bd. (Vol.) I, p. 269, 283.

France, Britain spent plenty of energy, mind and money (and – at least in one case, Crimea – blood) during the eighteenth century, dealing with the now major geopolitical rival, land power (and potential naval power) Russia. Yet, *Bismarck*'s successfully accomplished “*Reichsgründung*” of 1871,<sup>154</sup> and the subsequent profound change of the European geopolitical environment due to the emergence of a new, considerable geostrategic actor, and most significantly the intensified attempts of the German land power under Kaiser *Wilhelm II* to become a naval power by building up a fleet and seeking for colonies<sup>155</sup>, made Britain, the hegemonic maritime Power of that age, re-consider her priorities and approach her principal geopolitical rival of the past, Russia (as well as France) in order to face the new continental *hegemonic aspirant*, Germany. Though presenting a beacon of liberalism, parliamentary rule and civic culture according to its own self-perception, England went on to align herself with Russia, a country steadily accused by British opinion leaders and intellectuals of autocracy, despotism etc. for the most part of the nineteenth century.<sup>156</sup>

It has been well said that “historically, maritime forces have tended to be associated with state power, competitive security concepts and the pursuit of national interests”.<sup>157</sup> As a *realist* strategist, Mahan was skeptical about the capacity of most states to cooperate peacefully with each other, but none the less concluded that a transnational maritime consortium (“a community of commercial interests and righteous ideals”),<sup>158</sup> in this case comprising the United States and Britain, would be needed to defend the security of a large and expanding system of international trade. Neither country, he thought, had the resources to perform the task on their own, but together they could do the job. Moreover, because, *per definitionem*, particularly maritime countries are the most vulnerable to disruptions to the system, they will tend to be at the forefront of global consortia attempting to supply security to the regions that need it.

---

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 353.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 387-88.

<sup>156</sup> On similar geopolitical grounds, Churchill's Britain entered an “unholy alliance” with the Soviet Union in 1941.

<sup>157</sup> Michael Pugh (ed.), *Maritime Security and Peacekeeping: A Framework for United Nations Operations*, Manchester (Manchester University Press), 1994, p. 237.

<sup>158</sup> Mahan, A. T., *Retrospect and Prospect*, London (Sampson, Low, Marston), 1902, p. 177.

The United States, to begin with, must be included in any analysis of the Indo-Pacific geopolitical context; the reasons are more than obvious: The only global superpower (or “*Planetarmacht*”, to put it in *Panajotis Kondylis*’ terms)<sup>159</sup> dominates international politics, including most particularly the regions and sea lanes of vital importance.

At the latest since the *Spanish–American War* of 1898, the United States has been, *de facto*, a *Pacific Power*. In 1904, while giving his most celebrated lecture at the *Royal Geographical Society*, Sir Halford Mackinder referred to the United States pointing out that “she (=the U.S.) will construct the Panama Canal to make her Mississippi and Atlantic resources available in the Pacific.”<sup>160</sup>

In point of fact, the rise of the United States as a Pacific Power had already begun since the early nineteenth century. In his historical speech at the *Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum* in *Da Nang*, in 2017, former U.S. President *Donald Trump* reminded that the U.S. Congress had approved the first deployment of an American warship to the Pacific in 1817 and he declared: “We have been friends, partners and allies in the Indo-Pacific for a long, long time, and we will be friends, partners and allies for a long time.”<sup>161</sup>

It is a plain fact that, being once a *Continental Power* which then succeeded in transforming itself into a *Naval Power*, the United States has acted three times during the 20<sup>th</sup> century to restore or sustain the *balance of power* in *Eurasia* and deter the supremacy of a Continental Power in the Eurasian *Heartland* – to put it in Sir Halford J. Mackinder’s terms – when British Sea Power and balancing seemed, for the same purpose, inadequate: 1917, 1941, 1947. It has further been said that even NATO’s eastwards expansion after the end of the Cold War as well as the build-up of American military presence in the post-Communist Balkans have been perceived and followed by the policy makers as a strategy of *preventive balancing* targeting post-Soviet Russia, though this would never be officially declared.<sup>162</sup>

<sup>159</sup> Kondylis, Panajiotis, *Planetarische Politik nach dem kalten Krieg*, (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1992).

<sup>160</sup> Mackinder, *The Geographical Pivot of History*, p. 436.

<sup>161</sup> Sevastopoulos, op. cit.

<sup>162</sup> See Mearsheimer, John S., *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, (W. W. Norton), 2001; Brzezinski, Zbigniew, *Die einzige Weltmacht; Amerikas Strategie der Vorherrschaft (The Grand Chessboard; American Primary and Its Geostrategic Imperatives)*, Frankfurt a.M., 1999; Brzezinski, Z., „A Plan for

On the other hand, one should not underestimate the fact that, instead of a broad political consensus on America's proper role in the world, what we have been witnessing during the last decades is rather an ongoing debate among American politicians and scholars featuring a number of contending grand strategy visions. Four alternative visions have been identified so far: *neo-isolationism*,<sup>163</sup> *conservative realists'* concept of *selective engagement*,<sup>164</sup> *liberal internationalism*<sup>165</sup> and the concept of *primacy*<sup>166</sup> – or even *empire*.

Yet, no matter the outcome of the debate, whether a “*Reluctant Hegemon*”, a “*Benevolent Hegemon*”, an “*Emperor*” or a “*primus inter pares*” – or not – the United States is perceived, for the time being, as the most likely leader of any coalition dealing with *Revisionist Powers* – thus being, in the internet phrase, a kind of “*system's administrator*” for the global trading system. As a *maritime Power* the United States considers it as its function to defend the system against local disorders and wars, as threats to the common interest of all.<sup>167</sup> Therefore, it only was natural for the global maritime Power to adopt and further develop the geostrategic concept of the *Free and Open Indo-Pacific*.

Consequently, the crucial question is whether the U.S. conception of its dominant position in global politics today allows for a *multipolar* system involving all major strategic actors (i.e., “*Great Powers*”) – and this means, translated into the Indo-Pacific geopolitical context, if the U.S. understanding of its role as chief administrator of the global maritime system is congruent with the notion of a hegemonic Regional

---

Europe”, *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 1995; Kissinger, Henry A., *Die sechs Säulen der Weltordnung*, Berlin, 1994; Kissinger, H. A., *Die Vernunft der Nationen (Diplomacy)*, Berlin, 1996.

<sup>163</sup> See Posen, Barry R. and Ross, Andrew L., “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy”, *International Security*, 1996/1997, Vol. 21, No. 3; Layne, Christopher, “From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing”, *International Security*, 1997, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 86-124.

<sup>164</sup> Art, Robert J., “Geopolitics Updated: The Strategy of Selective Engagement”, *International Security*, 1998/1999, Vol. 23, No. 3, pp. 95-7.

<sup>165</sup> Carter, A. B.; Perry, W. J.; Steinbruner, J. D., *A New Concept of Cooperative Security*, Brookings Occasional Paper, Washington, DC (The Brookings Institution), 1992; Ruggie, J. G. (edit.), *Multilateralism Matters: The Theory and Praxis of an Institutional Form*, New York (Columbia University Press), 1993.

<sup>166</sup> Krauthammer, C., “The Unipolar Moment Revisited”, *The National Interest*, 2002/03, No. 70.

<sup>167</sup> It is noteworthy that the origin of such ideas goes back to Theodore Roosevelt (who, by the way, had met the famous naval strategist, then Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan as a fellow scholar during his time as a Visiting Speaker at the Naval War College in Newport, long before he was elected a President of the United States).

Power. The *U.S. National Security Strategy* issued in December 2017 declared the People’s Republic of China a “*revisionist*” Power – and even more critically, one that aims “*to erode American security and prosperity.*”<sup>168</sup> Does this mean that the world’s “*only remaining super-power*”, while deploying its geostrategy in the Indo-Pacific, will chose and implement a strategy of *Containment* – and if yes, to which extent, and at which costs?



---

<sup>168</sup> Cavanna, op. cit.

#### 4. The Republic of China (Taiwan): The keystone of Indo-Pacific Geopolitics

Since the end of Chinese Civil War and the imposition of a communist system in Mainland China (1949), the ruling *Chinese Communist Party* elite in Beijing has considered Taiwan – which had become the refuge of all those who achieved to resist the communist coup and escape Mao’s totalitarianism – to be a part of their territory. Since the very first moment though, the *Chinese Nationalist Government* in Taiwan has most naturally seen itself as the legal and rightful successor of the Republic of China and therefore, has never recognised Beijing’s alleged sovereignty claims, nor does it so nowadays – even more so as, historically, Taiwan had never been a part of the territory of the People’s Republic of China.

Currently, Taiwan, as well as the *Penghu (Pescadores)* Islands – an archipelago of ninety islands and islets in the Taiwan Strait – and the so-called offshore islands adjacent to the Chinese coast, are under the control of the Republic of China (Taiwan), while the Chinese Mainland is the domain of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Practically speaking, the demarcation line between these two entities is drawn within the perimeters of the Taiwan Strait. However, as long as both the Governments of Beijing and Taipei uphold the principle of “*one China*,” the line will never be called a “border.”<sup>169</sup> There had been, at least, three major *Taiwan Strait Crises* from the 1950s to the 1990s (1954-55, 1958, 1995-96), followed by a myriad of minor incidents throughout that period of history, and again an increasing series of clashes from the 2000s until nowadays, some of them with a bloody outcome.

At dawn on 3 September 1954, Mainland China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA), which had deployed approximately 150,000 troops to *Amoy (Xiamen)*, began bombarding the island of *Quemoy (Jinmen)*, one of the offshore islands under the ROC’s control. This triggered the *First Taiwan Strait Crisis*. When the crisis began,

---

<sup>169</sup> Matsumoto, Haruka, “The First Taiwan Strait Crisis and China’s “Border” Dispute Around Taiwan,” *Eurasia Border Review*, Vol. 3, Special Issue, pp. 75-91, here p. 77. Retrieved from [https://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/publicn/eurasia\\_border\\_review/Vol3SI/matsumoto.pdf](https://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/publicn/eurasia_border_review/Vol3SI/matsumoto.pdf)

43,000 Chinese Nationalist troops were deployed to Quemoy, and within five hours after the beginning of the PLA bombardment, about sixty shells had hit Quemoy. Although the bombardment halted for a while after midnight, it soon resumed and continued for several days.<sup>170</sup> The First Taiwan Strait Crisis ended without a major war; yet, all parties involved, i.e., Communist China, Nationalist China, and the United States – which was considered a *Chiang Kai-shek's* ally, despite repeatedly having let him down – interacted with divergent and convergent interests, bringing about the existing situation.

For, since then the PRC has consistently refused to renounce the possibility of *using force* in the “*Taiwan issue*.” It did so during the U.S.-PRC *Ambassadorial Talks*, which began in July 1955: As the First Taiwan Strait Crisis persisted, PRC Prime Minister *Zhou Enlai* made a statement at the *Bandung Conference*<sup>171</sup> in April 1955 that called for a ceasefire. Premier Zhou likewise proposed to discuss the Taiwan issue and related matters with the United States. The U.S. Government accepted this proposal and the crisis finally de-escalated.<sup>172</sup> Subsequently, the U.S.-PRC *Ambassadorial Talks* followed. The U.S. attitude practically meant that it accepted the *de facto* existence of the PRC, thus indicating its tacit acknowledgement of the “two China” status quo. In the negotiation, the U.S. side persistently demanded that the PRC renounce the use of force to resolve the “*Taiwan issue*.” The PRC side, however, refused to accept the U.S. demand, arguing that the Taiwan issue was China’s *internal matter* and that the People’s Republic of China would not discuss it with *external Powers*<sup>173</sup> – thus sticking to Mao’s line since July 1954 when Communist China had explicitly expressed her determination to “*liberate Taiwan*.”<sup>174</sup>

Mainland China kept refusing to renounce the possibility of use of force in the “Taiwan issue” even during the period of the so called *normalisation talks* between

---

<sup>170</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) 1952-54, Vol. XIV (1), pp. 563-564. Also see Matsumoto, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>171</sup> Kinder and Hilgemann, op. cit., p. 513.

<sup>172</sup> Matsumoto, *ibid.*

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

<sup>174</sup> For instance, the July 23 editorial of *Renminriboos* stated that, “Chinese people proclaim once again to the world that Taiwan is a Chinese territory, and we will definitely liberate Taiwan.” Quoted in Matsumoto, op. cit., p. 84.

Washington and Beijing, in the 1970s.<sup>175</sup> The then leader of the People's Republic of China Deng Xiaoping has upheld the PRC's right to use force as a matter of principle and necessity. In April 1979, Deng is reported to have told a delegation of U.S. Senators that the People's Republic of China would not possess the military capability to invade Taiwan for five years.<sup>176</sup> In 1986, he stated to the press that the PRC still did not possess the capability to invade Taiwan but did have the military strength to blockade the Taiwan Strait. Deng's statement was followed by a series of warnings to the ROC to reconsider the offer of "*peaceful re-unification*" or face the prospect of being forced into negotiations under duress of *naval blockade*.<sup>177</sup>

Beijing's position has remained intransigent on this issue because of the huge geostrategic, political, and symbolic significance the state and party ruling elite place on "*re-unification*." According to Deng Xiaoping, one of the three major tasks facing the People's Republic of China in the 1980s was "to strive for re-unification and particularly for the return of Taiwan to the motherland."<sup>178</sup>

Remarkably, and most probably upon U.S. pressure, the People's Republic of China replaced the phrase "liberation of Taiwan" with "Taiwan's re-unification." In point of fact though, Beijing had never relinquished the option of a *military solution* – first, because it wished to pressure Taiwan into considering the mainland's "re-unification" proposal; and second, it wished, and still wishes to retain *all possible options* with respect to its Taiwan policy.

Thus, the People's Republic of China has pledged to seek "peaceful re-unification" as a preferred option; yet, the Secretary-General *Hu Yaobang* stated in the 1980s: "If this wish cannot be realized for a protracted period, and if it is clear that some elements in Taiwan are opposing unification with foreign encouragement, then we would reexamine the situation. If we're sure of our capabilities, then why not

---

<sup>175</sup> Fu, Jen-Kun, *Taiwan and the Geopolitics of the Asian-American Dilemma* (New York; Westport, Connecticut, London: Praeger, 1992), p. 83.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> Deng Xiaoping, *Opening speech at the 12th National Congress of the Communist Party of China*, September 1, 1982. Retrieved from [https://cpcchina.chinadaily.com.cn/2010-10/20/content\\_13918249.htm](https://cpcchina.chinadaily.com.cn/2010-10/20/content_13918249.htm)

consider other means of unification.”<sup>179</sup> And on June 1, 1985 the Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party was quoted as having stated in an interview on May 10 that “he could not rule out the eventual use of force to reunite Taiwan with the mainland.”<sup>180</sup> Hu was quoted as telling [Mainland] China “does not have the military strength now to use force” because “military might depends on a strong economy,” but “for example, in seven or ten years’ time when our economy becomes strong, our national defence is modernised and the majority of the (Taiwan) people want to return (to Mainland China), we may take some strong action.”<sup>181</sup>

Thirty-four years later, on January 2, 2019, the leader of the People’s Republic of China Xi Jinping declared that Taiwan “*must and will be reunited with China.*”<sup>182</sup> President Xi warned Taiwanese people that “*independence will only bring hardship,*” adding Beijing would never tolerate any form of activity promoting Taiwanese independence. Instead, unification was “an inevitable requirement for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese people”, he argued. He also stressed that relations with Taiwan were “part of China’s domestic politics” and that “foreign interference is intolerable”. President Xi finally warned that Beijing “reserves the option of taking all necessary measures” against “outside forces that interfere with peaceful re-unification” and Taiwanese “*separatist activities.*”<sup>183</sup>

In sum, “unification is the goal and force is an option.”<sup>184</sup> It is clear that “under certain circumstances the PRC would consider using force and would proceed with a military offensive if a plausible strategy and sufficient capability were available.”<sup>185</sup> In

---

<sup>179</sup> *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 24, 1986, p. 27.

<sup>180</sup> “Chinese leader quoted as not ruling out force on Taiwan,” AP News, 1 June 1985. Retrieved from <https://apnews.com/article/bdea618078a9a4d26a139ba60e1e4304>

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> “Xi Jinping says Taiwan ‘must and will be’ reunited with China,” *BBC News*, 2 January 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-46733174>

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> Buckley, Chris, and Horton, Chris, “Xi Jinping Warns Taiwan that Unification Is The Goal and Force Is An Option,” *The New York Times*, January 1, 2019.

<sup>185</sup> Fu, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

point of fact, the PRC has removed the phrase “peaceful” in official government documents regarding plans to seize Taiwan.<sup>186</sup>

Given the real possibility of an assault, it is reasonable to review the options for military action discussed by Beijing and to consider the capability of the PRC and ROC with respect to each option. Distinguished scholar *Jen-Kun Fu* identified six options for PRC’s military action against Taiwan:

- military exercises in the Taiwan Strait including a display of nuclear force capability;
- shelling of Quemoy (Kinmen) and Matsu islands;
- a naval blockade of the Taiwan Strait;
- takeover of Penghu Island and isolation of Quemoy, Matsu, and Taiwan;
- a single massive offensive against Taiwan, Quemoy, and Matsu islands;
- an offensive against Matsu and Quemoy, followed by an attack on Taiwan.<sup>187</sup>

#### **4.1. Military Exercises as a Tool of Intimidation and Psychological Warfare**

For decades, PRC’s *People’s Liberation Army* has conducted military exercises close to Taiwan, which the Republic of China has reasonably considered to be a threat to her security. Some of these exercises have deliberately been intended to disturb and intimidate Taiwan while others have been conducted to improve the PRC’s offensive capability in multiple arenas.<sup>188</sup> For example, in January 1974 the People’s Republic of China utilised her naval forces in an amphibious assault on the then *South-Vietnamese-occupied* Paracel Islands in a display of PLA capabilities.<sup>189</sup>

In August 1982, shortly after the U.S.-PRC joint *communiqué* on ROC arms sale reduction, the PRC staged a series of amphibious manoeuvres along the *Fujian* coast directly opposite Taiwan. Between October 7 and 16 of the same year, the People’s Republic of China test-fired successfully her *first submarine-launched*

---

<sup>186</sup> Yew Lun Tian, Yew Lun, and Yew, Yimou Lee, “China drops word 'peaceful' in latest push for Taiwan 're-unification',” *Reuters*, May 22, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-parliament-taiwan/china-drops-word-peaceful-in-latest-push-for-taiwan-re-unification-idUSKBN22Y06S>

<sup>187</sup> Fu, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Samuels, Marwyn S., *Contest for the South China Sea* (New York and London: Methuen, 1982).

*nuclear missile* in the East China Sea, only 300 kilometers north of Taiwan.<sup>190</sup> The successful test made the People's Republic of China only the fifth country to have developed submarine-launched missiles – the others being the United States, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Britain, and France. Finally, in 1984 the PRC *Navy Oceanographic Survey Unit* completed data-gathering exercises in the Taiwan Strait, apparently confirming Deng's threat of undertaking a naval blockade.<sup>191</sup>

Even air-borne and amphibious exercises conducted far from Taiwan have been seen by the Republic of China as PRC preparation for a future invasion of Taiwan. In September 1982 the PLA conducted its largest-ever coordinated exercise in the mountainous *Zhangjiakuo* region north of Beijing. The exercise included more than 200,000 men and multiple air units. In May 1983 the PLA conducted a massive parachute-landing exercise. The same year the People's Republic of China also demonstrated her *blue-water* capability when a naval task force made a thirty-five-day 8,000-nautical-mile trip into the South Pacific to recover the instrument modules from China's first full-reach ICBM missile tests.<sup>192</sup>

All these air-borne and sea exercises could be preparation for an invasion of Taiwan. But even if Mainland China does not actively seek to invade Taiwan, her military buildup is useful in *intimidating* Taiwan and would be necessary if a decision was made to invade;<sup>193</sup> more importantly, Beijing's military power has been used in the past, is being used nowadays, and can be used in near future in situations short of all-out war, such as a naval blockade or some other demonstration of strength in the form of military exercises. Of more immediate concern than actual invasion, in fact, has been PLA's demonstrated capability of conducting large-scale coordinated exercises. It is felt that the display of such military power may be an attempt by the People's Republic of China to *coerce* the Republic of China into negotiations without launching an actual invasion.<sup>194</sup>

---

<sup>190</sup> *New York Times*, 17 October 1982.

<sup>191</sup> Fu, op. cit.

<sup>192</sup> *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 11, 1982, pp. 21-25

<sup>193</sup> Mizokami, Kyle, "How Taiwan Would Defend Against a Chinese Attack," *USNI (United States' Naval Institute) News*, March 26, 2014. <https://news.usni.org/2014/03/26/taiwan-defend-chinese-attack>.

<sup>194</sup> Fu, op. cit., p. 85. Mizokami, op. cit.

At this point, it should be remembered that the most *dramatic* PRC demonstration of military force to influence Taiwan and the United States since 1958 took place in 1995 and 1996 precisely through a series of military exercises that included the test firing of unarmed ballistic missiles into waters off Taiwan.<sup>195</sup>

The July–August and November 1995 displays of military capabilities were in response to the United States granting a visa to the then President of the Republic of China (Taiwan), *Lee Teng-hui*, for a private visit in June to speak at his *alma mater*, *Cornell University*, where his speech repeatedly praised the virtues of the “*Republic of China on Taiwan*.” Beijing had understood the visa would not be granted, but congressional pressure resulted in its issue. The March 1996 display of military strength was “evidently intended to warn President Lee, who was expected to retain the presidency in the coming election (he did), to cease what Beijing perceived as political moves toward Taiwan’s independence.”<sup>196</sup>

Both sets of exercises were also “deterrence messages intended to warn Washington and Taipei that China was ready and willing to employ military force to prevent Taiwan independence with or without U.S. military intervention.”<sup>197</sup> To ensure its military exercises were not misunderstood and seen as preparations to invade Taiwan, on March 5 Beijing announced both the impact areas of its missile tests and the times and locations of the military exercises. Washington had issued only a somewhat muted response to the 1995 exercises. The USS *Nimitz* aircraft carrier battlegroup had transited the Taiwan Strait in December, but no U.S. statement accompanied the transit.<sup>198</sup> The U.S. response to the March 1996 exercises was distinctly different. State Department spokesman *Nicholas Burns* called the missile tests “reckless and potentially dangerous,”<sup>199</sup> and two aircraft carrier battlegroups were dispatched to the Taiwan area.

---

<sup>195</sup> Godwin, Paul H.B., and Miller, Alice L., *China’s Forbearance Has Limits: Chinese Threat and Retaliation Signaling and Its Implications for a Sino-American Military Confrontation*. Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, China Strategic Perspectives No. 6 (Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press, April 2013), p. 14.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> “China Fires 3 Missiles into Sea near Taiwan,” *Washington Post*, 8 March 1996. Retrieved from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/gdpr-consent/?next\\_url=https%3a%2f%2fwww.washingtonpost.com](https://www.washingtonpost.com/gdpr-consent/?next_url=https%3a%2f%2fwww.washingtonpost.com)

It is clear that Mainland China has both the will to, and remarkable capability for conducting large-scale military exercises at sea and in the air as well as amphibious assaults. This situation of exercise of military pressure on Taiwan went on for years, with only very few phases of *de-escalation* such as the period of the “1992 Consensus” or the years of *Ma Ying-jeou*’s Presidency (2008-2016).<sup>200</sup>

Yet, the People’s Republic of China started a new phase of use of military exercises as a tool of *Psychological Warfare*, *intimidation*, and *blackmail* targeting the Government of the Republic of China and the Taiwanese people since Ms. *Tsai Ing-wen*, Chairperson of the *Democratic Progressive Party* (DPP), was elected, on 16 January 2016, and subsequently inaugurated, on 20 May 2016, as the 14<sup>th</sup>-term President of the Republic of China (Taiwan).<sup>201</sup>

The *bone of contention* for Beijing has been adhering to the “1992 Consensus” and opposing “*Taiwan independence*.” The former means acceptance that Taiwan and the Mainland belong to one and the same China – albeit “*respective interpretations*” – while the latter means ceding any option for Taiwan’s People to choose their own future.<sup>202</sup> Given her own history and that of her party, there was, in fact, no way Ms. Tsai Ing-wen would *directly* accede to *either* condition.<sup>203</sup> But Mainland China had warned that if she did not, then, in President Xi Jinping’s words, “the earth will move and the mountains will shake” and all manner of existing relationships would be cut off.<sup>204</sup> Further, Cross-Strait negotiations would come to a halt and implementation of existing ones could become questionable. Given Taiwan’s economic dependence on the Mainland market and on other relationships with it, as well as Beijing’s influence over Taiwan’s economic partners, the costs could be quite serious. Additionally, the consequences would probably involve blocking ROC’s activity in international

---

com%2farchive%2fpolitics%2f1996%2f03%2f08%2fchina-fires-3-missiles-into-sea-near-taiwan%2fbf5aa0eb-6078-4b3b-a0b6-fc547ef36127%2f.

<sup>200</sup> Chen, Dean P., “The Strategic Implications of Ma Ying-jeou’s “One ROC, Two Areas” Policy on Cross-Strait Relations,” *American Journal of Chinese Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (April 2013), pp. 23-41.

<sup>201</sup> “Tsai Ing-wen wins 2016 ROC presidential election,” *Taiwan Today*, January 17, 2016. Retrieved from <https://taiwantoday.tw/news.php?unit=2&post=3819>. Bush, Richard C., “Taiwan’s elections results, explained,” *Brookings*, January 16, 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2016/01/16/taiwans-election-results-explained/>

<sup>202</sup> Romberg, Alan D., “The “1992 Consensus”—Adapting to the Future?” in *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 49 (Winter 2016). Retrieved from [https://www.stimson.org/wp-content/files/file-attachments/CLM49AR\\_0.pdf](https://www.stimson.org/wp-content/files/file-attachments/CLM49AR_0.pdf)

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

organisations and poaching by Beijing on a number of her (then) twenty-two remaining diplomatic partners.<sup>205</sup>

Nevertheless, Ms. Tsai Ing-wen, and the DPP under her leadership had both emerged as clear winners from the presidential and legislative elections of January 2016. Ms. Tsai's victory has been considered a *milestone* in the Political History of the Republic for the following reasons:

First, Ms. Tsai's victory was a triumphant one. The distinguished jurist, graduate of the *National Taiwan University*, the *Cornell University* and the *London School of Economics and Political Science*, received 56.1% of the votes, compared to 30.1% for the candidate of the *Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang)* Mr. Eric Chu. The 25% margin between the two main candidates was the biggest in the Political History of the Republic of China. At the same time, her DPP also won an overwhelming majority in the legislative elections, securing 68 out of 113 seats of the Legislative Yuan. Both results handed Ms. Tsai and DPP broadest legitimation and considerable political manoeuvring space to pursue their political agenda and mandate.<sup>206</sup>

Second, it's important to analyse the voter motivations that led to Ms. Tsai's stupendous victory. To an extent, this was the result of growing voter frustration with the KMT's difficulty in tackling domestic problems, especially the stagnating economy. Above all though, a large part of voters had become concerned about greater dependence on Mainland China and the associated threat to Taiwan's democracy and *way of life*.

During the eight years of his Presidency, former President *Ma Ying-jeou* – also an excellent jurist and scholar who had received his degrees from the *National Taiwan University*, the *New York University* and the *Harvard University* – had implemented a policy course “promoting rapprochement and cooperation with mainland China”,<sup>207</sup> and he had done so with excessive zeal. This sounds as a rather peculiar *irony of history*, taking into consideration that Mr. Ma had been the Chairman of the *Kuomintang*, i.e., the old, historical *Chinese Nationalist Party* established by the Founding Father of the

---

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> *President Ma Ying-jeou's National Day Address*, 10/10/2013. Retrieved from [https://www.roc-taiwan.org/fi\\_en/post/423.html](https://www.roc-taiwan.org/fi_en/post/423.html)

Republic of China, Field Marshall *Chiang Kai-shek*, who had literally saved Taiwan from *Mao's* Communist totalitarianism in 1949; on the other hand, one could explain President Ma's Cross-Strait policy precisely because of such KMT background – despite historical wounds and traumas on both sides, and still existing huge political and ideological differences, it evidently meant a great lot to him that “The people of both sides of the Taiwan Strait are all Chinese by ethnicity”, as he had put it in his historical *National Day Address* on 10 October 2013.<sup>208</sup>

Rooted in the strategy of hedging, President Ma's reinvigoration of the so called “1992 consensus” on *Cross-Strait Relations*, the notion of “*one China, respective interpretations*” or “*one ROC, two areas*,” allowed Taipei “to employ binding engagement, limited bandwagoning, and soft balancing to sustain Taiwan's security, sovereignty, and autonomy while improving its ties with Beijing.”<sup>209</sup> In light of Taiwan's precarious domestic and international political circumstances, the Ma's administration “enacted pragmatically a mainland policy that would maximize Taiwan's economic and diplomatic returns while preparing for risk contingencies in dealing with a rising China.”<sup>210</sup> As a result, President *Ma's* policy produced an astonishing number (23) of non-political accords signed by the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China and impressively close bilateral ties at all so called *low*, or *soft* policy areas (trade, tourism, student exchange, and similar).

Nonetheless, Mr. Ma had obviously *underestimated* his fellow citizens' concerns about increasing dependence on Mainland China and the possible *threat* to Taiwan's *homeland* and *societal security* and *political* and *social achievements*. In first place, the Taiwanese public opinion might have welcomed the perspective of *normalisation* of Cross-Strait Relations – and the consequent drastic decrease of the war threat – plus tourism, business, student visits, or family re-unions. As time passed though, there were increasing misgivings over President Ma's Mainland China-friendly policies. The Taiwanese started fearing a “friendly” *take-over*, so to speak, of their maritime homeland by the bulimic, continental “*Big Brother*”. In such case, they feared the end of Taiwanese *way of life* and political system would inevitably follow. The outcome of the election was, thus, “the result of the public growing more skeptical

---

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Chen, Dean P., “The Strategic Implications of Ma Ying-jeou's “One ROC, Two Areas” Policy on Cross-Strait Relations,” *American Journal of Chinese Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (April 2013), pp. 23-41.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

about Ma Ying-jeou's policy of engaging China, at least economically – a skepticism that grew further throughout Ma's second term.”<sup>211</sup> A clear sign of the dramatic shift of minds and feelings had been the mass protests by students and civil activists, the “*Sunflower Movement*”, in March and April 2014 after the KMT had tried to pass the *Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement*, which would have further strengthened Taipei's dependence on Beijing.<sup>212</sup>

The KMT's surprising disregard for public opposition to getting *too close* to Mainland China led to the biggest electoral defeat of the *Great Old Party* of the country's Political History. Thus, the 2016 elections represent a historical milestone of colossal significance since they provided an opportunity for the citizens of the Republic of China to declare, *urbi et orbi*, their own distinct *Taiwanese* identity and *civic*, or *constitutional patriotism*, and to reinforce their own liberal-democratic political system.

The 2016 elections therefore reflect a *metastrophe* in Taiwanese political attitudes. The result was consistent with a *generational shift* among Taiwanese people, particularly the younger generations who have little or no cultural affinity for the mainland; to many of them, even the remoted hypothesis that the PRC could/would manage one day to “*swallow*” their country seems to be their worst nightmare. Indeed, long-term socio-political and ideological trends demonstrate that a majority of citizens now identify as ‘solely Taiwanese’ and that there's hardly any support for “*re-unification*” with (Communist) China.<sup>213</sup>

A recent study on national identity shift in Taiwan has found that most Taiwanese people reject being called ‘Chinese’ (*zhongguoren*) when asked about their

---

<sup>211</sup> Bush, op. cit.

<sup>212</sup> Smith, Glenn, “Taiwan's Sunflower Movement,” *Foreign Policy in Focus*, May 29, 2014. Retrieved from <https://fpif.org/taiwans-sunflower-movement/>

<sup>213</sup> See Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, *Changes in the Taiwanese/Chinese identity of Taiwanese as tracked in surveys by the Election Study Center, 1992–2015*. Retrieved from <https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/PageDoc/Detail?fid=7800&id=696>; also see Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, *Taiwan independence vs. unification with the mainland trend distribution in Taiwan, 1992–2015*. Retrieved from <https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/PageDoc/Detail?fid=7801&id=6963>.

national identity.<sup>214</sup> However, they do *not* deny their *ethnic and cultural Chinese identity*. What they object to “is being called Chinese nationals, especially this China which is internationally recognised as the People’s Republic of China.”<sup>215</sup> In other words, most Taiwanese people do not identify themselves with the *mainland Chinese* state even though they still associate themselves with the *Chinese nation*. It is also noted that there is *no consensus* with regard to national identity in Taiwan, since close to one third of the population still do not object to be called ‘*zhongguoren*.’<sup>216</sup>

Last but not least, Ms. Tsai’s Presidency represented the third peaceful transfer of power in the history of the Republic of China and a re-affirmation of the vitality of the island’s political system.

Four years later, President Tsai Ing-wen triumphed again in the national presidential election of 11 January 2020 and secured a second term in office by taking an overwhelming 57.1% of the vote. The tremendous victory of Ms. Tsai Ing-wen and her Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has been considered a heavy blow to Beijing’s prestige and policy.<sup>217</sup>

The efforts made by PRC’s ruling state and party elite, and notably by Chairman and President Xi Jinping to politically isolate President Tsai Ing-wen, to punish Taiwan economically, and to intimidate Taiwanese citizens failed to deliver the desired outcome. On the contrary, there can be no doubt that at least a large part of Taiwan’s citizens finally voted for Ms. Tsai out of their wish to deliver a resounding *slap* in the face of CCP; they re-elected President Tsai Ing-wen, who vowed to preserve their country’s freedom and sovereignty, despite Beijing’s threats and its attempts to bring the island republic under its control. Through her landslide victory against her main rival Mr. *Han Kuo-yu*, the presidential candidate of the main opposition party KMT, President Tsai Ing-wen not only secured a second term in the highest office of the Republic of China, but she actually achieved to increase the number of votes that she

---

<sup>214</sup> Yang Zhong (2016): “Explaining National Identity Shift in Taiwan,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, DOI: 10.1080/10670564.2015.1104866.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>217</sup> Lee Myers, Steven, and Horton, Chris, “In Blow to Beijing, Taiwan Re-elects Tsai Ing-wen as President,” *The New York Times*, January 11, 2020.

received comparing with her first election in 2016; in point of fact, Ms. Tsai now succeeded in taking the largest total number of votes than any other presidential candidate ever did in the electoral chronicles of the country.<sup>218</sup>

In her victory speech, President Tsai Ing-wen said: “With every presidential election, Taiwanese tell the world that we cherish the democratic way of life and cherish our country, *the Republic of China (Taiwan)*.”<sup>219</sup> She said that her administration would continue to push for reforms and close the income gap between rich and poor people. More importantly, the re-elected President declared emphatically that she would continue to keep the nation safe and protect its sovereignty. Ms. Tsai also sent a clear message to the other side of the Strait by stating: “I also hope that Beijing understands that democratic Taiwan, and our democratically elected government, will not give in to threats and intimidation.”<sup>220</sup>

The tremendous victory of Ms. Tsai Ing-wen and DPP underscored support for a distinct *Taiwanese identity*, particularly among the younger generations of voters, and the extent to which public sentiment had drifted further from the idea of a single, unified China. PRC’s attempts to strangle Taiwan economically and punish President Tsai as well as repeated threats by President Xi Jinping and other senior state and party authorities that Taiwan “must and will be unified with the People’s Republic of China”<sup>221</sup> – all the tactics aiming at isolating, delegitimising and undermining President Tsai had eventually *backfired*.

If truth be told, President Tsai’s and DPP’s campaign also found *momentum* from months of student and other citizen protests in Hong Kong against Beijing’s

---

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> “Taiwan, Tsai Ing-wen wins second term as president,” *AsiaNews.it*, 01/13/2020. Retrieved from <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Taiwan,-Tsai-Ing-wen-wins-second-term-as-president-49011.html>

<sup>221</sup> Cited in Iliopoulos, Ilias, “Taiwan: A Time for Clarity,” *In Depth*, Retrieved from <https://indepth.gr/taiwan-a-time-for-clarity>. Cited also in Aspinwall, Nick, “Xi Says Taiwan ‘Must’ Unify With China as Tsai Unveils Her Own ‘Four Musts’,” *The Diplomat*, January 2, 2019. Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2019/01/xi-says-taiwan-must-unify-with-china-as-tsai-unveils-her-own-four-musts/>

encroachment on Hong Kong's freedoms.<sup>222</sup> Indeed, President Xi had declared that the “*One Country, Two Systems*”-doctrine must be applied in the case of Taiwan, as it had been the case with Hong Kong and (former Portuguese colony) Macau.<sup>223</sup> Ms. Tsai has categorically rejected the proposal, saying at a large rally on the last Friday evening before the election Sunday: “Young people in Hong Kong have used their lives and blood and tears to show us that ‘one country, two systems’ is not possible. Tomorrow it’s the turn of our young people in Taiwan to show them that the values of democracy and freedom will overcome all difficulties.” In fact, thousands of young people came out to vote many of whom flew home from abroad, making crystal clear that “Taiwan must remain Taiwan!”<sup>224</sup>

Beijing's reaction would follow soon thereafter. The entire year 2020 witnessed a drastic increase of *military provocations* with the obvious purpose of intimidating Taiwanese leaders and citizens.<sup>225</sup> In this regard, on September 10, 2020, the Government of the Republic of China (Taiwan) sounded the alarm over Mainland China conducting large-scale joint air and naval exercises inside the ROC's *Air Defence Identification Zone*, a move Taipei denounced as a “severe provocation” and a threat to regional peace and stability.<sup>226</sup>

Beijing's ruling elite decided to hold a joint air-naval exercise ninety (90) nautical miles (166km) off the coast of Taiwan. Formations of approximately twenty-four PLAAF airplanes (SU-30s, J-10s and Y-8 jets) and seven PLAN vessels were detected by the ROC Armed Forces to have been operating, in multiple waves, for two successive days, between 7am and noon, in an area between Pratas, a ROC-controlled

---

<sup>222</sup> Anderlini, Jamil, “China's dream of using Hong Kong as model for Taiwan's future is dead,” *Financial Times*, January 11, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.ft.com/content/15d992f4-33a1-11ea-9703-eea0cae3f0de>

<sup>223</sup> Former British Crown colony Hong Kong had been ceded to the P.R. of China under the condition of enjoying a semiautonomous status according to the relevant U.K.-P.R.C. treaty

<sup>224</sup> Lee Myers and Horton, op. cit.

<sup>225</sup> See Suci, Peter, “The PLAN: China's Navy Just Conducted Drills in the South China Sea,” *The National Interest*, May 8, 2020. Retrieved from <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/plan-chinas-navy-just-conducted-drills-south-china-sea-152051>

<sup>226</sup> Hille, Kathrin, “Taiwan claims ‘severe provocation’ after China military drills,” *Financial Times*, September 10, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.ft.com/content/9bf1c039-3222-4aa7-be37-6f01afc41ef2>

atoll in the South China Sea, and Taiwan's south-western coast.<sup>227</sup> Quite characteristically, PLAAF airplanes violated the ROC's ADIZ forty times in two days.<sup>228</sup> PLAN Marine Corps, and other PLA units must have been involved, too.

The *Ministry of National Defense* and the *Ministry of Foreign Affairs* of the *Republic of China (Taiwan)* held rare impromptu news conferences in the late evening of the tenth of September 2020, to denounce Mainland China's new provocation. They had earlier issued an English-language warning to Beijing calling on both the People's Liberation Army and the Chinese Communist Party to exercise restraint and to maintain regional stability.<sup>229</sup> At the same time, they called on all free nations to recognise the threat posed by the People's Republic of China.

Quite remarkably, it was the *Deputy Chief* of the *General Staff for Intelligence* Major General *Yang Ching Se* who gave the briefing at [Taiwan's] Ministry of National Defence, next to *Deputy Minister of National Defence* Mr. *Chang Che-ping*. General Young Ching Se believed that the PLA intended to create a new status quo under which it could regularly operate in the area off the south-west of Taiwan. "Everyone knows about their intention to take Taiwan. So it is very obvious that they are using the pretext of an exercise to squeeze our operating space," the ROC Army General told reporters and he added that the PLA would continue "such activities in the name of drills." For his part, Deputy Minister of National Defence Mr. Chang Che-ping said that the consecutive incursions into Taiwan's Air Defence Identification Zone posed a severe threat to his country's defence, to regional stability, and to international civilian flights as well. Mr. Chang Che-ping also urged Beijing to show restraint, adding that its actions only created more animosity to Beijing among the Taiwanese people.<sup>230</sup>

ROC Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Spokeswoman Ms. *Joanne Ou* condemned PRC's provocations and urged the international community to squarely face up to the threat posed by Mainland China. "Taiwan does not seek confrontation, but neither will it back down," Ms. Ou said; and adding a sentence that demonstrates the morale of

---

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Everington, Keoni, "Chinese warplanes violated Taiwan's ADIZ 40 times in 2 days," *Taiwan News*, September 11, 2020

<sup>229</sup> "Defense, foreign ministries criticize China after second day of PLA drills," *Taipei Times*, September 11, 2020, <https://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2020/09/11/2003743200>

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

dignity of the insular republic, she said that Taiwanese “can rest assured” that Taiwan’s military “will staunchly defend national security.”<sup>231</sup>

Only a few days thereafter, tensions escalated further because of PLAAF’s violation of the “*Median Line*” in the Taiwan Strait. Generally speaking, the “Median Line” is a line at sea, separating two sides locked in a decades-long conflict. A *gentlemen’s agreement* rather than an official demarcation, the median line has been a tacit code of conduct of sorts that, for decades, reduced the risk of military ‘accidents’ in the Taiwan Strait, one of the world’s major geopolitical hot spots.<sup>232</sup>

Over the years the two sides—the People’s Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF), and the Republic of China [Taiwan] Air Force (ROCAF)—stuck to their half of the Strait, veering off at the last moment before crossing into the other side and potentially sparking a crisis. With the exception of a brief incident in 1999, the tacit agreement held until March 2019, when two PLAAF J-11 fighters crossed the Median Line in the Taiwan Strait, flying 43 nautical miles into Taiwan’s side, forcing the ROCAF to scramble interceptors. The deliberate act, as the Government of the Republic of China (Taiwan) described it, occurred as Beijing was gradually increasing its military activity near and around Taiwan, which continued until the re-election, in January 2020, of President Tsai Ing-wen as the head of the island republic. Following Ms. Tsai’s re-election, PLA naval and aerial activity increased markedly, with several crossings into Taiwan’s Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) and occasional violations of the Median Line.

There is reason to believe that the recent intensification of military activity reflects frustration in Beijing and a realisation that the large majority of the Taiwanese population will not yield to promises of “peaceful unification” under the “*one Country, two Systems*” formula – and even less so in the light of the recent Hong-Kong experience. More and more, so called *hawks* from the PRC’s ruling state and party elite have unscrupulously expressed the view that only force can “resolve” the Taiwan “issue” once and for all. In party-controlled media in mainland China

---

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Cole, J. Michael, “China Ends ‘Median Line’ in the Taiwan Strait: The Start of a Crisis?” *The National Interest*, September 22, 2020. Retrieved from <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/china-ends-%E2%80%98median-line%E2%80%99-taiwan-strait-start-crisis-169402>.

threats to attack Taiwan, and even to decapitate the island republic's leadership have become all too often.

More recently, PLAAF intrusions in Taiwan's ADIZ and across the Median Line have been used to signal Beijing's displeasure over high-level visits by U.S. officials to Taiwan (Secretary of Health and Human Services Mr. *Alex Azar* in early August and Under Secretary of State Mr. *Keith Krach* in mid-September 2020) and major arms sales announcements by the U.S. Then, on September 21 Mr. *Wang Wenbin*, a spokesman at PRC's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told a press conference that "there is no so-called center line in the Taiwan Strait."<sup>233</sup>

Of course, the "agreement" on a median line in the Taiwan Strait always was a tacit one. Yet, is Beijing right to presume that it never officially recognised the existence of a median line and that therefore there is no policy shift? Experts in History of International Relations, Diplomacy, and Geopolitics are well aware of the fact that the obviolation of a tacit agreement between states (one that had been respected in practice, by both sides and for long time) can certainly be construed as a deviation from customary policy – and one which markedly alters the rules of the strategic game.

All of this is ostensibly meant to exacerbate the pressure on Taipei's Government and the Taiwanese people. So far, the latter strategy does not appear to be working, and could in fact backfire, as it did in the case of Taiwan's presidential elections. If the PRC further fosters a *siege mentality* on Taiwan, then the people of Taiwan are likely to strengthen their resolve against the Mainland.

In the meantime, Beijing's frustrations are compounded by the entirely deserved and expanding respect that Taiwan has received for how the Republic has dealt with the new coronavirus epidemic. Instead of silently accepting that fact, and allowing time to move the diplomatic needle back to normal, Beijing has made clear its intention to continue to isolate Taipei internationally – by blocking ROC's minimal participation as an "observer" at the *World Health Assembly* organized by the *World Health Organization* on May 18 and 19, 2020.<sup>234</sup>

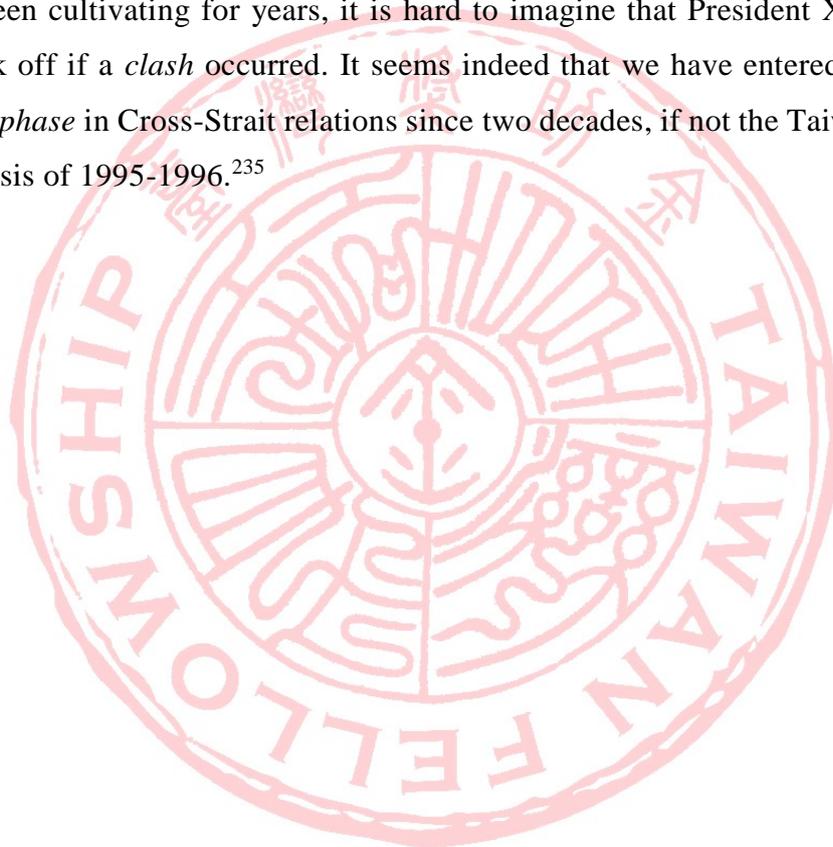
---

<sup>233</sup> Cited in Cole, op. cit.

<sup>234</sup> Ministry of Health and Welfare, Republic of China (Taiwan), *Taiwan Can Help, and Taiwan is Helping!* Retrieved from <https://covid19.mohw.gov.tw/en/cp-4789-53866-206.html>. See also "China says Taiwan's bid to attend key WHO meeting will fail," *Reuters*, May 8, 2020.

For sure, the risk of an *armed conflict* is increased. In the meantime, all of this certainly represents a good opportunity for the PLA to collect intelligence and assess ROCAF responses. Besides, it might be that Beijing actually wants a military “*accident*” to occur, which it would inevitably blame on Taiwan and use as *casus belli*. Demonstrating prudence, President Tsai Ing-wen has shown restraint, so far; yet, she will have to take more concrete actions in response to Beijing’s provocations, especially if PLAAF aircraft were to approach within twelve nautical miles of Taiwan proper.

On the other side, given the sort of bellicose *jingoism* that Mainland’s ruling elite has been cultivating for years, it is hard to imagine that President Xi Jinping would back off if a *clash* occurred. It seems indeed that we have entered the *most dangerous phase* in Cross-Strait relations since two decades, if not the Taiwan Strait Missile Crisis of 1995-1996.<sup>235</sup>



---

<sup>235</sup> Cole, op. cit.

#### 4.2. Naval Blockade of Taiwan

In considering possible military actions against Taiwan, the PRC leadership has given most frequent and serious consideration to a naval blockade. As mentioned above, Deng Xiaoping had publicly stated the viability of this option and it did appear to be within the PRC's naval capability. Already since the late 1970s and the 1980s, several policy analysts seemed to agree that this represented the most likely option for any Mainland Chinese armed offensive.<sup>236</sup>

Under the prism of the strategic analysis by American naval experts, the People's Republic of China was likely to choose a *naval blockade* over other strategies, for a variety of reasons. A blockade would exploit Taiwan's weakness (naval defence) while rendering Taiwan's ground forces useless; it would quickly bring Taiwan's economy to a *standstill*, since it depends on the *import* of raw material and energy and the export of finished goods; it would use less equipment and operating funds than a full scale invasion and therefore – and quite importantly when talking about the early 1980s – it would not weaken PRC's defence capabilities against the then existing Soviet Union and Vietnam; last, but not least, a naval blockade would entail little loss of life, decreasing the likelihood of public outcry and third-party intervention.<sup>237</sup>

Based on World War II experience it has been estimated that one submarine can effectively blockade 1,000 nautical miles. Given that Taiwan's coastline stretches 11,000 square nautical miles from north to south, it would require about twelve PLAN submarines to effectively blockade all of Taiwan.<sup>238</sup> Even with ROCN antisubmarine warfare capability and shallow water in the Taiwan Strait, it seems likely that the large PLAN submarine fleet could impose such a blockade. In particular, the two most important ports of Taiwan, Keelung and Kaohsiung, which account for more than ninety percent of Taiwan's freight, would be most vulnerable to submarine blockade. Yet, “although a blockade would be relatively easy for Beijing to declare in effect, and

---

<sup>236</sup> Esposito, Bruce J., “The Military Viability of Taiwan” in Jack F. Williams (Ed.), *The Taiwan Issue* (Lansing: Asian Studies Center of Michigan State University, 1976). Muller, David, “A Chinese Blockade of Taiwan”, *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* 110, No. 10 (September (1984), pp. 51-55. Linder, J., “Taiwan's Troubled Security Outlook”, *Strategic Review* 8, No. 4 (Fall 1980), pp. 104-118.

<sup>237</sup> Muller, op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>238</sup> Fu, op. cit., p. 86.

the deployment of submarines to demonstrate a determination to enforce the blockade would unquestionably be within the capabilities of the PRC, a successful sustained blockade might be very difficult to execute without enormous expenditure of resources. For one thing, the ROC plans to respond to a high intensity blockade... with an immediate escalation of the conflict. This would include the use of the ROCAF against Mainland shipping and port targets, as well as the mining of PRC ports such as Shanghai.”<sup>239</sup>

Yet, aside from the issue of capability, the PRC must consider the likely response from Washington and Tokyo before proceeding with a naval blockade. It is possible that neither the United States nor Japan would take action if the PRC restricted the geographic scale and time frame of the blockade and prevented major civilian destruction. However, the People’s Republic of China would have to expect a military response from the Republic of China in the Taiwan Strait. Clearly, the survival of Taiwan depends on access to sea lanes, and she has done everything in her power to make her security a concern of all Indo-Pacific nations. Because of this it is unlikely that a PRC blockade could be achieved without interventions by other Powers.

### **4.3. Military Assault or Siege of Taiwan’s Offshore Islands**

The People’s Republic of China has never attempted another full-scale amphibious invasion of the offshore islands after its failure to take Quemoy in 1958.<sup>240</sup> It did, however, continue to shell Quemoy for decades. Following Sino-American “normalisation” the PRC ceased its shelling of the offshore islands and reduced the number of troops and aircraft in the Fuzhou military district.

The Republic of China controls a number of offshore islands including Tung Yin, Liang Tao, Matsu, Wu Chiu, Quemoy, and Tung Ting. Additionally, ROC’s troops are stationed on several disputed islands in the South China Sea, such as Tungsha (Pratas Island) and Nansha (Spratly Islands).<sup>241</sup> Of these islands, Quemoy and Matsu

---

<sup>239</sup> Lasater, M., *U.S. Policy Towards China’s Re-unification: The Reagan Years, 1980-1986*. Ph.D. dissertation submitted to George Washington University, 1988, p. 14.

<sup>240</sup> Godwin and Miller, op. cit.

<sup>241</sup> Samuels, M., *The Contest for the South China Sea* (London: Methuen, 1982).

had once been the most fortified,<sup>242</sup> but now Kinmen and Matsu are virtually undefended.<sup>243</sup>

All these islands are close to Mainland China, which makes it possible to cut off ROC's supplies if under siege from the mainland. Hence, a more feasible strategy for the PRC would be a blockade of Taiwan's offshore islands with continuous naval or ground bombardment. To avoid heavy military conflict the PRC might attack one of the less well defended islands such as Tungsha in the South China Sea or Matsu in the Taiwan Strait between Quemoy and Taiwan.<sup>244</sup> Matsu is considered a particularly likely target.<sup>245</sup> A PRC blockade of Matsu is certainly within its capabilities. This would entail artillery bombardment, mining the harbor, and attacking ROC supply missions with the massive fleet of fast-attack boats. It is unlikely that the United States would provide a naval escort for ROC munitions and food supply convoys since the legal status of Taiwan's offshore islands has been in question since Congress repealed the *Formosa Resolution* in 1974.<sup>246</sup>

In the PRC's view an offshore-island offensive would serve to (1) break ROC morale; (2) gain a beachhead, which would give PRC a greater symbolic presence in the region; and (3) establish a base for future incursions onto other islands.<sup>247</sup> If Matsu, for example, were under siege, then the island's troops could be used as hostages to encourage the ROC authorities into negotiations with the mainland government. Without third-country assistance, the troops on Matsu might be forced to either surrender or fight to the last man. Either outcome would have a devastating impact on the people of Taiwan. In the event of the above scenario, the ROC would have to choose

<sup>242</sup> *Air Force Magazine*, Vol. 69, No. 2 (February 1986), p.118.

<sup>243</sup> Carpenter, Ted Galen, "Is Beijing Preparing for Backdoor Military Aggression Against Taiwan?" *The American Conservative* and *Cato Institute Commentary*, June 8, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.cato.org/commentary/beijing-preparing-backdoor-military-aggression-against-taiwan>

<sup>244</sup> Lin, Cheng-yi, *China, the U.S., and the Security of Taiwan*. Ph.D. dissertation submitted to the University of Virginia, 1987, p. 105.

<sup>245</sup> Snyder, Edwin K.; Gregor, A. James; Chang, Maria Hsia, *The Taiwan Relations Act and the Defense of the Republic of China (Policy Papers in International Affairs, Number 12)*, Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1980, p. 51.

<sup>246</sup> See PUBLIC LAW 93-475-OCT. 26, 1974. Retrieved from <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-88/pdf/STATUTE-88-Pg1439.pdf>

<sup>247</sup> *Ming Pao Monthly*, May 1977, pp. 22-24, cited after Fu, op. cit., p. 88.

among three responses – desert Matsu, negotiate with the PRC, or launch an all-out retaliation.

#### 4.4. Invasion of Taiwan

On March 6, 2014 the then Minister of National Defence of the Republic of China Yen Ming is reported to have told the national Legislative Yuan's Foreign Affairs and National Defence Committee the country's military could hold out "at least one month" alone against a Mainland Chinese invasion.<sup>248</sup> The estimate was understood as "a sharp reminder of how much the strategic equation has turned against Taiwan."<sup>249</sup>

Indeed, "the days of Taiwan being an impregnable fortress appear to be over."<sup>250</sup> Mainland China's rapid and imposing military buildup, coupled with declining defence budgets in Taiwan, have shifted the balance of power "*to the point where defeat in an invasion scenario — barring foreign intervention — is now inevitable.*"<sup>251</sup> It goes without saying that Taiwan is greatly outnumbered in army, navy, and air forces. The Armed Forces of the Republic of China number approximately 290,000, with 130,000 in the ROC Army, 45,000 in the ROC Navy and Marine Corps, and approximately 80,000 in the ROC Air Force.<sup>252</sup>

Yet, despite this imbalance it remains questionable whether the PLA advantages are sufficient to launch a successful amphibious invasion. To begin with, the ROC Army is capable of mobilizing relatively sufficient troops along the west coast of Taiwan to counteract an amphibious assault. During World War II it was estimated that it would require 300,000 U.S. troops to defeat about 100,000 Japanese forces on Taiwan.<sup>253</sup> Applying the same 3:1 ratio needed to guarantee a successful amphibious

---

<sup>248</sup> Mizokami, op. cit.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid. See also Dreyer, J., and Ross, E., "The Military Balance in the Taiwan Strait," in M. Lasater (Ed.), *The Two Chinas: A Contemporary View* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1986).

<sup>253</sup> Snyder, Gregor, and Chang, op. cit., p. 29.

invasion suggests the PRC would need to mobilize at least 390,000 ground troops, and of course, immensely more in case of ROC Armed Forces' mobilisation.

More importantly though, most modern estimates suggest that the game will be decided at sea and in the air before PLA troops set foot on the island(s). An absolutely necessary precondition of any successful PRC's invasion of Taiwan is therefore PLA's Air Supremacy and Sea Control over the entire Taiwan Strait. Clearly, Mainland China has a considerable advantage in a naval offensive. The PLAN maintains a large number of fast-attacking craft equipped with missiles and torpedoes. The PLA Air Force (PLAAF) also has a clear numerical advantage in aircraft.

And yet, despite daunting odds, Taiwan continues to build a military uniquely prepared for an asymmetric war with China. In view of smaller defence budgets and an overwhelming PLA's conventional force, the ROC's political and military leaders have superbly drafted out and pursued what can be named a *smart geostrategy* of a *Small Power*, moving toward asymmetrical systems and an anti-access, area denial capability. Traditionally, the Army has been the dominant Service, but that has shifted over the years. The ROC's Military Doctrine in 2004 centered upon the principle of "*offshore engagement*" where the primary goal of the ROC's Armed Forces in any conflict with the PRC would be to keep as much of the fighting away from Taiwan proper, i.e. populations centres, for as long as possible to minimize damage to infrastructure and civilian casualties.<sup>254</sup> Consequently, the Army is only relevant once the enemy lands on the island(s), while the Navy and Air Force can range over the Strait.

Moreover, rather than matching the PLA ship for ship and plane for plane – which simply can't be done –, the ROC's Armed Forces are fielding systems that imperil PLA's ability to operate in the Taiwan Strait.<sup>255</sup> Thus, the ROC's defences are quite different from those of most states because of the nature of Taiwan's geostrategic position; "few countries see the need for surface-to-air missiles in land-based silos,

---

<sup>254</sup> Ministry of National Defense, ROC, *2004 National Defense Report. Republic of China*. 2364380. Archived from the original (PDF) on 11 March 2006. Retrieved 5 March 2006.

<sup>255</sup> Mizokami, op. cit.

nearly four-dozen fast missile boats, and a mountain hollowed out to shelter fighter aircraft,” for instance.<sup>256</sup>

Quite characteristically, the Republic of China Navy (ROCN) has transitioned from the most neglected arm of the Taiwanese military to the most important. For it is the Navy alone that can defeat an invasion fleet at sea. Sinking amphibious transports not only takes a large ground force out of action, but also permanently degrades the enemy’s amphibious capability. Taiwan has, therefore, made a significant investment in small, fast missile patrol craft designed to take on much larger Chinese surface and amphibious ships. Twelve missile patrol combatants of the *Jing Chiang* class were built — each 680 tons fully loaded — with a 76mm gun and mine-laying racks.<sup>257</sup> There are also 34 smaller ships of the 150 ton *Kung Hua VI* project. Ships of both classes are each equipped with 4 *Hsiung Feng* anti-ship missiles. This diminutive fleet collectively weighs just over 13,000 tons but altogether packs a total of 184 anti-ship missiles.<sup>258</sup>

Besides, a marvelous example of smart strategy investing on small ships for big targets is the ROCN’s *Hsun Hai*, or “Swift Sea” program of small missile corvettes. These catamarans are capable of 38 knots and designed to have a minimal radar signature. Armed with eight *Hsiung Feng II* and *Hsiung Feng III* anti-ship missiles, the corvettes have been dubbed “carrier killers” by the Taiwanese media. The first, *Tuo River*, was commissioned in March 2014 and expected to be operational by mid-2015. Twelve ships were planned.<sup>259</sup>

Nevertheless, a serious disadvantage was to be seen in the ROCN’s submarine fleet consisting of just four aging submarines. Two are of the U.S. Navy *Tench* class, *Hai Shih* and *Hai Pao*. Both were launched toward the end of the World War II and are used as training vessels. The other two submarines, *Hai Hung* and *Hai Hu*, are a Dutch design of mid-1980s vintage. Displacing 2,600 tons submerged, they were upgraded in 2013 with *Harpoon II* anti-ship missiles.

---

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

*Submarines* stand to be a key pillar of Taiwan's *asymmetrical* approach. "After Taiwan has lost air and sea control, it's the subs that will still be able to attack groups of amphibious landing aircraft," *Wang Jyh-perng*, ROCN reserve captain told the *Asia Times* in 2011. However, no diesel-electric submarine builder — facing pressure from China — will sell Taiwan new submarines. Under such circumstances, the ROCN headquarters announced, in January 2014, a 15-year upgrade plan for naval forces, under which a local shipbuilder has been directed to determine the feasibility of locally built submarines.

Significantly, in a speech in October 2020, President Tsai Ing-wen declared: "We will continue to modernise defensive combat capabilities and accelerate the upgrading of our asymmetrical capabilities to deal with military expansion and provocation from the other side of the Taiwan Strait." Indeed, only a few days thereafter, on November 24, 2020 Ms. Tsai presided over a ceremony to mark the start of construction of the nation's first indigenous submarine at state-run shipbuilder *CSBC Corp*'s shipyard in Kaohsiung.<sup>260</sup> Its first trip should take place in September 2023, according to ROC's military officials.<sup>261</sup>

This submarine is an important part of "allowing our navy to develop asymmetric warfare and to intimidate and block enemy ships from surrounding Taiwan's main island," said President Tsai during the ceremony attended by the Minister of National Defence *Yen De-fa*, the Secretary-General of the National Security Council *Wellington Koo* and the ROCN Commander-in-Chief – and former Acting Chief of the General Staff of the ROC Armed Forces – Vice-Admiral *Liu Chih-ping*.<sup>262</sup>

"With the construction of the submarine to its future commission, we will certainly let the world know our persistence in safeguarding our sovereignty", added Taiwan's President. If truth be told, Ms. Tsai Ing-wen has made boosting the nation's indigenous defence capacity a central pillar of her country's National Defence

---

<sup>260</sup> "Taiwan starts submarine production," *Taipei Times*, November 25, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2020/11/25/2003747541>.

<sup>261</sup> Strong, Matthew, "Taiwan's first indigenous submarine to launch in 2023," *Taiwan News*, 2021/07/21.

<sup>262</sup> *Taipei Times*, op. cit.

Policy.<sup>263</sup> She recently relaunched the national military aviation industry with the production of new trainer jets for the ROCAF.

More importantly, President Tsai's Administration has pushed for the development of more sophisticated weapon systems by utilising the domestic high-tech industries. For Taiwan correctly assumes that she only could effectively block any attempt of an invasion coming from the side of Mainland China by focusing on sophisticated systems of asymmetric warfare that would prove able to destroy the enemy's landing fleet at the Taiwan Strait.

With regard to Taiwan's *air power* – and given that the PRC could not successfully invade Taiwan without seizing air superiority, the ROCAF is seen as one of the primary deterrents to PLA's action. The ROCAF fighter jets were state of the art in the 1990s, when most of the aircraft were purchased. Yet, time and PLAAF's buildup have eroded their technological edge — opening up the possibility that Beijing could successfully contest air superiority over Taiwan and the off-shore islands. The ROCAF currently has 146 F-16 A/B Block 20 multirole fighters, armed with AIM-120 AMRAAM air-to-air missiles. It also operates 55 *Mirage* 2000 multirole fighters, armed with *Magic* air-to-air missiles. Rounding out Taiwan's main fighter inventory are 126 *Ching-kuo* indigenous fighters, armed with locally developed *Sky Sword II* air-to-air missiles.<sup>264</sup>

In the event of war, the ROCAF's air bases will come under heavy air attack, both by aircraft and missiles. PLA's *Second Artillery Corps* has an estimated 1,500 conventionally armed short range ballistic missiles, many of which will likely be used in the counter-air role. The ROCAF is therefore prepared to keep air bases open while under attack. Taiwan has the *Rapid Runway Repair System*, used by the *U.S. Air Force*, to repair runways damaged by enemy attack. The ROCAF also has the *Portarrest* P-IV mobile aircraft arresting system for landing aircraft on damaged runways. Besides, the ROCAF has invested considerable resources in hardening base facilities. *Chiashan Air Base*, on the island's eastern coast, includes a hollowed-out mountain that serves as a refuge for up to 100 *Mirage* 2000-5 and F-16 fighters. Two airfields serving the base

---

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> Mizokami, op. cit.

are both at least 7,500 feet long. Chiashan is also a designated command post for counterattacks mounted by Taiwan against invading forces. A second facility buried inside a mountain is *Hengshan Command Center*. Located on the outskirts of Taipei, Hengshan was completed in 1982 and serves as the national military command center in both peace and war. In wartime, it serves as the seat of the ROC's Government. The ROCAF also operates the nationwide air defence network, with eleven early warning sites overall. Main air defence is provided by Taiwan's indigenously produced *Tien Kung II* surface-to-air missiles. Radar guided, *Tien Kung II* has a range of 125 miles and is deployed at six bases, four on Taiwan and two on nearby island groups.<sup>265</sup>

In the light of the above, it appears that the practical realities of a full-blown invasion of Taiwan are also daunting for the PRC: "Ferrying hundreds of thousands of troops across the narrow Taiwan Strait to a handful of reliable landing beaches, in the face of fierce resistance, is a harrowing prospect. Troops would then have a long slog over Taiwan's western mudflats and mountains to reach the capital, Taipei."<sup>266</sup>

Even more significantly, the PLA would face an opponent who has been preparing for this eventuality for more than seventy years. At mass anti-invasion drills in May 2019, ROC's Armed Forces Spokesman Major General *Chen Chung-Chi* said the island knew it had to always be "*combat-ready*." "Of course, we don't want war, but only by gaining our own strength can we defend ourselves," he added; "if China wants to take any action against us, it has to consider paying a painful price."<sup>267</sup>

Besides, there are additional reasons why invasion may *not* be in the best interest of Beijing's state and party ruling elite. In an era of unprecedented financial interdependence, it is quite likely that Mainland's economy would suffer a certain degree of damage in the case of an armed conflict – *unless* mission would be accomplished within a few days, perhaps.

Furthermore, a military capture of Taiwan would alienate the Taiwanese people, without the cooperation of whom any sort of "*nation-building*", so to speak, on the day

---

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> Westcott, Ben, "A Chinese invasion of Taiwan would be a bloody, logistical nightmare," *CNN*, June 24, 2019. Retrieved from <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/06/23/asia/taiwan-china-invasion-intl-hnk/index.html>

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

after, would be extremely difficult. And finally, a full-scale assault would raise such anti-Mainland feelings in the U.S. that a direct military response could no more be off the table *even if* this or that White House Administration truly had no real wish to engage in a war with the People's Republic of China.

In the light of the above facts and considerations, Beijing is said to increasingly use "*Sharp Power*" to achieve its goal of Taiwan's "re-unification" with the Mainland. The exercise of *Sharp Power* is a pillar of *Political Warfare*. As defined in a U.S. State Department *memorandum* written on May 4, 1948 by the *Policy-Planning* staff under the direction of *George Kennan* – the *spiritus rectus* of the Strategy of Containment towards the Soviet Union –, *Political Warfare* is "the logical application of Clausewitz's doctrine in time of peace"; the memo defined *Political Warfare*, *lato sensu*, as "the employment of all the means at a nation's command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives."<sup>268</sup>

*Sharp Power*'s modern form includes "overt and covert uses of diplomatic, political, economic, and information means to affect policy decision-making or the political context affecting such decision-making in another state through means that are neither violent nor limited to persuasion or voluntary transaction."<sup>269</sup> Distinguished from coercive "*Hard Power*" and persuasive "*Soft Power*," *Sharp Power* seeks, as *Christopher Walker* puts it, to "pierce, penetrate, or perforate" political, media, and social environments of targeted countries, to manipulate their politics and, at times, to erode their political institutions.<sup>270</sup>

Irrespective of the above, the People's Republic of China continues to pressure Taiwan militarily. The pressure could well escalate, and dangerously so. President Xi Jinping and the CCP ruling elite may go on to play the "*Taiwan card*" to cement their quasi normative legitimacy at home. Indeed, in March 2020, the head of Taiwan's intelligence agency is said to testify in an open legislative hearing that he pegged the

---

<sup>268</sup> Cited after Boot, Max, and Doran, Michael, "Political Warfare," *Policy Innovation Memorandum*, No. 33, Council on Foreign Relations, June 2013. Retrieved from [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/166932/Policy\\_Innovation\\_Memorandum\\_33\\_Boot.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/166932/Policy_Innovation_Memorandum_33_Boot.pdf)

<sup>269</sup> DeLisle, Jacque, "Political Warfare, Sharp Power, the U.S., and East Asia," *Orbis*, April 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.fpri.org/article/2020/04/editors-corner-spring-2020-political-warfare-sharp-power-the-u-s-and-east-asia/>

<sup>270</sup> Cited after deLisle, op. cit.

likelihood of Mainland China using force against Taiwan “tomorrow” at a 6 or 7 out of 10, with 10 being very likely – in which case the crucial question would be, which would be the response of the United States, Taiwan’s primary, however informal ally.



## 5. Regional and extra-Regional Middle Powers

### 5.1. India: PRC's Key Rival in the Indo-Pacific

It is not by chance that – as stated in previous ages – it was a brilliant officer of India's Navy, Captain Dr. *Gurpreet S. Khurana*, who re-introduced the term '*Indo-Pacific*' it to the modern geopolitical, strategic and maritime literature since 2007.<sup>271</sup>

Statesmen, diplomats, military officers and policy analysts in India – as in Russia, by the way – understand much more than many of their American or Western European counterparts about historical and geopolitical realities. India's foreign policy and defence community is not fooled by Beijing's façade of "neighbourliness." Almost a decade ago, the then Chief of India's Army General Staff, General *Vijay Kumar Singh*, warned that India must "wake up" to her military shortcomings and the threat posed by China, adding that unresolved border disputes could be used as the pretext to "put India down" at any time China perceived India becoming too powerful. General *Singh* advocated increased spending on defence and referred to Beijing's subjugation of Tibet, its wooing of Nepal and Myanmar, and its use of Pakistan as a "cat's paw."<sup>272</sup>

One must bear in mind that China's border disputes with India during the period of 1960–62 left 3,000 Indian soldiers dead. Notably, the border dispute remains unresolved. The ruling state and party elite of the People's Republic of China claim an entire state of the Federal Republic of India, Arunachal Pradesh, which borders on Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Mainland China and is roughly the size of Portugal. Beijing calls the 90,000-square-kilometre area "*Southern Tibet*". Further, Mainland China is still occupying 15,000 square miles of territory of India – in Aksai Chin, high in the Himalayas.<sup>273</sup> More recently, India has faced Beijing's assertive policies during violent clash with PLA troops on the *Line of Actual Control (LAC)* in the Galwan

---

<sup>271</sup> Khurana, op. cit.

<sup>272</sup> "Warning of Threats from China," *The Dominion Post*, 15 December 2012.

<sup>273</sup> Emmott, Bill, *Rivals: How the Power Struggle Between China, India and Japan Will Shape Our Next Decade*, London: Allen Lane, 2008.

Valley in Ladakh in mid-June 2020; although a de-escalation of troops and equipment has begun, India's mistrust of Mainland China remains high.<sup>274</sup>

After India officially endorsed her “*Look East Policy*” (2006), and more importantly after Prime Minister Narendra Modi went on to unveil his country's “*Act East Policy*” at the 12<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-India Summit in 2014 held in Myanmar,<sup>275</sup> the Navy – which is, in fact, the most *strategic* force among the armed forces as we know from history, strategy and theory of Sea Power – has been building a strong base on the eastern front, namely at the Vishakhapatnam-based *Eastern Naval Command*, with an eye on the strategically significant South China Sea. Since then, India has been pursuing an impressive naval construction program to redress the obsolescence of much of her fleet. The then Chief of India's Navy General Staff Admiral *Nirmal Verma*, on the eve of Navy Day on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011, outlined an ambitious expansion plan for the Navy, which should render India able to have a greater footprint in the South China Sea.<sup>276</sup>

After tremendous efforts had been made – with forty-six warships and submarines being constructed, and another forty-nine in the pipeline – Admiral *Verma* declared in August 2012, “Today, I am confident we do not suffer asymmetries anymore. We have the wherewithal to defend our maritime interests.”<sup>277</sup> To this one should add that, by 2027, the Indian Navy is estimated to have 500 aircraft of all varieties, and 150 ships, in its inventory.<sup>278</sup>

In this regard, particular reference must be made to the fact that India's first domestically constructed nuclear submarine capable of firing ballistic missiles was part of a program to make India a major Power in the Indo-Pacific. The *INS Arihant* was the first in its class, with four more to follow. The strategic significance of this particular

---

<sup>274</sup> “Trust deficit remains a year after Galwan clash,” *Hindustan Times*, June 15, 2021.

<sup>275</sup> See <https://www.drishtiiias.com/loksabha-rajyasabha-discussions/the-big-picture-india-s-act-east-policy>

<sup>276</sup> Sharma, Suman, “Navy Ready to Flex Muscles in South China Sea,” *The Sunday Guardian* (New Delhi), 4 December 2011, <http://www.sunday-guardian.com/news/navy-ready-to-flex-muscles-in-south-china-sea>.

<sup>277</sup> Pandit, Ranjit, “India's Elusive Nuclear Triad Will Be Operational Soon: Navy Chief,” *The Times of India*, 8 August 2012, [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-08-08/india/33099651\\_1\\_ins-arihant-ssbns-slbm](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-08-08/india/33099651_1_ins-arihant-ssbns-slbm).

<sup>278</sup> Sharma, op. cit.

weapons platform lies in the fact that, as Admiral *Verma* put it, “The advent of INS *Arihant* into the fleet will complete the crucial link in India’s nuclear triad – the ability to fire nuclear weapons from land, air and sea.”<sup>279</sup>

There can be no doubt about the reason for India’s determination to add nuclear-armed submarines to their military: Mainland China, although India’s policy-makers and diplomats have been elusive when questioned on this, as should be expected.<sup>280</sup> Remarkably, only countries like the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and the People’s Republic of China had the capability to launch a submarine-based ballistic missile until then.

And what about the “BRICS”,<sup>281</sup> one might reasonably ask. Despite the supposed, historically and geopolitically meaningless “*bloc*” that is identified as “BRICS”, India remains wary of Mainland China if truth be told – as does *Russia* which also regards herself as an Indo-Pacific Power by the way, and this has been developing recently.

Albeit all trade and diplomacy, India’s statesmen, diplomats and military are not so *naïve* as to let their guard down. Similarly, they will continue participating in the so called “QUAD” (“*Quadrilateral Security Dialogue*”),<sup>282</sup> but they will be dubious about placing too much reliance on Washington for defence purposes – particularly after President Trump left office.

---

<sup>279</sup> Sen, Sudhi Ranjan, “Why INS *Arihant*, Submarine in Final Stages of Testing, Is So Important,” 7 August 2012, NDTV, <http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/why-ins-arihant-submarine-in-final-stages-of-testing-is-so-important-252415>.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>281</sup> BRICS is the acronym coined to associate five countries, and major emerging economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

<sup>282</sup> The *Quadrilateral Security Dialogue*, commonly known as “QUAD”, is a group of four countries: the United States, Australia, India, and Japan. Maritime cooperation among them began after the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004. But today the countries—all democracies and vibrant economies—work on a far broader agenda, which includes tackling security, economic, and health issues. It is a loose grouping rather than a formal alliance. Japan initially emphasized the democratic identity of the four nations, whereas India seemed more comfortable emphasizing functional cooperation. Australian leaders have been reluctant about creating the impression that the group is a formal alliance. See Smith, Sheila A., “The Quad in the Indo-Pacific,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, May 27, 2021, <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief//quad-indo-pacific-what-know>

In any case, India is the *added factor* in the geopolitical equation of the Indo-Pacific Geopolitics: *full of potential – but in need of drastic transformations to fulfil that potential.*

## 5.2. Japan

As it had been the case with several rising Powers in the course of history, Mainland China faces challenges both from the ruling status quo Power, read the United States, and from her countless neighbouring states. Beijing's proclaimed pursuit of “*win-win*” solutions as it expands its economic, political and military influence will only serve it for so long before the attendant imbalances in power lead to resistance — and in many places, that is *already* happening.

In this regard, the observation might deserve consideration that, what purely quantitative comparisons of U.S. and the PRC naval power essentially misunderstand are not only the remarkable differences in force structure, for instance, but also, and perhaps more importantly the incomparable regional ally differential maintained by the global maritime Power. Surprisingly enough, “the naval forces of such allies are seldom, if ever, part of the equation.”<sup>283</sup> For example, Beijing's single formal ally – the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (i.e., North Korea) – only maintains a handful of submarines and coastal patrol vessels. In contrast, the United States has formal military alliances with six state actors in the broader region – Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea (i.e., South Korea), and Thailand. Moreover, several Regional Powers maintain ever-deepening security relationships with the United States due precisely to concerns over potential threats from Mainland China.

It is true that the United States does remain the main guarantor of security for regional actors such as Japan and the Republic of Korea (i.e., South Korea); by no means are these states helpless though. In point of fact, the *Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force* maintains one of the largest surface fleets in the world, containing 51 major surface combatants; similarly, the ROKN currently totals 23 major warships.<sup>284</sup>

---

<sup>283</sup> Mainardi, op. cit.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

In the light of the above it becomes clear that, whether Mainland China will eventually achieve to reshape the naval, and therefore also the power balance in the Indo-Pacific, or not, will depend on the geostrategies drafted out and applied not only by the United States, but also by other regional strategic actors. For, as the U.S.–PRC strategic rivalry intensifies, there is a growing expectation in the Indo-Pacific region that, in addition to these two major players, Middle Powers such as India, Japan, and Australia should play more active roles to ensure stability. Some researchers make the interesting point that this reflects the reality that “the Indo-Pacific region is geographically extensive and culturally and politically diverse—and therefore should not be subject to unipolar or a bipolar hegemony.”<sup>285</sup>

Among the Middle Powers, there are high expectations for Japan to assume a comprehensive leadership role in the region, especially as it has multilayered relationships—economic, security, and cultural—with the countries of Southeast Asia.<sup>286</sup> Under the “*Free and Open Indo-Pacific*” vision shared by Japan, the United States and other countries, Japan is considered “well positioned to continue engaging with like-minded states on a range of issues in order to support regional stability and prosperity.”<sup>287</sup>

In recent years, international relations in the geopolitical subsystem of Asia-Pacific have been substantially influenced by the rise of *Mainland China* to the rank of a Great Power, and more importantly by her declared will to transform herself into a maritime Power. Hence the need for reconsidering of the American Strategy, as manifested in the term “*Indo-Pacific*” used by U.S. President *Donald Trump*, instead of the term “*Asia-Pacific*” that had been used by the previous American administration – and also the need for the new “*Free and Open Indo-Pacific [FOIP] Strategy*”.

Japan under former Prime Minister *Shinzō Abe* confirmed her active role in the framework of the *Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy*. With success of Mr. *Abe*’s economic policy (see the term “*Abenomics*”), and his decision to re-interpret Article 9 of the 1947 Constitution, Prime Minister’s *Abe* Japan moved forward towards assuming a clearly increased role in the major Indo-Pacific geopolitical region.

---

<sup>285</sup> Suzuki, op. cit.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

Interestingly enough, Mr. *Abe* has been the first statesman to use the term “*Indo-Pacific*” since 2007. And he talked about a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” strategy in August 2016 during his keynote address to the *Tokyo International Conference on African Development* (TICAD) in Nairobi, Kenya. The Free and Open Indo-Pacific “is a diplomatic initiative that seeks to develop the region as an “international public good” in which a unified ASEAN is central to maintaining the rules-based international order in a comprehensive, inclusive, and transparent manner that ensures stability and prosperity for the region as a whole.”<sup>288</sup> The Japanese Government has emphasised that this “is not a China-containment strategy, but rather a rules-based, inclusive framework for regional integration.”<sup>289</sup>

Under former Japanese Prime Minister *Abe*, and his successor Prime Minister *Yoshihide Suga*, Japan has developed, and maintains a shared interest with the U.S. in upholding the *Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy*. In point of fact, Mr. *Abe* had already underlined the *strategic link* between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean since 2007, in his famous speech to the Indian Parliament, during his first term. Five years later, when Mr. *Abe* returned to the office of the Japanese Prime Minister (2012), he once again invoked this matter, proceeding with further implementation of the aforementioned strategy. Besides, Japan is a member state of the *Quad* – which, however informal, is seen as a tool of a *strategy of containment* of Mainland China, especially since Trump’s Presidency. For her part, Japan has stressed the democratic identity of the four member states (the United States, Australia, Japan, and India).<sup>290</sup>

Thus, additionally to her economic strength and the increased influence that she already exercises in terms of “*Soft Power*”, Japan will play a more active role in the fields of security and defence. She already possesses a first-class Coast Guard; and if Tokyo succeeds in overcoming the limitations posed by a *stricto sensu* interpretation of Article 9 of the Constitution, *Japan’s Self-Defense Forces* (which are quite remarkable anyway) will be officially transformed into a true armed force ready to assume new roles and tasks in the major Indo-Pacific region.

---

<sup>288</sup> Suzuki, op. cit.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Smith, op. cit.

### 5.3. Vietnam

Vietnam consists of two geographic and population cores — the *Red River Delta* in the north, home to the capital of Hanoi, and the *Mekong River Delta* in the southern lowlands, where *Ho Chi Minh City* (former *Saigon*) sits.<sup>291</sup> These cores are separated by over 1,600 miles and connected by a thin and largely mountainous coastal spine, only around 30 miles wide at its narrowest point. Despite mountains and jungles, the northern Vietnamese core has a long history of invasion by forces from China. This almost continuous pressure from the north in part forced Vietnam's early rulers to expand the country's boundaries, first southward, to the Mekong River Delta, and then westward, into present day Laos and Cambodia.<sup>292</sup>

Historically and today, the natural geographic separation of Vietnam's northern and southern cores has exacerbated the two regions' social, cultural and political divide — leaving the country vulnerable to intervention by foreign powers, whether Chinese, French or American. Consequently, “Vietnam’s primary geographic challenge is to secure buffer space both on land and sea. Today, Vietnam's need for space and security in the South China Seas pits it against China, also in the throes of maritime expansion, thus adding a new dimension to Vietnam's longstanding struggle to carve space for itself against its larger northern neighbor.”<sup>293</sup>

Vietnam’s applied geostrategy since the *Doi Moi* era of the late 1980s led to a greater emphasis on political and economic integration with the geopolitical subsystem of Asia-Pacific and the broader international system. Vietnamese *geostrategy* since then has pursued:

- 
- a) strengthening ties with neighboring countries in the *Mekong River Delta sub-region* where Hanoi exercises significant influence,

---

<sup>291</sup> For an excellent analysis of the geo-economic significance of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) see Liu, F.-K., “Beijing’s Regional Strategy and China-ASEAN Economic Integration,” op. cit.

<sup>292</sup> “Vietnam's Geographic Challenge,” *Stratfor*, September 18, 2014. Retrieved from <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/vietnams-geographic-challenge>

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

- b) a more active role in the major *South-East Asian region*, and
- c) cultivating links with *Great Powers*.

In this regard of course, the most spectacular development has, undoubtedly, been the establishment and further strengthening of the bilateral relations with the United States of America – so as to confirm, one more time, the surprisingly persistent *survival of geopolitical patterns* in the course of human history and the supremacy of Geopolitics over ephemeral political systems and ideologies. For it is the inexorable and timeless laws of Geopolitics that have led the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to see in the face of the U.S., once the most hated enemy, the best ally towards the threat coming from the part of the People's Republic of China.

Thus, it was not from nowhere that the then U.S. President Barack Obama visited Hanoi in 2016 announcing an end to the decades-long U.S. arm sales embargo on the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.<sup>294</sup> Vietnam may purchase weapons from the United States under the same terms as other nations. President Obama's successor Donald Trump would follow soon, visiting Vietnam more than once and energetically seeking for a strengthening of the bilateral relations. One would think that the ideological gap would make such development impossible. But historically, Geography, and Geopolitics tend to prevail over ideology.

The reasoning behind both actors' geostrategies has to do with Mainland China. Geography dictates that the United States must find allies who have significant disputes with Mainland China and need support to cope with a potential threat. Both Communist China and Communist North-Vietnam were allied during the Vietnam War, with Beijing providing massive amounts of weapons, material and some military advisers to Vietnam. The CCP saw then the defeat of the United States as diminishing the American threat to the People's Republic of China.

---

<sup>294</sup> Thayer, Carl, "Obama's Visit to Vietnam: A Turning Point?" *The Diplomat*, May 31, 2016

Nevertheless, once the Vietnam War ended, and Vietnam became the dominating regional actor in Indochina, underlying geopolitical tensions between the two neighbouring countries re-emerged.

There had always been an old but still vivid national memory of China's occupation of Vietnam, anyway. China's imperial ambitions towards Vietnam go back to 208 BC when a Chinese General, *Trieu Da* proclaimed himself Emperor of much of the country. In 111 BC Vietnam was annexed by the Han and became the district of *Giao-chi*.<sup>295</sup> Over centuries of resistance some measure of independence was achieved, but Vietnam continued to pay tribute to China. The Mongols were successfully repelled during the twelfth century, attesting to the tenacity of the Vietnamese. The Chinese occupied the country in 1407 AD. Liberation was accomplished in 1428 after two decades of further resistance. China attacked in 1788 but was repelled.<sup>296</sup>

Upon such geopolitical, and geo-cultural background – and despite common shared Marxist-Leninist ideology – the rift between China and Vietnam became apparent when thousands of ethnic Chinese began to flee Vietnam during 1978. Territorial disputes over the Spratly (Nansha) Islands and Vietnam's invasion of *Cambodia* further increased tensions. In 1979, this turned into a shooting war.

The Soviet Union, now dealing with a hostile PRC, allied with Vietnam. Mainland China's invasion of Vietnam in 1979 was intended as a direct provocation to Moscow, which had signed a defence treaty with Hanoi in 1978, itself aimed at Beijing. This Soviet-Vietnamese alliance made Vietnam the 'linchpin' in the USSR's "drive to contain China."<sup>297</sup>

Beijing announced its intention to invade Vietnam on 15 February 1979, the very first day that the 1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty could be legally terminated by either

---

<sup>295</sup> Bolton, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> Scalapino, Robert A., "The Political Influence of the USSR in Asia," *Soviet Policy in East Asia*, Donald S. Zagoria (Ed.) (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 71.

party, and attacked Vietnam three days later. Moscow's failure to support Hanoi prompted the People's Republic of China to announce on 3 April 1979 that it intended to terminate the 1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance.<sup>298</sup>

After three weeks of fighting, the PLA withdrew. Although China's military action appeared to be a failure, Moscow's failure to assist Hanoi undermined Russo-Vietnamese relations and "effectively terminated the Soviet-Vietnamese defence treaty."<sup>299</sup> The outcome can, therefore, be seen as PRC's strategic victory by breaking the Soviet *encirclement* and by eliminating Moscow's threat of a *two-front war* against Mainland China.<sup>300</sup>

Washington saw this as a satisfactory *balance of power*. It therefore remained hostile toward Hanoi in the years that followed American withdrawal from Indochina, mainly for historical reasons. Nonetheless, with the collapse of the Soviet empire and later on, the spectacular growth of Mainland China's economy, which has been followed by PLA's rapid and imposing modernisation, the United States learned to value Vietnam as a geopolitical ally against an assertive PRC bidding for Regional Hegemony in the Indo-Pacific – and so did Vietnam with regard to its previous enemy.

Besides, Vietnam has increasingly claimed a pro-active role in regional multilateral structures. Quite characteristically, as 2019 was reaching its end, a distinguished researcher, Mr. Prashanth Parameswaran, had *verbatim* written in an analysis published by the Wilson Center that 2020 would be «a Big Year for Vietnam's Foreign Policy».<sup>301</sup>

---

<sup>298</sup> Bolton, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid. p. 17.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> Parameswaran, Prashanth, "Why 2020 Will Be a Big Year for Vietnam's Foreign Policy," *Wilson Center: Insight and Analysis*, December 3, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/why-2020-will-be-big-year-for-vietnams-foreign-policy>

As a matter of fact, Vietnam's Prime Minister *Nguyen Xuan Phuc* and his Government had been looking forward to welcome 2020, on which so many expectations had been invested. For 2020 would see Vietnam holding the position of the annually rotating chairmanship of the *Association of Southeast Asian Nations* (ASEAN) and, at the same time, Hanoi should hold a two-year term non-permanent seat at the *United Nations Security Council* – indeed, a first class opportunity for an international demonstration of Vietnam's diplomatic capabilities and its role as a security factor in the Indo-Pacific.

Yet, the chaos of the COVID-19 virus dispersion threatened to torpedo the very conduct of Vietnam's ASEAN chairmanship. Observers of Asia-Pacific Geopolitics and Foreign Affairs are aware of the fact that, as a norm, ASEAN diplomacy is mostly based on direct contact and personal communication. It is famously known for its face-to-face discussions of significant issues and the making of diplomatic or commercial agreements on the golf courses, at the karaoke halls, or during the drinks on sideline meetings. In the absence of such actual in-person meetings due to COVID-19, several foreign diplomats and journalists had predicted the failure of Vietnam's ASEAN chairmanship. However, Hanoi proved quite creative in its diplomatic actions and made the best out of the situation. Far from limiting itself to "damage control" as several experienced diplomats and observers had been expecting in the first months of 2020, the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs managed to organise and conduct all the important meetings and related events in an ASEAN year, including the first virtual summit in June 2020 and the final summit in November – which also included face-to-face meetings for the first time in 2020. Moreover, within the framework of the 53rd ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting and related meetings, up to forty-two documents were adopted.<sup>302</sup>

In the years to come, it must be taken for granted that Vietnam will seek to further improve its relationship with the United States and continue its efforts to ensure

---

<sup>302</sup> Linh, Nguyen Phuong, and Nguyen, Khac Giang, "Vietnam's Virtual Charm Offensive," *The Diplomat*, November 1, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/10/vietnams-virtual-charm-offensive>

valuable American support in dealing with Mainland China's rise as a hegemonic aspirant in the Indo-Pacific.

It will continue, in other words, to apply a pattern of *geo-strategy* which is, historically, *typical*, and even mandatory for any *coastal* or *littoral* Small, or Middle Power when facing a security challenge coming from a major land, Continental Power – in defence of its national interests and *regardless of ideology*, or political religion.



#### 5.4. Australia

Middle and Small Powers are making their own strategic moves as the United States and China compete for influence in the Indo-Pacific. Australia, which has generally emphasised economic cooperation with Mainland China, is doing her best not to bend to Beijing's economic coercion despite an economic deterioration caused by Covid-19—attracting a great deal of interest from ASEAN countries that have succumbed to intimidation in the past.

Australia's 2020 *Defence Strategy Update*, released on July 1, 2020, provides significant insight into Australia's security aspirations as a Middle Power.<sup>303</sup> The Defence Strategy Update aims at providing the country with “a new strategic policy framework to ensure Australia is able – and is understood as willing – to deploy military power to shape our environment, deter actions against our interests and, when required, respond with military force.”<sup>304</sup> It can therefore be reasonably argued that the document draws attention not only to deterrence by denial but also to deterrence by punishment, an approach that has obvious important implications for regional Geopolitics.

Noticeably, the updated strategy paper states that, comparing with 2016, Australia now faces “an environment of increasing strategic competition; the introduction of more capable military systems enabled by technological change; and the increasingly aggressive use of diverse grey-zone tactics to coerce states under the threshold for a conventional military response.”<sup>305</sup>

Evidently, Australia is dealing with the geopolitical shift in the Indo-Pacific in geostrategic terms; she “steps up in defense of the Indo-Pacific Order.”<sup>306</sup> She has reassured her alliance with the United States; Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs

---

<sup>303</sup> Australian Government, Department of Defence, Strategy and Policy, *2020 Defence Strategic Update & 2020 Force Structure Plan*, Released on 1 July 2020. Retrieved from <https://www1.defence.gov.au/strategy-policy/strategic-update-2020>

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

<sup>306</sup> Townshend, Ashley, and Thomas-Noone, Brendan, “Australia steps up in defense of the Indo-Pacific Order,” *The Diplomat*, September 1, 2020.

*Marise Paine* and Minister for Defence *Linda Reynolds* visited Washington, D.C., in July 2020 for the annual *Australia–United States Ministerial Consultations* (AUSMIN), at which they publicly aligned themselves with the United States on the South China Sea issue and denied the legitimacy of Beijing’s claims. Australia keeps promoting information sharing with New Zealand, Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom under the *Five Eyes* intelligence-sharing agreement. She coordinates with Japan, India, and the United States under the *Quadrilateral Security Dialogue* (“the Quad”) – again, one out of the many achievements of Donald Trump’s Presidency; and she also coordinates with India and even France under the informal *trilateral* security initiative.<sup>307</sup>

In July 2020, the Prime Ministers of Japan and Australia met virtually amid rising tensions over the South China Sea and Hong Kong, confirming and announcing the importance of the two countries’ co-operation under the *Free and Open Indo-Pacific* vision. Australia’s decision to upgrade Australia–India relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership at the Australia–India Summit in June 2020 also was particularly noteworthy given that Australia’s ties with India were the weakest among the *Quad* countries. Of course, the revitalization of the *Quadrilateral Security Dialogue* fueled Beijing’s suspicions of an emerging Asian version of NATO, but the Quad has yet to institutionalise security co-operation – with Australian Governments having been reluctant about creating the impression that the loose group is a formal alliance.<sup>308</sup>

Similarly, Canberra *declined* an invitation to participate in a *freedom of navigation operation* (FONOP) with the U.S. Navy in the South China Sea, citing Australia’s national interests. This does not necessarily mean that Australia does not perceive a national security threat from the part of the People’s Republic of China; an explanation is rather to be seen in the fact that – despite growing anti-Mainland China feelings of the Australian public opinion – the political elite realises the need to avoid further escalation, which could have extremely unpleasant consequences for the national economy.

---

<sup>307</sup> Rajagopalan, Rajeswari Pillai, “Rise of the Minilaterals: Examining the India-France-Australia Trilateral,” *The Diplomat*, September 17, 2020.

<sup>308</sup> Smith, Sh., op. cit.

### 5.5. Britain as an Indo-Pacific Power

Between 2018 and 2020, the British *Royal Navy* sent five warships to Asia-Pacific. Even more remarkably, each of those warships sailed through the South China Sea, which has increasingly been a field of projection of Mainland China's ambitions – along with the Taiwan Strait and the East China Sea – and the Apple of Discord among Mainland China and several other countries in the region. Notably, one of the Royal Navy's vessels, HMS *Albion*, conducted a U.S.-style *Freedom of Navigation Operation* (FONOP) in the Paracel Islands in August 2018.<sup>309</sup> As explained in previous pages, three countries claim sovereignty over the Paracel Islands, i.e., Mainland China (the *People's Republic of China*), Taiwan (the *Republic of China*) and the *Socialist Republic of Vietnam*. Of those three, Mainland China exercises a *de facto* sovereignty over the islands since recent years, based on the rule of force.

By 2022, the *Royal Navy* will have deployed its biggest flotilla of warships to Asia in a generation. The carrier strike group will be led by the *Royal Navy*'s largest ever warship, the \$3.9 billion, 65,000-ton aircraft carrier *HMS Queen Elizabeth*. The carrier will embark a squadron of *Royal Air Force* F-35B fighter jets as well as a squadron of *U.S. Marine Corps* F-35Bs. The *Queen Elizabeth* will be accompanied by approximately nine to 10 other warships, a mix of destroyers, frigates, support ships and submarines.<sup>310</sup>

The flotilla will visit Southeast Asia, almost certainly calling in at *Changi Naval Base* in Singapore. It may also participate in naval activities to mark the 50th anniversary of the *Five Power Defence Arrangements*, the military alliance that links the Power which once used to exercise *Command of the Seas*, i.e., Great Britain, with Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, and New Zealand – all four countries former *Dominions of the Crown*.<sup>311</sup> Significantly, this will not be a sort of one-off naval

---

<sup>309</sup> Storey, Ian, "Can the UK Achieve Its Naval Ambitions in the Indo-Pacific?" *The Diplomat*, November 7, 2020. Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2020/11/can-the-uk-achieve-its-naval-ambitions-in-the-indo-pacific>. See also "British navy's HMS Albion warned over South China Sea 'provocation'," *BBC News*, 6 September 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-45433153>

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>311</sup> For the *Five Powers Defence Arrangements* of 1971 see Thayer, Carlyle A., "The Five Power Defence Arrangements: The Quiet Achiever," *Security Challenges*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (February 2007), pp. 79-96.

maneuver, or showing the flag. Instead, the *Royal Navy* wishes its vessels to remain in the region for long.

What does all this mean? At a web-seminar hosted by the *International Institute for Strategic Studies* (IISS) in July 2020,<sup>312</sup> Vice Admiral *Jerry Kyd*, the *Royal Navy*'s *Fleet Commander*, described aircraft carriers as a “metaphor for a nation-state that intends to be relevant on the global stage at the strategic level.”<sup>313</sup> Carriers can, he said, fulfill a number of missions including strategic messaging, power projection, naval diplomacy and trade promotion.<sup>314</sup> Admiral *Kyd* noted that while the Euro-Atlantic space remains Britain's centre of strategic gravity – especially given the threat posed, in his view, by a resurgent Russia – the *Royal Navy* was “coming back” to the Indo-Pacific and that RN's ambition is to be “absolutely persistent” and be “forward” there.

Admiral *Kyd*'s comments are consistent with the new British Grand Strategy. The idea of a bigger British military/naval footprint (*'tilt'*) in the Indo-Pacific is included in the strategic vision of a “*Global Britain in a Competitive Age*,” the first comprehensive (111-page) review of the UK's defence, security, development and foreign policy since the end of the Cold War, which was drafted out by the Conservative Government led by Prime Minister Mr. *Boris Johnson*,<sup>315</sup> following the United Kingdom's historical decision of 2016 to leave the EU.

As stated above, Britain's new geostrategy remains firmly anchored within the Euro-Atlantic region, with the United States as her “most important strategic ally” and Russia as her most “acute threat”; yet, the People's Republic of China,

---

<sup>312</sup> IISS, “A new era for UK maritime air power: testing times, testing waters,” <https://www.iiss.org/events/2020/07/uk-maritime-air-power>, 13 July 2020

<sup>313</sup> Cited after Storey, op. cit.

<sup>314</sup> For further to this matter see Iliopoulos, Ilias, *History, Geography, and Strategy of Sea Power* (Athens: Livanis Editions, 2010).

<sup>315</sup> Cabinet Office, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*, 16 March 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy>

India and Japan are recognised as the three most important Powers in the Indo-Pacific with widely differing characteristics and relationships with the United Kingdom.<sup>316</sup>

The geostrategy of *Global Britain* recognises the PRC as an “authoritarian state” and warns that her increasing power and international assertiveness is likely to be the most significant geopolitical factor in the world today. The review also states that the People’s Republic of China poses the “biggest state-based threat” to the United Kingdom’s economic security and a “systemic challenge” to British security, prosperity and values. But, at the same time, it makes clear that it will seek to engage [Mainland] China at multiple levels, including as a “systemic competitor” for economic trade and investment amidst additional safeguards, whilst seeking cooperation on climate change. In effect, the UK’s approach to China appears to be to “compete where necessary; cooperate where possible; counteract when necessary”.<sup>317</sup>

Besides, the observation deserves attention that, in the new British geostrategy, an emphasis has been put on India. India is recognised as “the largest democracy in the world” and as an “international actor of growing importance.” The UK’s officially stated objective is to “transform bilateral cooperation over the next ten years across the full range of bilateral shared interests.”<sup>318</sup> The review seeks enhanced bilateral defence cooperation and the strengthening of maritime security.

In this context, the UK’s *Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office* went on to create an *Indo-Pacific Directorate*. Moreover, under its Permanent Under Secretary *Sir Philip Barton* (a former British *High Commissioner* to India, by the way), the FCDO “raised India’s profile by appointing, for the first time, a top-level official primarily tasked with building relations with India (and the Indian Ocean).”<sup>319</sup> Quite characteristically, while presenting his vision of *Global Britain*,

---

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Roy-Chaudhury, Rahul, “Undertanding the UK’s ‘tilt’ towards the Indo-Pacific,” *IISS Expert Commentary*, 15 April 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2021/04/uk-indo-pacific-tilt>

Prime Minister Johnson, in a highly symbolic gesture, announced to the *House of Commons* that he looked forward to visiting India soon.

The significance of the major Indo-Pacific geopolitical region for *Her Britannic Majesty's Government* becomes even clearer if taking into account the costs of the deployment and maintaining of a flotilla equal to more than a third of the Royal Navy's ships in the Indo-Pacific – a particularly heavy burden at a time when the United Kingdom is facing its worst economic crisis in decades due to the COVID-19. In April 2018, Britain had opened her naval support facility in Bahrain, her first permanent base in the western Indian Ocean since the British Armed Forces withdrew from East of Suez in the 1970s. The UK now has seven “permanent points of presence” in the Indian Ocean (Bahrain, Oman, Kenya, Brunei, Singapore, Diego Garcia and Qatar).<sup>320</sup>

Yet, being the very epitome of an insular, maritime, and sea-trade nation – which had been ruling the waves for centuries – Britain considers that *freedom of navigation* is one of the central pillars of the rules-based international order and economy. She, therefore, is committed to upholding it. In the light of the above observation one must see the fact that H.M.'s Government “takes no position on the territorial and maritime claims made by different countries in the South China Sea” but upholds the “right of innocent passage whenever transiting in another States' recognised territorial seas.”<sup>321</sup>

Free from Brussels, at last, *Global Britain*, as declared by Prime Minister *Boris Johnson*, is coming back to waters, sea lanes, and maritime routes, all too familiar to *Britannia* throughout her long history of *thalassocracy*.

---

<sup>320</sup> Storey, op. cit.

<sup>321</sup> Lunn, Jon, and Lang, Arabella, “The South China Sea dispute, July 2016, Updated,” House of Commons, Library, *Briefing Paper*, Number 7481, 12 July 2016, p. 28. Retrieved from <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7481/CBP-7481.pdf>

### 5.6. France as an Indo-Pacific Power

A short reference must be made to France's role as an Indo-Pacific Power. One seems often to ignore the plain fact that – apart from being a European, an Atlantic, and a Mediterranean Power – France is, at the same time, an important geostrategic actor in the major Indo-Pacific geopolitical region. She has substantial interests in the region, underpinned by her vast Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

French territories in the area span 11.7 million square kilometers of the South Indian and Pacific oceans, giving the European Power one of the world's largest EEZs! This grants France – always remaining a Naval Power – remarkable advantages. Further, these very parcels of land and sea allow France to gain an outsized political influence in the Indo-Pacific arena.<sup>322</sup> Indeed, if France chooses to speak, she cannot be ignored.

Among France's overseas territories are:

- a) the *Mayotte* and *La Réunion* Islands, *Scattered Island*, the *French Southern and Antarctic* lands in the southern Indian Ocean,
- b) *New Caledonia*, *Wallis-and-Futuna*, *French Polynesia* and *Clipperton* in the Pacific Ocean.

The French territories and islands mentioned above are home to 1.5 million French nationals and 8,000 military personnel, but their geostrategic value is incalculable given their geopolitical location.

The fact that France, along with the then-West Germany, had been one of the pioneers of the (Western) European unification has not prevented her from becoming the first member-state of the EU to embrace the geostrategic concept of the Indo-Pacific. In fact, the ruling elite in *Versailles* and the *Quai d'Orsay* achieved to receive financial help for those overseas departments from the EU through the *European Regional Development Fund* (ERDF). The *Mayotte* program received twelve million euros; a similar program including *La Réunion* Island received 63.2 million euros.

---

<sup>322</sup> Phar, Kim Beng, and Bizot, Clementine, "Is France Capable of Being an Indo-Pacific Power," *The Diplomat*, December 24, 2020. Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2020/12/is-france-capable-of-being-an-indo-pacific-power>.

France then passed another 2.43 billion euro budget for 2021 aimed for all of its overseas territories.<sup>323</sup>

French President *Emmanuel Macron* chose to announce France’s Indo-Pacific strategic vision while he was visiting Sydney and Nouméa in May 2018.<sup>324</sup> He declared France a “*resident Power*” in the Indo-Pacific. Furthermore, the recent initiative of forming a trilateral “*France – India – Australia strategic axis*”<sup>325</sup> – despite any discontent from the side of Continental Power China as manifested in the “*Global Times*”<sup>326</sup> – must be seen under this prism. This axis is aimed at unifying the geostrategic interests of the three Powers in the Indo-Pacific geopolitical region.



<sup>323</sup> See “France at the heart of INTERREG,” <https://www.pnoconsultants.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/France-at-the-heart-of-INTERREG-DEF.pdf>. See also Phar and Bizot, op. cit.

<sup>324</sup> Fisher, Denise, “The Indo-Pacific and France’s Pacific Sovereignty,” *Dans Outre-Terre*, 2020/1-2 (N° 58-59), pp. 401-427.

<sup>325</sup> Tillett, Andrew, “Emmanuel Macron vows new 'Indo-Pacific axis' with Australia to maintain balance,” *Financial Review*, May 2, 2018.

<sup>326</sup> “Macron’s opportunistic show in Indo-Pacific,” *Global Times*, 2018/5/3. Retrieved from <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1100663.shtml>

## Conclusions

With very few and remarkable exceptions – such as sending the then *Mediterranean Squadron* of the newly founded U.S. Navy (predecessor of the [Mediterranean] U.S. *Sixth Fleet* of our times) surprisingly far away from home, to the warm Mediterranean waters (“*off-shore of Libya*”), to fight the notorious *Berber* pirates,<sup>327</sup> in the beginning of the nineteenth century (i.e., roughly two decades after the thirteen British Crown colonies in North America had achieved to found an independent Republic) – the rise of the United States of America to the rank of a global maritime Power in the twentieth century took place only after that new geostrategic actor of the Western Hemisphere had largely secured its continental position, and was left with only two weak land neighbors. By contrast, Mainland China’s geostrategy, aiming at achieving maritime hegemony in the Indo-Pacific, and beyond, is being applied while, at the same time, Beijing is still seeking to secure its continental position mainly, though not exclusively through geo-economics, in the form of infrastructure, trade, and loans.

And yet, through a combination of Geopolitics, Geostrategy, and Geo-economics, Mainland China seems to represent the new *Heartland Power* envisioned by British geographer Sir Halford J. Mackinder. As early as his 1904 paper defining the Heartland, the founding father of Classic Anglo-Saxon Geopolitics did not exclude the possibility of “substitution” of Chinese control of the “inland area” for that of Russia – in which case “the geographical significance of the pivot position” would not “tend”; quite the opposite, actually, Mackinder considered such development to constitute a “peril to the world’s freedom”, “just because they [the Chinese] would add an oceanic frontage to the resources of the great continent, an advantage as yet denied to the Russian tenant of the pivot region.”<sup>328</sup>

Quite remarkably, in 1944 the Dutch-born American realist strategist Nicholas Spykman, Mackinder’s successor so to speak, also noted that the “dominant power in the Far East will undoubtedly be China, providing she achieves real unification and

---

<sup>327</sup> London, Joshua E., *Victory in Tripoli. How America’s War with the Barbary Pirates Established the U.S. Navy and Shaped a Nation* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2005).

<sup>328</sup> Mackinder, “The Geographical Pivot of History,” p. 437.

provided that Japan's military power is completely destroyed."<sup>329</sup> Even more impressively, Spykman foresaw a struggle between the United States and China for control of the "*Asian Rimland*" – which he also named "*Asiatic Mediterranean*."<sup>330</sup>

To a certain extent, a *new geopolitical Heartland* has already formed – at Mainland China's initiative and by her growth and *strategic ambition* – and is bent on domination in the broader Indo-Pacific *Rimland*, and beyond. A new *strategic axis* is about to be formed, with Mainland China as its *pivot* and under participation of Russia, Iran, Turkey, and, to a lesser extent, Pakistan. The fact that all these states seem to share an inclination towards *authoritarian* rule may not be the main driver of such geopolitical development, but it obviously facilitates it. Speaking in purely *realist*, geopolitical terms, the reasons for this are to be seen in the ongoing refusal of the "West", read the global ruling Power United States, to change its profoundly hostile attitude towards post-Soviet Russia and allow her the integration into the world system as equal and respected partner.

It is not for this paper to make a list, and a thoroughly analysis of the countless *strategic miscalculations* and *bad choices* made by so many successive White House Administrations, and by the notorious American foreign policy establishment in- and outside the U.S. Department of State, from 1992 to 2016, and again from 2021 onwards. Consequently, it would go beyond the scope of this work to discuss how Washington – blindly followed by Brussels – has managed to give birth to a *Sino-Russian* strategic axis. For the time being, and for the purpose of this paper what is of essence is that an increasing number of American, and other "Western" policy analysts and strategists seem to believe that, first, a *confrontation* between the United States and the People's Republic of China is *inevitable* – and that, second, the ruling Power has to confront the emerging Power *now* (which means, before the Eurasian Heartland Power succeeds in fully transforming itself into a *Blue Water Maritime Power*), *or accept the fact that Mainland China will be not just the Regional Hegemon in the Indo-Pacific, but in fact, the hegemonic Global Power in ten years' time.*

---

<sup>329</sup> Spykman, *The Geography of the Peace*.

<sup>330</sup> Sempa, Francis P., "Nicholas Spykman and the Struggle for the Asiatic Mediterranean," *The Diplomat*, January 9, 2015.

This is due to *objective* factors (such as demography and the rate of overall growth of mainland China), and also *subjective* reasons, notably the PRC's *strategic ambition* to be a leading World Power – a policy that is both developed and expressed by President Xi Jinping, with Mr. Xi clearly wishing to be counted among the most assertive world leaders of our time.

Under Xi Jinping's leadership, Mainland China does not only aims at establishing Regional Hegemony in the Indo-Pacific, but also seeks to expand to the entire globe, for the first time in Chinese history. Mainland China has already conquered Africa, in a manner of speaking. Mainland China further achieved to gain control of important ports of Southern and Western Europe (Greece, Spain, Italy, France, The Netherlands, Belgium) and of another 40 ports in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Southern and South-Eastern Asia, Oceania, and so on and so forth. Last, but not least, Mainland China even shows ambition for both the Arctic and the Antarctic.

Against this imposing geopolitical background, the *One Belt, One Road*, or *Belt and Road Initiative* proves to be something *essentially more* than a purely economic project, no matter how huge or spectacular; expanding over the whole of Eurasia – from the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean to the Gulf of Aden, from the Pacific to the Horn of Africa to the Mediterranean and beyond, up to North-Western Europe – this is a grandiose *geo-economic* plan with clear *geostrategic* parameters and objectives.

Or to put it in terms of historical analogies, the notorious “*Berlin–Baghdad–Bahn*” plan initiated by the *Second German Reich* (1914) – alarmed about which plan Britain eventually led Europe and the world into the *First World War* – almost looks negligible in size and scope, comparing with today's *Belt and Road* project. And even the U.S. Marshall Plan for Western Europe, *Belt and Road*'s closest equivalent, had a much narrower financial reach and timeline (1947-1951) and covered far fewer nations.

The keystone of this imposing architecture is undoubtedly Taiwan.

By looking at the map, we can see *why* one of Beijing's major goals is to attempt to swallow Taiwan. Mainland China's access to the Pacific – and if truth be told, its very *Road to Regional Hegemony* – is limited by two obstacles:

The first is the *small island chains* in the South and the East China Seas. When we look at the map, Mainland China's motive in asserting control over these island becomes clear. If Beijing cannot control these islands and shoals, it cannot exercise full *Command of the Sea* in the geopolitical sub-system of the Indo-Pacific nor can it truly become the *Regional Hegemon*.

The second obstacle is a *free* and self-confident Taiwan, which sticks out as a major spur aimed squarely at mainland China's southeast coast – and which, despite size and overwhelming numeric analogies, has developed formidable military forces to defend her freedom and dignity from the PRC's encroachment.

Indeed, *the Taiwan Strait seems to have become the most likely place for a dangerous, large-scale conflict between the United States and the People's Republic of China to start*. This eventuality is due not only to developments in Mainland China, but to policy choices that have been made in Washington throughout the last decades. Most particularly, the notorious policy of “*strategic ambiguity*”—in which neither Beijing nor Taipei can, and should be sure whether the United States will intervene in a conflict—has long outlived its usefulness; instead, it has contributed to instability in the Strait.

The conventional wisdom in the U.S. foreign policy bureaucracy holds that so long as Taiwan does *not* declare *formal independence*, Beijing will *not* invade. Yet, PRC's ruling state and party elite – which claims Taiwan as PRC's province, although Taiwan had never been part of the PRC's territory – passed a notorious “*Anti-Secession Law*” in 2005, mandating an armed “re-unification” if peaceful “re-unification” is not possible. And, according to PRC's opinion polls, 89% of people on the Mainland favour forced “re-unification.” Similarly, high ranking PLA officers are reported to have expressed their will to “realize re-unification by force,” should Taiwan refuse to cede to Beijing's leadership.<sup>331</sup>

---

<sup>331</sup> Mastro, Oriana Skylar, “Opinion: Why Tsai Ing-wen's re-election as president could darken Taiwan's future,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 11, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2020-01-11/taiwan-president-tsai-ingwen-election-china>

In recent years, read since Ms. Tsai Ing-wen's election, and re-election, Beijing has increasingly been using almost all means sort of a military assault on the islands, naval blockade, or full scale invasion (i.e., diplomatic and economic isolation and even strangulation, military threats and provocations, bullying, blackmail, and so on and so forth) to make the Taiwanese political elite and people accept PRC's sovereignty under the same notorious "*one Country, two Systems*" principle by which the CCP rules Hong Kong. After watching Beijing's crackdown in Hong Kong though, the ROC citizens want nothing of the similar and decided to send Beijing a clear message in January 2020. As the Foreign Minister of the Republic of China (Taiwan) *Dr. Joseph Wu* told in an interview at that time, "young voters here in Taiwan see the young demonstrators in Hong Kong fighting for their freedom and democracy [and realize] if they don't come out and try to save our country through the democratic process, Taiwan might become a second Hong Kong."<sup>332</sup> Thus, as *Oriana Skylar Mastro* from the *American Enterprise Institute* points out, there is a real danger that the lesson Beijing has taken from President Tsai's triumphal re-election in January 2020 is that "*the only way Taiwan will ever 'reunify' with mainland China is at the end of a gun.*"<sup>333</sup>

Meanwhile, several experts have started making the point that, to preserve regional stability and security, the United States must give up its old, *passée*, and counterproductive policy of *strategic ambiguity* with regard to Taiwan, and instead proceed with implementation of a *strategy of deterrence* of the People's Republic of China.

In this regard, it must be taken into serious consideration that "Deterrence signaling has been more systematically and directly applied when Beijing has perceived a major military threat or strategic trend placing a high value interest in jeopardy."<sup>334</sup> Beijing's recognition of the then existing *power asymmetry* between itself and Washington partially explains why *none* of the *post-Korean War* crises involving the United States evolved into direct military conflict. Mainland Chinese and American scholars agree that "one characteristic of Sino-American crises is [Mainland] China's

---

<sup>332</sup> Cited in Thiessen, Marc A., "Donald Trump is the most pro-Taiwan president in US history," *The Washington Post*, January 15, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.aei.org/op-eds/donald-trump-is-the-most-pro-taiwan-president-in-us-history/>

<sup>333</sup> Mastro, op. cit.

<sup>334</sup> Godwin and Miller, op. cit., p. 2.

consistent policy of seeking to avoid a military confrontation with the United States even as it employed or threatened the use of military force.”<sup>335</sup>

This record does *not*, however, necessarily transfer to a potential Taiwan crisis: for here, “some [Mainland] Chinese hold the view that whereas Taiwan involves a core interest for [Mainland] China, it is only of marginal strategic interest to the United States. Consequently, [Mainland] China should not be fearful of employing military force to deter Taiwan’s *de jure* independence because the United States could well decide that a war with [Mainland] China over Taiwan is simply too costly given the island’s low strategic value to the United States.”<sup>336</sup>

Besides, PRC’s rulers and strategists are certainly aware of the fact that PLA’s best “*invasion strategy*” is to strike and fight surprisingly and win decisively within a week; otherwise a Taiwan invasion could be a strategic disaster to the Mainland’s economy. They understand that time is of the essence, and time is on the other side – the trade partners, including Taiwan, Japan and America. After swiftly and decisively defeating Taiwan, Beijing would go to the table with the U.S. to terminate the political crisis and would guarantee to restore the daily economic operations in both Taiwan and Mainland China; and since the U.S. military power turned out to be too slow to deploy into the Taiwan Strait, Washington “unhappily accepts the deal rather than risk WW III”<sup>337</sup> – that is “the end state in the mind of PRC elite.”<sup>338</sup>

It goes without saying that this perception of the *asymmetric importance* of Taiwan to Beijing and Washington must be seriously taken into account by the latter as it otherwise seems to open for the PRC a promising window of opportunity for military action. Meanwhile, as the odds of a blockade, missile strike, or even invasion of Taiwan grow with each passing year, an increasing number of American analysts, opinion leaders, and even politicians argue that, to effectively dissuade Beijing from that course, *clarity* is in order – in form of a “declaratory statement of policy”, p.i., “committing the

---

<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

<sup>337</sup> Chiang Tawian, Chun W., ROC Army, “Crisis Management in the Taiwan Strait,” *USAWC Strategy Research Project*, U.S. Army War College, 7-4-2003.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

United States to the defense of Taiwan.”<sup>339</sup> Given Taiwan’s *strategic centrality* —an *island gate* to the larger Indo-Pacific—such a statement might be the single most effective thing that the United States could do to ensure enduring peace and stability in the region.

In the view expressed by two outstanding scholars, *Fu-Kuo Liu* and *Patrick Mendis*, even the new U.S. “TAIPEI Act” (*Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative*) of 2019, unanimously passed by the U.S. *House of Representatives* in May 2020, “has all but removed the ambiguity of the “one China policy” that helped maintain the status quo since Washington recognized Beijing in 1979.”<sup>340</sup> It must fairly be said though that *Donald Trump* has been the most *pro-Taiwan* President in American History.<sup>341</sup>

During his presidency, U.S. Navy warships sailed through the Taiwan Strait — the international waters separating the island republic from Mainland China — on a routine basis, compared with just one to three times a year under former President *Barack Hussein Obama*.<sup>342</sup> While both former President Obama and former President *George W. Bush* refused Taiwan’s entirely justified and legitimate requests to buy F-16 fighter jets for fear of provoking Beijing’s anger, President Trump approved the sale — the first since 1992. And after his election, in November 2016, Donald Trump became the first U.S. President or President-elect to speak directly with his Taiwanese counterpart since *Jimmy Carter* downgraded U.S. diplomatic relations in 1978 when he accepted a congratulatory call from President Tsai Ing-wen. Of course, such calls are routine in similar instances, but because of the peculiar diplomatic constraints placed on Taiwan to the benefit of *Communist* China in the 1970s, Donald Trump’s

---

<sup>339</sup> Mazza, Michael, Global Taiwan Institute, “Imagining the end of strategic ambiguity,” <https://www.aei.org/articles/imagining-the-end-of-strategic-ambiguity>, June 3, 2020. This point was made, for instance, by Congressman Mike Gallagher (Republican-Wisconsin).

<sup>340</sup> Mendis, Patrick, and Liu-Fu-Kuo, “The Early Casualties of the TAIPEI Act in the Post-Coronavirus World,” *The National Interest*, May 17, 2020. Retrieved from <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/early-casualties-taipei-act-post-coronavirus-world-154851>

<sup>341</sup> Thiessen, op. cit.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

direct communication with Ms. Tsai marked a *historical milestone*, as it would be seen in the years to come.

Indeed, Trump's administration elevated ties with Taiwan and sold it *game-changing* weapons (torpedoes, surface-to-air missiles, air-to-ground missiles, mobile anti-ship *Harpoon* missiles, etc. further to the aforementioned F-16s). The reasoning behind this was to raise the costs of a PLA invasion by making Taiwan a "*porcupine*."

It goes without saying that President Trump's approach enraged both Beijing and *the U.S. foreign policy establishment*; remarkably though, his policy found an increasingly *bipartisan* support in Congress. In a sense, President Trump was just complying with the *Taiwan Relations Act*, which requires the U.S. Administration to sell the Republic of China (Taiwan) weapons necessary for its *self-defence*. But prior U.S. Administrations had failed to meet this standard because of their *policies of appeasement* of Communist China. President Trump sent two high-ranking officials of his Administration to Taipei.

Furthermore, Trump's Administration achieved to make a Taiwan-related decision of high political symbolism, only a few days before the President had to leave the White House. The then U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that he was lifting all restrictions on contacts between U.S. officials and their Taiwanese counterparts, thus putting an end to an applied policy of almost five decades. Mr. Pompeo said that for several decades the State Department had created complex internal restrictions on interactions with Taiwanese counterparts by American diplomats and other officials. He then announced that he is lifting all of these self-imposed restrictions, which had been decided by several U.S. governments "unilaterally", in an attempt "to appease the Communist regime in Beijing." Thereafter, an announcement was made that the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Ms. Kelly Craft, would visit Taiwan for meetings with senior Taiwanese leaders.

By this last decision, Donald Trump's Administration almost completed the historical shift of the U.S. policy on the China and Taiwan issue – which had marked Trump's Presidency since the very beginning. If truth be told, the previous U.S. Administration came one step short of completion of this major historical change. This step would certainly be a full diplomatic recognition of Taiwan as a sovereign state –

in other words, a complete reversal of the infamous Kissinger's policy and a restoration of the bilateral relations at the status that had existed until approximately forty-five years ago. Of course, after the power shift at the White House, statesmen, diplomats, political analysts, and strategists are eager to find out the future policy course of Mr. *Joe Biden's* Administration towards Mainland China, the Indo-Pacific, and more significantly, Taiwan.

“*But isn't Taiwan too little a country compared with Mainland China?*” one might ask. President Tsai Ing-wen's reply herein has been that “From a global standpoint, Taiwan is more important than ever.”<sup>343</sup> Ms. Tsai explained that stabilising relations across the Taiwan Strait is no longer an issue solely for Taiwan and Mainland China, but “a concern for the whole Indo-Pacific region” and “a focus of international attention.”<sup>344</sup>

Indeed, Taiwan matters greatly to her Indo-Pacific neighbours, especially since planning and implementation of President Tsai's *New Southbound Policy*.<sup>345</sup> The President further reminded that her country had worked alongside the international community to confront the consequences of COVID-19 and did show to the international community that “Taiwan can help.”<sup>346</sup> If truth be told, the island republic had been eager to generously provide all countries threatened with humanitarian aid, and to do so not only in the Indo-Pacific, or Africa, but even in Europe. Taiwan therefore matters to all nations in the world as it has shown that it is “a force for good in the world”,<sup>347</sup> and will continue to be an indispensable member of the international community, both now and into the future. But over, and above that, Taiwan matters to all nations because it stands as a perpetual reminder of what is possible in international relations – both for better and for worse.

The Republic of China (Taiwan) offers proof that development – both political and economic – is possible; that democratisation is possible – and need not require outside intervention or bloodshed. Taiwan has grown into a society that represents all

---

<sup>343</sup> Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan), News Releases, *President Tsai delivers New Year's Address*, 2021-01-01. Retrieved from <https://english.president.gov.tw/News/6089>

<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

<sup>345</sup> CSIS, *Taiwan's New Southbound Policy. Deepening Taiwan's Regional Integration*, July 2019. Retrieved from <https://southbound.csis.org>.

<sup>346</sup> Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan), *President Tsai delivers New Year's Address*, op. cit.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

important values of what used to be called once *the Free World* – all values the “West” occasionally tries to promote elsewhere in the world, but in vain – notoriously scoring a myriad of own goals, or resulting in infamous *blow-backs*, and causing *rivers of blood* (see Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, etc.). Instead, Taiwan achieved all of this, all on her own – in spite of all limitations *unfairly* imposed upon her since the 1970s, and even in recent years, the most shameless, opprobrious, and scandalous of which is, undoubtedly, the ongoing exclusion of 23.500.000 Taiwanese people from the World Health Organisation (WHO).

But the experience made by the Republic of China demonstrates how vulnerable the freedom of states actually is. It reveals that the freedom most nations take for granted ultimately rests on the will and determination of a people, and on the will and determination of its leaders and political elite, Foreign Service, Armed Forces, intellectual elite and last, but not least, of the citizens themselves to maintain, safeguard and defend their set of values and way of life – and to draft out and apply smart and effective geostrategies, following proper assessments of the geopolitical situations, trends, and shifts.

Taiwan’s leaders have been teaching the world *lessons in dignity*. In a speech in October 2020, President Tsai Ing-wen made clear that it was [Mainland] China that “had undermined its relations with Taiwan through its constant military provocations.” The President noted that her Administration did not “act rashly” in response, but she did not yield to Beijing’s wishes. Ms. Tsai declared that Taiwan is willing to facilitate “meaningful dialogue under the principles of parity and dignity.”<sup>348</sup> At almost the same time, President Tsai Ing-wen, Prime Minister Su Tseng-chang and Minister of National Defence Yen De-fa unanimously stated that “Should (Mainland) China launch a war against Taiwan, the military would fight to the last standing person.” And they also declared that “*Taiwan will not fall!*”

*It is highly probable that, within the next few years, the world will witness a major attempt of Mainland China to absorb Taiwan.* In such case, the United States will be faced with a terrible *dilemma*. Hong Kong was easily subdued and there was but a minimal, verbal reaction from the “West.” But *Taiwan’s seizure would be of a significantly greater order of magnitude.* If the United States were to abandon Taiwan

---

<sup>348</sup> “Tsai seeks ‘meaningful’ cross-strait talk,” *Taipei Times*, October 11, 2020.

in PRC's hands that would indicate weakness in U.S. capability or resolve – or both. Other nations would be forced to consider whether their interests, too, might be at risk. Hence, if the “West” is seen as reducing its commitment to Taiwan it will have an impact on the global maritime order and security architecture.

*Even though* the United States has no formal alliance with the Republic of China (Taiwan) – indeed, it doesn't even recognise the ROC as a state since the dramatic shift in U.S. foreign policy initiated by Kissinger in the 1970s – Taiwan retains an important symbolic role in the U.S.-led system of alliances, institutions, and relationships. If truth be told, the Republic of China (Taiwan) is *critical* to U.S. credibility: *how* America handles the security aspects of her Taiwan policy is an important indicator of her capacity and willingness to honour other commitments around the world.

Sadly, both successive ruling Occidental (once upon a time referred to as “Anglo-Saxon”) maritime Powers have *a bad record of abandoning, or worse betraying their allies* – a bitter lesson from History the Republic of China has learned better than anyone else (for instance, in 1946, January 1950, November 1953, 1954, 1962, 1971/72, 1978, and so on and so forth).

Yet, in Admiral *Eric McVadon's* words, “American credibility as an alliance partner and as a bulwark of peace and stability in the region and around the world would be sorely diminished” were the United States to cease support of Taipei and “lead Beijing to conclude that it can attack Taiwan and *not* be repulsed.”<sup>349</sup> Or, as *Albert Willner* has put it, America's friends already are alert for signs of a decline in U.S. power; if the U.S. makes decisions regarding Taiwan that reinforce this perception, it will have profound implications for America's other relationships.<sup>350</sup>

“*Is there no way for the ruling Power to avoid open confrontation with the rising Power?*” one may reasonably ask. In view of the rise of Mainland China as an increasingly *Revisionist Power*, a realist answer would be “*yes, but*” – America must abandon *strategic uncertainty* and specify *a priori* her commitment to defend Taiwan.

---

<sup>349</sup> Cited after Rigger, Shelley, “Why giving up Taiwan will not help us with China,” *American Enterprise Institute Report*, 29 November 2011, <https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/why-giving-up-taiwan-will-not-help-us-with-china>

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*

Taiwan is a Sovereign State with its own national Flag, Anthem, and Currency, Government, Parliament, and other robust democratic institutions, Armed Forces, Foreign Service, foreign diplomatic partners, a first-class human capital in universities, research labs, hospitals, and services, and one of the world's largest economies. Ongoing *strategic ambiguity* may mislead Beijing's ruling state and party elite into making fatal steps – which would then be irreversible.

Or, to put it with excellent historian *Victor Davis Hanson's* almost dramatic words, “*throughout history, conflict had always broken out between enemies when the appearance of deterrence – the material and spiritual likelihood of using greater military power successfully against an aggressive enemy – vanished.*”<sup>351</sup>

Taiwan's planned capture by Mainland China will be the most critical *test case* of the would-be *Regional Hegemon* of the major Indo-Pacific region. And the response of the United States will be the most serious *credibility test* of American *Global Primacy*. A key question, then, for twenty-first century's Geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific, and beyond, is whether the *ruling maritime Power* and the *rising Eurasian Heartland Power* will be able to escape the proverbial *Thucydides trap*...

---

<sup>351</sup> Hanson, Victor Davis, *The Second World Wars: How the First Global Conflict Was Fought and Won* (Basic Books, 2017).

## Literature

- Allison, Graham, *Destined for War: Can America and China escape the Thucydides's Trap?* (Mariner Books, 2017).
- Allison, G., "The Thucydides Trap. Are the U.S. and China Headed for War?" *The Atlantic*, September 24, 2015. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/09/united-states-china-war-thucydides-trap/406756/>
- Anderlini, Jamil, "China's dream of using Hong Kong as model for Taiwan's future is dead," *Financial Times*, January 11, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.ft.com/content/15d992f4-33a1-11ea-9703-eea0cae3f0de>
- Art, Robert J., "Geopolitics Updated: The Strategy of Selective Engagement", *International Security*, 1998/1999, Vol. 23, No. 3, pp. 95-97.
- Aspinwall, Nick, "Xi Says Taiwan 'Must' Unify With China as Tsai Unveils Her Own 'Four Musts'," *The Diplomat*, January 2, 2019. Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2019/01/xi-says-taiwan-must-unify-with-china-as-tsai-unveils-her-own-four-musts>
- Australian Government, Department of Defence, Strategy and Policy, *2020 Defence Strategic Update & 2020 Force Structure Plan*, Released on 1 July 2020. Retrieved from <https://www1.defence.gov.au/strategy-policy/strategic-update-2020>
- Australian Government, Department of Defence, *Defence White Paper*. Released on 3 May 2013. Retrieved from [https://www.defence.gov.au/whitepaper/2013/docs/WP\\_2013\\_web.pdf](https://www.defence.gov.au/whitepaper/2013/docs/WP_2013_web.pdf)
- Baker, Rodger, "China's Amphibian Dilemma: Straddling Land and Sea Ambitions," *Stratfor.com*, 7 September 2020. Retrieved from <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/china-s-amphibian-dilemma-straddling-land-and-sea-ambitions>
- Bertram, Christoph, "Europe's Best Interest: Staying Close to Number One," *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft* (International Politics and Society), Vol. 6, No. 1 (January 2003). Retrieved from [https://www.fes.de/ipg/IPG1\\_2003/ARTBERTRAM.HTM](https://www.fes.de/ipg/IPG1_2003/ARTBERTRAM.HTM)

- Bloomberg, *U.S. Signals to China It Won't Keep Out of South Sea*, retrieved from <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2010-07-23/u-s-says-settling-south-china-sea-disputes-leading-diplomatic-priority-> on 23 July 2010.
- Bolton, Kerry, *Geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific: Emerging Conflicts, New Alliances* (London: Black House Publishing Ltd, 2013).
- Boot, Max, and Doran, Michael, "Political Warfare," *Policy Innovation Memorandum*, No. 33, Council on Foreign Relations, June 2013, retrieved from [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/166932/Policy\\_Innovation\\_Memorandum\\_33\\_Boot.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/166932/Policy_Innovation_Memorandum_33_Boot.pdf)
- Bower, Ernest Z., "Hillary Clinton—A Secretary of State Fluent in ASEAN," *Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Newsletter*, 20 July 2010, retrieved from <https://www.csis.org/analysis/hillary-clinton%E2%80%94secretary-state-fluent-asean> on 20 July 2010.
- Brill, Heinz, *Geopolitik heute; Deutschlands Chance* (Berlin: Ullstein Verlag, 1994).
- Brill, H., "Geopolitik in der Diskussion," *Zeitschrift für Politik – Neue Folge*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (1998), pp. 205-219.
- Brzezinski, Zbigniew, *Die einzige Weltmacht; Amerikas Strategie der Vorherrschaft* (English title: *The Grand Chessboard; American Primary and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*), (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1999).
- Brzezinski, Z., „A Plan for Europe“, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 1 (January/February 1995), pp. 26-42.
- Buckley, Chris, and Horton, Chris, "Xi Jinping Warns Taiwan that Unification Is The Goal and Force Is An Option," *The New York Times*, January 1, 2019.
- Buckley, C., "China says U.S. naval ship broke the law," *Reuters*, 10 March 2009, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-idUSPEK9458120090310>
- Bush, Richard C., "Taiwan's elections results, explained," *Brookings*, January 16, 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2016/01/16/taiwans-election-results-explained>
- Cabinet Office, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*, 16 March 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy>

- Cable, James, *The Political Influence of Naval Force in History* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998).
- Campbell, Kurt, *The Pivot: The Future of American Statecraft in Asia* (Grand Central Publishing, 2016), Nook Book (eBook).
- Carpenter, Ted Galen, "Is Beijing Preparing for Backdoor Military Aggression Against Taiwan?" *The American Conservative*, and *Cato Institute Commentary*, June 8, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.cato.org/commentary/beijing-preparing-backdoor-military-aggression-against-taiwan>
- Carter, A. B.; Perry, W. J.; Steinbruner, J. D., *A New Concept of Cooperative Security*, Brookings Occasional Paper, Washington, DC (The Brookings Institution), 1992.
- Cartwright, Mark, "The Seven Voyages of Zheng He," *World History Encyclopedia*, 7 February 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1334/the-seven-voyages-of-zheng-he>.
- Cavanna, Thomas P., "Unlocking the Gates of Eurasia: China's Belt and Road Initiative and its Implications for U.S. Grand Strategy," *Texas National Security Review*, Vol. 2, Issue 3 (May 2019), <http://dx.doi.org/10.26153/tsw/2927>.
- Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, China Strategic Perspectives No. 6, Godwin, Paul H.B., and Miller, Alice L., *China's Forbearance Has Limits: Chinese Threat and Retaliation Signaling and Its Implications for a Sino-American Military Confrontation* (Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press, April 2013).
- Chen, Dean P., "The Strategic Implications of Ma Ying-jeou's "One ROC, Two Areas" Policy on Cross-Strait Relations," *American Journal of Chinese Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (April 2013), pp. 23-41.
- Chiang Tawian, Chun W., ROC Army, "Crisis Management in the Taiwan Strait," *USAWC Strategy Research Project*, U.S. Army War College, 7-4-2003.
- Churchill, Winston S. Sir, *The Second World War*, Vol. 1: "The Gathering Storm", London (Guild), 1985. First publication 1948.
- Cole, J. Michael, "China Ends 'Median Line' in the Taiwan Strait: The Start of a Crisis?" *The National Interest*, September 22, 2020. Retrieved from <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/china-ends-%E2%80%98median-line%E2%80%99-taiwan-strait-start-crisis-169402>.

- Corbett, Julian Sir, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy. Classics of Sea Power. With an introduction and notes by Eric Grove* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988). First publication 1911.
- Council on Foreign Relations, Center for Preventive Action, “Armed Clash in the South China Sea,” *Contingency Planning Memorandum No. 14*, April 11, 2012, retrieved from <https://www.cfr.org/report/armed-clash-south-china-sea>.
- CSIS (Center for Strategic and International Studies), *Taiwan’s New Southbound Policy. Deepening Taiwan’s Regional Integration*, July 2019. Retrieved from <https://southbound.csis.org>.
- Defense Intelligence Agency, *China Military Power. Modernizing a Force to Fight and Win*, 2019, p. 70, [https://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/China\\_Military\\_Power\\_FINAL\\_5MB\\_20190103.pdf](https://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/China_Military_Power_FINAL_5MB_20190103.pdf)
- DeLisle, Jacque, “Political Warfare, Sharp Power, the U.S., and East Asia,” *Orbis*, April 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.fpri.org/article/2020/04/editors-corner-spring-2020-political-warfare-sharp-power-the-u-s-and-east-asia>
- Deng Xiaoping, *Opening speech at the 12th National Congress of the Communist Party of China*, September 1, 1982. Retrieved from [https://cpcchina.chinadaily.com.cn/2010-10/20/content\\_13918249.htm](https://cpcchina.chinadaily.com.cn/2010-10/20/content_13918249.htm)
- Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Military and Security Developments involving the People’s Republic of China 2020*. Annual Report to Congress. Retrieved from <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF>
- Donnelly, Eric, “The United States – China EP-3 Incident: Legality and ‘Realpolitik’,” *Journal of Conflict & Security Law*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Spring 2004), pp. 25-42).
- Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, *Changes in the Taiwanese/ Chinese identity of Taiwanese as tracked in surveys by the Election Study Center, 1992–2015*. Retrieved from <https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/PageDoc/Detail?fid=7800&id=696>.
- Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, *Taiwan independence vs. unification with the mainland trend distribution in Taiwan, 1992–2015*. Retrieved from <https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/PageDoc/Detail?fid=7801&id=6963>.

- Emeritus Professor Thayer, Carlyle A., "Background Briefing: Recent Naval Exercises in the South China Sea," *SAGE International*, 6/7/2011, retrieved from <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/131071/Background%20Briefing.pdf>.
- Esposito, Bruce J., "The Military Viability of Taiwan" in Jack F. Williams (Ed.), *The Taiwan Issue* (Lansing: Asian Studies Center of Michigan State University, 1976).
- Everington, Keoni, "Chinese warplanes violated Taiwan's ADIZ 40 times in 2 days," *Taiwan News*, September 11, 2020
- Feith, Douglas J., "China's Maritime Strategic Challenge," *National Review*, October 18, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.hudson.org/research/15404-china-s-maritime-strategic-challenge>
- Fels, Enrico, *Shifting Power in Asia-Pacific? The Rise of China, Sino-US Competition and Regional Middle Power Allegiance* (Springer International Publishing, 2017).
- Fisher, Denise, "The Indo-Pacific and France's Pacific Sovereignty," *Dans Outre-Terre*, 2020/1-2 (No. 58-59), pp. 401-427.
- Forage, Paul C., "The Foundations of Chinese Naval Supremacy in the Twelfth Century" in Jack Sweetman *et al.* (Eds.), *New Interpretations: Naval History 10<sup>th</sup> Symposium* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991).
- Foreign Ministry's Statement: "Seriously Protesting Japanese Government's Infringement on China's Sovereignty," *Peking Review*, Vol. 20, No. 25, June 17, 1977, pp. 16-17.
- Fu, Jen-Kun, *Taiwan and the Geopolitics of the Asian-American Dilemma* (New York; Westport, Connecticut, London: Praeger, 1992).
- Gray, Colin S., *The Geopolitics of the Nuclear Era: Heartland, Rimlands, and the Technological Revolution* (New York: Crane, Russak, 1977).
- Haddick, Robert, "America Has No Answer to China's Salami-slicing," *War on the Rocks*, February 6, 2014. Retrieved from <https://warontherocks.com/2014/02/america-has-no-answer-to-chinas-salami-slicing>
- Hanson, Victor Davis, *The Second World Wars: How the First Global Conflict Was Fought and Won* (Basic Books, 2017).
- Harding, Richard, *Sea power and Naval Warfare, 1650-1830* (London: University College Press, 1999).

- Haushofer, Karl, *Der deutsche Anteil an der geographischen Erschliessung Japans und des südjapanischen Erdraumes und deren Forderung durch den Einfluss von Krieg und Weltpolitik* (München: *Mitteilungen der Geographischen Gesellschaft in München*, IX, Nr. 1, 1914).
- Haushofer, K., *Südostasiens Wiederaufstieg zur Selbstbestimmung* (Berlin-Grunewald: Kurt Vowinckel Verlag, 1923).
- Haushofer, K., *Geopolitik des Pazifischen Ozeans* (Berlin-Grunewald: K. Vowinckel Verlag, 1925).
- Haushofer, K., *Grenzen in ihrer geographischen und politischen Bedeutung* (Berlin-Grunewald: K. Vowinckel Verlag, 1927).
- Haushofer, K.; Obst, Erich; Lautensach, Hermann; Maull, Otto (Hrsg.), *Bausteine zur Geopolitik* (Berlin: Grunewald, 1928).
- Haushofer, K., *Macht und Erde. 2: Jenseits der Großmächte* (K. Haushofer, Hrsg., 1932).
- Haushofer, K., *Deutsche Kulturpolitik im indopazifischen Raum. Mit einem biographischen Anhang von Hans Roemer* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1939).
- Hepple, Leslie W., "The revival of Geopolitics," *Political Geography Quarterly*, Vol. 5, issue 4, supplement 1, October 1986, pp. 21-36.
- Heydarian, Javad, "Manila's Balancing Act: The South China Sea dispute underscores the problems the Aquino has in balancing China and the United States," *The Diplomat*, 4 October 2011.
- Hille, Kathrin, "Taiwan claims 'severe provocation' after China military drills," *Financial Times*, September 10, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.ft.com/content/9bf1c039-3222-4aa7-be37-6f01afc41ef2>
- Hookway, James, "Vietnam Plans Live-Fire Drill After China Spat," *The Wall Street Journal*, 10 June 2011.
- Huang, David Wei Feng (Ed.), *Asia Pacific Countries and the US Rebalancing Strategy* (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2016).
- Hughes, Lindsey, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).
- IISS, "A new era for UK maritime air power: testing times, testing waters," <https://www.iiss.org/events/2020/07/uk-maritime-air-power>, 13 July 2020

- Ikenberry, John G., and Kupchan, Charles A., “Socialization and Hegemonic Power,” *International Organization*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (Summer 1990): 283–315, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002081830003530X>
- Iliopoulos, Ilias, “Taiwan: A Time for Clarity,” *In Depth*, Retrieved from <https://indepth.gr/taiwan-a-time-for-clarity>.
- Iliopoulos, I., *Ίστορία, Γεωγραφία και Στρατηγική τῆς Ναυτικῆς Ἴσχύος* (Historia, Geographia kai Stratēgikē tēs Nautikēs Ischyos, i.e., History, Geography, and Strategy of Sea Power), (Athens: Livanis Editions, 2010).
- Johnson, Christopher K., “President Xi Jinping’s “Belt and Road” Initiative. A Practical Assessment of the Chinese Communist Party’s Roadmap for China’s Global Resurgence,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Report*, March 28, 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.csis.org/analysis/president-xi-jinping%E2%80%99s-belt-and-road-initiative>.
- Jordis von Lohausen, Heinrich, *Denken in Völkern: Die Kraft von Kultur, Sprache und Raum in der Weltgeschichte* (Graz: Leopold Stocker-Verlag, 2001).
- Kan, Shirley A. (Coordinator); Best, Richard; Bolkcom, Christopher; Chapman, Robert; Cronin, Richard; Dumbaugh, Kerry; Goldman, Stuart; Manyin, Mark; Morrison, Wayne; O’Rourke, Ronald, Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division; and Ackerman, David, American Law Division, “China-U.S. Aircraft Collision Incident of April 2001: Assessments and Policy Implications,” *Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report for Congress*, Order Code RL30946, Updated October 10, 2001, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30946.pdf>
- (Dr.) Kaufman, Alison A., *China’s Participation in Anti-Piracy Operations off the Horn of Africa: Drivers and Implications*, Center of Naval Analyses, Conference Report, MISC D0020834.A1/Final July 2009. Retrieved from [https://www.cna.org/cna\\_files/pdf/D0020834.A1.pdf](https://www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/D0020834.A1.pdf)
- Kaushiva, Pradeep, and Singh, Abhijit (Eds.), *Geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific* (New Delhi: KW Publishers Pvt Ltd in association with the National Maritime Foundation, 2011).
- Kennedy, Paul, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers. Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987).
- Khurana, Gurpreet S., “Security of Sea Lines: Prospects for India-Japan Cooperation”, *Strategic Analysis*, Volume 31, No. 1 (2007), pp. 139–153.

- Kjellén, Rudolf, *Staten som Lifsform* (Stockholm, 1916). German edition: *Der Staats als Lebensform* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1917).
- Kinder, Hermann, and Hilgemann, Werner, *dtv-Atlas zur Weltgeschichte* (Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1991), 25. Ausgabe (25th Publication), Bände (Vols.) I and II.
- Kissinger, Henry A., *Die sechs Säulen der Weltordnung* (English Title: *The Six Pillars of the World Order*), (Berlin: Siedler, 1992).
- Kissinger, H. A., *Die Vernunft der Nationen* (English Title: *Diplomacy*) (Berlin: Siedler, 1994).
- Kondylis, Panajiotis, *Planetarische Politik nach dem kalten Krieg* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1992).
- Krauthammer, C., “The Unipolar Moment Revisited”, *The National Interest*, 2002/03, No. 70.
- Kristof, Ladis K. D., “The Origins and Evolution of Geopolitics,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1960), pp. 15-51.
- LaGrone, Sam, “AFRICOM: Chinese Naval Base in Africa Set to Support Aircraft Carriers,” *USNI (United States Naval Institute) News*, April 20, 2021. Retrieved from <https://news.usni.org/2021/04/20/africom-chinese-naval-base-in-africa-set-to-support-aircraft-carriers>
- Lai To, Lee, “The South China Sea: China and Multilateral Dialogues,” *Security Dialogue*, vol. 30, No. 2 (June 1999), pp. 165-178.
- Lampton, David M.; Ho, Selina Ho; Kuik, Cheng-Chwee, *Rivers of Iron: Railroads and Chinese Power in Southeast Asia* (University of California Press, 2020).
- Lasater, M. (Ed.), *The Two Chinas: A Contemporary View* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1986).
- Lasater, M., *U.S. Policy Towards China's Re-unification: The Reagan Years, 1980-1986*. Ph.D. dissertation submitted to George Washington University, 1988.
- Layne, Christopher, “From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing”, *International Security*, 1997, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 86-124.
- Lee Myers, Steven, and Horton, Chris, “In Blow to Beijing, Taiwan Re-elects Tsai Ing-wen as President,” *The New York Times*, January 11, 2020.

- Lin, Cheng-yi, *China, the U.S., and the Security of Taiwan*. Ph.D. dissertation submitted to the University of Virginia, 1987.
- Linder, J., "Taiwan's Troubled Security Outlook", *Strategic Review* 8, No. 4 (Fall 1980), pp. 104-118.
- Linh, Nguyen Phuong, and Nguyen, Khac Giang, "Vietnam's Virtual Charm Offensive," *The Diplomat*, November 1, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/10/vietnams-virtual-charm-offensive>
- Liu, Fu-Kuo, "Reexamining Taiwan's South China Sea policy dilemma," *China International Strategy Review*, Volume 1, Issue No. 1 (2019), pp. 169-180. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42533-019-00015-w>
- Liu, F.-K., "Beijing's Regional Strategy and China-ASEAN Economic Integration," *The Jamestown Foundation: China Brief*, Volume 8, Issue 10, May 13, 2008. Retrieved from <https://jamestown.org/program/beijings-regional-strategy-and-china-asean-economic-integration/>
- London, Joshua E., *Victory in Tripoli. How America's War with the Barbary Pirates Established the U.S. Navy and Shaped a Nation* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2005).
- Lunn, Jon, and Lang, Arrabella, "The South China Sea dispute, July 2016, Updated," House of Commons, Library, *Briefing Paper*, Number 7481, 12 July 2016, p. 28. Retrieved from <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7481/CBP-7481.pdf>
- Mackinder, Halford J. Sir, "The Geographical Pivot of History", *Geographical Journal*, Vol. XXIII, No. 4 (1904), pp. 421-437.
- Mackinder, H. J. Sir, *Britain and the British Seas* (London: William Heinemann, 1902).
- Mackinder, H. J. Sir, *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1919).
- Mackinder, H. J. Sir, "The Round World and the Winning of Peace", *Foreign Affairs*, 21 (July 1943).
- Mahan, Alfred Thayer, *The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793-1812* (Vol. I, Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1892).
- Mahan, A. T., *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1965). First publication 1890.

- Mahan, A. T., *Retrospect and Prospect* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, 1902).
- Mahan, A. T., *Der Einfluss der Seemacht auf die Geschichte*. Herausgegeben und bearbeitet von Gustav Adolf Wolter (Herford, 1967).
- Mainardi, Benjamin, “Yes, China Has the World’s Largest Navy. That Matters Less Than You Might Think,” *The Diplomat*, 7 April 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/04/yes-china-has-the-worlds-largest-navy-that-matters-less-than-you-might-think>.
- Martinson, Ryan D., and Dutton, Peter A., “China’s Distant-Ocean Survey Activities: Implications for U.S. National Security,” *China Maritime Report*, No. 3 (November 2018), China Maritime Studies Institute, U.S. Naval War College Newport, Rhode Island.
- Massie, Robert K., *Peter der Grosse. Sein Leben und seine Zeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1992).
- Mastro, Oriana Skylar, “Opinion: Why Tsai Ing-wen’s re-election as president could darken Taiwan’s future,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 11, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2020-01-11/taiwan-president-tsai-ingwen-election-china>
- Matsumoto, Haruka, “The First Taiwan Strait Crisis and China’s “Border” Dispute Around Taiwan,” *Eurasia Border Review*, Vol. 3, Special Issue, pp. 75-91. Retrieved from [https://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/publicn/eurasia\\_border\\_review/Vol3SI/matsumoto.pdf](https://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/publicn/eurasia_border_review/Vol3SI/matsumoto.pdf)
- Mazza, Michael, Global Taiwan Institute, “Imagining the end of strategic ambiguity,” <https://www.aei.org/articles/imagining-the-end-of-strategic-ambiguity>, June 3, 2020.
- Mead, Walter Russel, “The Return of Geopolitics,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 93, No. 3 (May/June 2014).
- Mearsheimer, John S., *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, (W. W. Norton), 2001.
- Mendis, Patrick, and Liu-Fu-Kuo, “The Early Casualties of the TAIPEI Act in the Post-Coronavirus World,” *The National Interest*, May 17, 2020.

Retrieved from <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/early-casualties-taipei-act-post-coronavirus-world-154851>

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, *Confluence of the Two Seas. Speech by H.E. Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan at the Parliament of the Republic of India.* August 22, 2007. Retrieved from <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0708/speech-2.html>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan), *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) strongly demands that the Japanese government refrain from taking any unilateral action that violates the ROC's sovereignty over the Diaoyutai Islands, so as to avoid damaging bilateral cooperative relations and generating tension in East Asia.* Press Release, No. 230, Date: 2012-09-12, Data Source: 公衆外交協調會. Retrieved from [https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News\\_Content.aspx?n=1329&s=32537](https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News_Content.aspx?n=1329&s=32537).
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan), *ROC reiterates position on South China Sea arbitration between Philippines, mainland China.* Press Release No. 115. May 13, 2016. Data Source: Public Diplomacy Coordination Council. Retrieved from [https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News\\_Content.aspx?n=1EADDCFD4C6EC567&s=C2834B14509069C4](https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News_Content.aspx?n=1EADDCFD4C6EC567&s=C2834B14509069C4).
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan), *ROC position on the South China Sea Arbitration.* Press Release No. 002. July 12, 2016. Data Source: Public Diplomacy Coordination Council. Retrieved from [https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News\\_Content.aspx?n=1EADDCFD4C6EC567&s=5B5A9134709EB875](https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News_Content.aspx?n=1EADDCFD4C6EC567&s=5B5A9134709EB875).
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan), *ROC Government reiterates its position on South China Sea issues.* Press Release No. 240. Date: 2015-10-31. Data Source: Public Diplomacy Coordination Council. Retrieved from [https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News\\_Content.aspx?n=1EADDCFD4C6EC567&s=F5170FE043DADE98](https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News_Content.aspx?n=1EADDCFD4C6EC567&s=F5170FE043DADE98).
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan), *The facts about the Diaoyutai Islands.* Retrieved from [https://www.roc-taiwan.org/public/BZ\\_en\\_localNews/61264211571.pdf](https://www.roc-taiwan.org/public/BZ_en_localNews/61264211571.pdf)

- Ministry of National Defense, ROC, *2004 National Defense Report. Republic of China*. 2364380. Archived from the original (PDF) on 11 March 2006. Retrieved 5 March 2006.
- Mingjiang, Li, “Chinese Debates of South China Sea Policy: Implications for Future Developments,” *RSIS Working Paper*, No. 239 (Li Mingjiang S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, 2012).
- Mizokami, Kyle, “How Taiwan Would Defend Against a Chinese Attack,” *USNI (United States’ Naval Institute) News*, March 26, 2014. Retrieved from <https://news.usni.org/2014/03/26/taiwan-defend-chinese-attack>.
- Morgenthau, Hans J., *Politics Among Nations, The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948).
- Morgenthau, H. J., *In Defense of the National Interest* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951).
- Morgenthau, H. J., “The Problem of the National Interest”, *Dilemmas of Politics* (Chicago: University Press, 1958).
- Morgenthau, H. J., *Macht und Frieden. Grundlegung einer Theorie der internationalen Politik* (Gütersloh, 1963).
- Muller, David, “A Chinese Blockade of Taiwan”, *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* 110, No. 10 (September (1984), pp. 51-55.
- Nong, Hong, “The South China Sea disputes. A review of history and prospects for dispute settlement” in: Kimie Hara (Ed.), *The San Francisco System and Its Legacies: Continuation, Transformation and Historical Reconciliation in the Asia-Pacific* (Routledge, 2015).
- O’Callaghan, Terry, “Geopolitics,” in: Martin Griffiths (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of International Relations and Global Politics*, 1st ed. (Oxon, England: Routledge, 2005), pp. 308-310.
- Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan), News Releases, *President Tsai delivers New Year’s Address*, 2021-01-01. Retrieved from <https://english.president.gov.tw/News/6089>.
- Office of Naval Intelligence (Publisher), *The People’s Liberation Army Navy: A Modern Navy with Chinese Characteristics*, August 2009.
- O’Rourke, Ronald, Specialist in Naval Affairs, “Maritime Territorial and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) Disputes Involving China,” *Congressional Research Report*, April 9, 2013, Congressional Research Service 7-5700,

- R42784. Retrieved from file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/20130409\_R42784\_8126199b4dd0793ecb346279fd198bfbe123526d.html
- Padfield, Peter, *Maritime Supremacy and the Opening of the Western Mind* (Woodstock and New York: Overlook Press, 1999).
  - Parameswaran, Prashanth, “Why 2020 Will Be a Big Year for Vietnam’s Foreign Policy,” *Wilson Center: Insight and Analysis*, December 3, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/why-2020-will-be-big-year-for-vietnams-foreign-policy>
  - Parry, Richard Lloyd, “Analysis: so much more than a naval water fight. If the nightmare scenario of a superpower war in Asia were to materialise, the South China Sea could be where it all starts,” *The Times*, March 10, 2009. Retrieved from <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article5879033.ece#cid=OTC-RSS&attr=797093> on 10 March 2009.
  - Pedrozo, Raul, Close Encounters at Sea,” *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 62 (2009), No. 3, <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol62/iss3/8>
  - Phar, Kim Beng, and Bizot, Clementine, “Is France Capable of Being an Indo-Pacific Power,” *The Diplomat*, December 24, 2020. Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2020/12/is-france-capable-of-being-an-indo-pacific-power>.
  - Pinto da Costa, Gerhard Ferrão, *China and India’s Maritime Geostrategies: Implications for International Maritime Security and Scenarios for 2030*, Dissertação para obtenção de grau de Mestre em Estratégia, Universidade de Lisboa, Lisboa 2015.
  - Polmar, Norman; Brooks, Thomas A.; Fedoroff, George E., *Admiral Gorshkov: The Man Who Challenged the U.S. Navy (Blue & Gold)* (Naval Institute Press, 2019).
  - Posen, Barry R., and Ross, Andrew L., “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy”, *International Security*, 1996/1997, Vol. 21, No. 3.
  - *President Ma Ying-jeou’s National Day Address*, 10/10/2013. Retrieved from [https://www.roc-taiwan.org/fi\\_en/post/423.html](https://www.roc-taiwan.org/fi_en/post/423.html)
  - Prestwich, Menna, “The revocation of the Edict of Nantes,” *History*, Vol. 73, No. 237 (February 1988), pp. 63-73.
  - PUBLIC LAW 93-475-OCT. 26, 1974. Retrieved from <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-88/pdf/STATUTE-88-Pg1439.pdf>

- Pugh, Michael (Ed.), *Maritime Security and Peacekeeping: A Framework for United Nations Operations*, Manchester (Manchester University Press), 1994.
- Rajagopalan, Rajeswari Pillai, “Rise of the Minilaterals: Examining the India-France-Australia Trilateral,” *The Diplomat*, September 17, 2020.
- Ratzel, Friedrich, “Die Gesetze des räumlichen Wachstums der Staaten”, *Petermanns Mitteilungen*, 42 (1896), pp. 97-107.
- Ratzel, F., *Lebensraum* (Tübingen: H. Laupp, 1901).
- Ratzel, F., *Politische Geographie*, Neudruck der 3. Auflage von 1923. Durchgesehen und ergänzt von Eugen Oberhummer (Osnabrück, 1974).
- Ratzel, F., *La Géographie Politique: Les concepts fondamentaux* (Paris: Fayard, 1987).
- Ratzel, F., “La géographie politique”, in Chaliand, Gérard, *Anthologie mondiale de la stratégie* (Paris: Laffont, 1990).
- Reeves, Jeffrey, and Wallis, Joanne, “A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Strengths, Weaknesses, and Opportunities for Engagement (Introduction),” *Asia Policy*, Vol. 15, No. 4, October 28, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.nbr.org/publication/a-free-and-open-indo-pacific-strengths-weaknesses-and-opportunities-for-engagement-introduction>
- Rodger, Nicholas Andrew Martin, *The Safeguard of the Sea: A Naval History of Britain*, Vol. I (London: HarperCollins, 1997).
- Romberg, Alan D., “The “1992 Consensus”—Adapting to the Future?” in *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 49 (Winter 2016). Retrieved from [https://www.stimson.org/wp-content/files/file-attachments/CLM49AR\\_0.pdf](https://www.stimson.org/wp-content/files/file-attachments/CLM49AR_0.pdf)
- Roy, Denny, “How China Is Slow Conquering the South China Sea,” *The National Interest*, 7 May 2020, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/how-china-slow-conquering-south-china-sea-151811>
- Ruggie, J. G. (Ed.), *Multilateralism Matters: The Theory and Praxis of an Institutional Form*, New York (Columbia University Press), 1993.
- Samuels, Marwyn S., *The Contest for the South China Sea* (New York and London: Methuen, 1982).
- Scalapino, Robert A., “The Political Influence of the USSR in Asia,” *Soviet Policy in East Asia*, Donald S. Zagoria (Ed.) (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982).

- Sempa, Francis P., “Nicholas Spykman and the Struggle for the Asiatic Mediterranean,” *The Diplomat*, January 9, 2015.
- Sevastopoulos, Demetri, “Trump gives glimpse of ‘Indo-Pacific’ strategy to counter China,” *Financial Times*, November 10, 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.ft.com/content/e6d17fd6-c623-11e7-a1d2-6786f39ef675>
- Shelley Rigger, “Why giving up Taiwan will not help us with China,” *American Enterprise Institute Report*, 29 November 2011, <https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/why-giving-up-taiwan-will-not-help-us-with-china>
- Shen, Wenwen, “China and Its Neighbours: Troubled Relations,” *EU-Asia Centre*, 1 March 2012, [http://www.eu-asiacentre.eu/pub\\_details.php?pub\\_id=46](http://www.eu-asiacentre.eu/pub_details.php?pub_id=46).
- Smith, Glenn, “Taiwan’s Sunflower Movement,” *Foreign Policy in Focus*, May 29, 2014. Retrieved from <https://fpif.org/taiwans-sunflower-movement/>
- Smith, Sheila A., “The Quad in the Indo-Pacific,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, May 27, 2021, <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/quad-indo-pacific-what-know>
- Snyder, Edwin K.; Gregor, A. James; Chang, Maria Hsia, *The Taiwan Relations Act and the Defense of the Republic of China (Policy Papers in International Affairs*, Number 12), Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1980.
- Spykman, Nicholas, “Geography and Foreign Policy, I,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (1938), pp. 28-50.
- Spykman, N., *The Geography of the Peace* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1944).
- Starr, Harvey, “On Geopolitics: Spaces and Places,” *International Studies Quarterly* (2013), Vol. 57, No. 3 (September 2013), pp. 433–439.
- Storey, Ian, “Can the UK Achieve Its Naval Ambitions in the Indo-Pacific?” *The Diplomat*, November 7, 2020. Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2020/11/can-the-uk-achieve-its-naval-ambitions-in-the-indo-pacific>. See also “British navy’s HMS Albion warned over South China Sea ‘provocation’,” BBC News, 6 September 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-45433153>
- Stratfor, *Vietnam’s Geographic Challenge*, Sep 18, 2014. Retrieved from <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/vietnams-geographic-challenge>

- Stratfor, *The Geopolitics of the United States, Part 1: The Inevitable Empire*, July 4, 2016, retrieved from <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/geopolitics-united-states-part-1-inevitable-empire>
- Strong, Matthew, “Taiwan’s first indigenous submarine to launch in 2023,” *Taiwan News*, 2021/07/21.
- Suci, Peter, “The PLAN: China’s Navy Just Conducted Drills in the South China Sea,” *The National Interest*, May 8, 2020. Retrieved from <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/plan-chinas-navy-just-conducted-drills-south-china-sea-152051>
- Tate, Andrew, “Chinese navy puts newest platforms on display”, *Janes*, 24 April 2019, <https://www.janes.com/defence-news/news-detail/chinese-navy-puts-newest-platforms-on-display>.
- Thayer, Carl, “Obama’s Visit to Vietnam: A Turning Point?” *The Diplomat*, May 31, 2016
- Thayer, Carlyle A., “The Five Power Defence Arrangements: The Quiet Achiever,” *Security Challenges*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (February 2007), pp. 79-96.
- Thiessen, Marc A., “Donald Trump is the most pro-Taiwan president in US history,” *The Washington Post*, January 15, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.aei.org/op-eds/donald-trump-is-the-most-pro-taiwan-president-in-us-history/>
- Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*.
- Tian, Yew Lun, and Lee, Yimou, “China drops word 'peaceful' in latest push for Taiwan 're-unification',” *Reuters*, May 22, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-parliament-taiwan/china-drops-word-peaceful-in-latest-push-for-taiwan-re-unification-idUSKBN22Y06S>
- Till, Geoffrey, *Sea power: A Guide for the Twenty-First Century* (London and Portland: Frank Cass, 2006). First publication 2004.
- Tillett, Andrew, “Emmanuel Macron vows new 'Indo-Pacific axis' with Australia to maintain balance,” *Financial Review*, May 2, 2018.
- Tow, William T. (Ed.) and Stuart, Douglas (Ed.), *The New US Strategy towards Asia: Adapting to the American Pivot* (Routledge Security in Asia Pacific Series, Routledge, 2014), 1st Edition.
- Townshend, Ashley, and Thomas-Noone, Brendan, “Australia steps up in defense of the Indo-Pacific Order,” *The Diplomat*, September 1, 2020.

- ...
- United States Government Printing Office, David W. Mabon and Harriet D. Schwar (Eds.), John P. Glennon (Ed. Gen.), *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954, China and Japan*, Volume XIV, Part 1 (Washington 1985).
- Watts, Alex, “Vietnam accuses China of sabotage,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 June 2011.
- Weiss, Kenneth G., “The Naval Dimension of the Sino-Soviet Rivalry,” *Naval War College Review*, January - February 1985, Vol. 38, No. 1 (January - February 1985), pp. 37-52.
- Westcott, Ben, “A Chinese invasion of Taiwan would be a bloody, logistical nightmare,” *CNN*, June 24, 2019. Retrieved from <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/06/23/asia/taiwan-china-invasion-intl-hnk/index.html>
- Wittram, Reinhard, *Peter I., Czar und Kaiser. Zur Geschichte Peter des Grossen in seiner Zeit* (Göttingen: Verlag Vandenhoeck, 1954).
- Xiaokun, Li, “Navigation in South China Sea 'not a problem',” *China Daily*, 23 October 2010.
- Yamei (Ed.), “Work Together to Build the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China, At the Opening Ceremony of The Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, 14 May 2017,” *Xinhua Net*, 2017-05-14. Retrieved from [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/14/c\\_136282982.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/14/c_136282982.htm).
- Zhang, Zhixing, “China Takes an Expansionist View of Geopolitics,” *Real Clear Defence*, 1 November 2017, originally published at *Stratfor.com*. Retrieved from [https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2017/11/01/china\\_takes\\_an\\_expansionist\\_view\\_of\\_Geopolitics\\_112566.html](https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2017/11/01/china_takes_an_expansionist_view_of_Geopolitics_112566.html).
- Zhong, Yang: “Explaining National Identity Shift in Taiwan,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, pp. 336-352. Published online: 01 Feb 2016. DOI: 10.1080/ 10670564.2015.1104866.