

CONTAINING THE DRAGON: THE RISE OF CHINESE MILITARY POWER AND
ITS EFFECT ON US FOREIGN POLICY

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ABSTRACT
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US Foreign Policy

In 2001, John Mearsheimer made a prediction that according to his theory of offensive realism, if Chinese military power continued to grow, the US would increase its military presence in East Asia in order to contain growth of Chinese power. Now in 2013, US military presence is slowly rising, appearing to prove Mearsheimer's prediction. Therefore the question that needs to be asked is can offensive realism explain the current status of US-Chinese relations. By examining the changes in Chinese military developments by comparing unit sizes and amounts to the changes in military weapons developments, an integration rate can be formed to show how fast the Chinese military is modernizing. This rate is then compared to trends of US foreign policy since 2001 to determine that although there is a period in which the Iraq War has an effect on great power politics between the US and China, but under normal circumstances, offensive realism can be used to describe and predict the future of US-Chinese relations.

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I. Introduction

In 1978, Chairman Deng Xiaoping instituted the “Reforming and Opening Up” economic policies that allowed the Chinese economy to begin interacting with other international economies. Since that time, China has continually reported unprecedented rates of economic growth. What was once the country torn apart by civil war and foreign occupation of the early twentieth century has become a developing country that has the second largest economy and largest standing army in the world.

Since the Cold War, the main countries that controlled the politics in the Northeast Asia region are Japan followed by South Korea, both of whom are close allies with the United States and have histories of the US helping build the Japanese Constitution after World War II and the US maintaining its military alliance with South Korea even after the armistice signing in 1953 that bound their country to the US in a military partnership. It can therefore be argued that the US had the most influence in controlling Northeast Asian politics and was the regional hegemon – at least until the rise of China.

In terms of theories on international relations, experts are divided into two camps: realists and those who support more liberal theories centered on ideas such as globalization or justice. Realists believe that situations such as the rise of China are likely to create conflict because the power that China is gaining is threatening other countries’ security. In this case, the rise of China threatens to diminish the amount of influence that the US has long held in the Northeast Asian region, which could result in the inability of the US to protect its allies and therefore its national interests. Power shifts begin with a decline in power of the hegemon, or most powerful nation, and then the rise in power of a

new nation. In order to create the conflict that realism speaks of, however, the rising nation must be dissatisfied with the current international structure (regional or worldwide) and wishes to change, or revise, the system. Realists also argue that the probable response to such possible power shifts is actions by another country, typically the declining hegemon, that counterbalance the challenger's growth in power.

In 2001, John Mearsheimer published a book titled *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* in which he described the nature of the current international system and expounds on this particular situation of Chinese growth from a realist perspective. He theorized that great powers around the world simply do not pursue power until the point in which sovereignty is secured, but rather continue the pursuit of power until it has achieved hegemon status in the region and is beyond possibility of being threatened by other nations. Mearsheimer defines this as offensive realism. In 2001 China was still economically inferior to Japan and South Korea. Therefore in his final analysis, Mearsheimer declares that China at that time was not strong enough to become a regional hegemon. However he posited that if China's economy continued to grow at a fast pace, it could become the next example of a great power in the pursuit of hegemony, and according to his theory on offensive realism, the US would implement containment policies that would keep the US military in Northeast Asia to make sure China would not become a peer competitor.¹

In November 2011, the *Washington Post* reported that the US announced that it would establish a permanent military presence in Australia to counterbalance growing Chinese power. This directly indicates a shift in the balance of power in the region and

¹ Mearsheimer, John J. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: Norton, 2001: 400

that the US is reacting exactly as Mearsheimer's theory of offensive realism predicts by using an increase in military presence to counterbalance growing Chinese power.

The United States is also currently shifting its military mission focus from the Middle East to the Far East, despite major defense budget cuts and size reduction of the Armed Forces. Why is this happening? Is the US reacting to a growth in Chinese power, as offensive realism predicts?

I argue that when deciding if the US is in decline or not relative to China becoming a revisionist nation or not, the scenario that is most true to reality is that the US is in decline and that China is a revisionist nation. Therefore Mearsheimer's theory of offensive realism can be applied and tested by asking the question, "Is the change in Chinese military power having an effect upon US national security policy in East Asia?" Chinese military power best describes absolute power, as opposed to soft economic power, and is quoted by Mearsheimer as the variable that determines whether or not a nation is capable of being a hegemon. US foreign policy is divided into the camps of engagement versus containment. By performing both qualitative and quantitative analysis on these two variables, I hypothesize that a correlation can be shown to prove that under the conditions of the rise of a new hegemon, the US will react with containment policies in order to maintain its hegemony, just as Mearsheimer predicts.

II. Theoretical Base for the Argument

In the grand scheme of US-China relations there are 4 different positions that academia holds about the current nature of China and the US relations. The United States is either being described as a nation in decline or not in decline. Then China is being described as either a Status Quo Nation or a Revisionist Nation.

Those who describe the US as being in decline argue that the US is losing its military supremacy, that globalization is diffusing US hegemonic power more evenly around the world, and that the US economy is no longer as strong as it once was.

Declinists argue that the reduction of US military supremacy is a result of the proliferation of military technology. Certain military technologies have given many countries the advantage that great powers have typically held over smaller rivals.² For example, nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons have given small powers the ability to achieve destruction not possible by conventional methods. Christopher Twomey argues that the development of space technology also has the potential to further even the military power balance.³ In addition to military technology proliferation, the US military budget is also currently under pressure from the necessity of government spending cuts, with little hope of being resolved while Washington is in political gridlock over budget cut plans.⁴

² Twomey, Christopher P. "Missing Strategic Opportunity in U.S. China Policy since 9/11: Grasping Tactical Success." *Asian Survey* 47.4 (2007): 557

³ Ibid.

⁴ Rachman, Gideon. "This Time It's For Real." *Foreign Policy* 184 (2011): 59-63

Globalization is shifting power away from the nation-states, especially the United States.⁵ Twomey describes international economic flows as being the “backbone of globalization” and how on issues of ranging from regulatory harmonization to macroeconomic policy, globalization provides sub-state actors new opportunities and increases the costs of many policy options for states. He argues that currently the US still maintains its economic power, but it also currently being threatened, especially by developing countries such as China, and its power will be eroded away at by globalization in the future.⁶ Gideon Rachman also argues that globalization is not synonymous with Westernization and does not spread Western values. Therefore, when non-western countries begin to contribute and benefit from globalization, these countries may not promote US policies and yet still be financially able to not depend upon the United States and the West.⁷

Lastly, Declinists such as Arvind Subramanian argue that the US economy is in decline because it abounds with major fiscal and growth problems. He states that after repeated tax cuts, two wars, financial and the economic crisis from 2008 to 2010, continued growth of long-term entitlements such as health care, and build up of bad assets for the government have created doubts within the US public sector, high public and private debt, and long term unemployment. All of which will reduce long term growth, stagnate middle class income growth, create growing inequality, and cause declining mobility.⁸

⁵ Twomey, Christopher P. "Missing Strategic Opportunity in U.S. China Policy since 9/11: Grasping Tactical Success." *Asian Survey* 47.4 (2007): 557

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Rachman, Gideon. "This Time It's For Real." *Foreign Policy* 184 (2011): 59-63

⁸ Subramanian, Arvind. "The Inevitable Superpower." *Foreign Affairs* 90.5 (2011): 66-78

Focusing on America's declining economy, the slow reduction in US military power, and the erosion of US international influence caused by globalization, declinists argue that US hegemony is coming to an end.

The declinists are opposed by those who claim that the US is not in decline. Instead of arguing that the economy, technology, and globalization are working against the US, those who claim that the US is not in decline argue that these forces actually help the maintaining of the US's hegemon status.

First, concerning the economy, non-declinists argue that the US dollar is not going to lose its strength. China is not going to open up its markets or increase the value of its currency in the future because of the 2008 financial crisis.⁹ The US also benefits from its ability to decide international economic policy as a hegemon, and reduced exchange rate risks. Foreign countries depend upon the US dollar for prosperity (including China), which means that globalization may not be a neutral process that diffuses wealth evenly throughout the international system, but can be more of a political process controlled by the US to serve its interests.¹⁰

Non-declinists also argue that the nature of US hegemony plays a role in maintaining its hegemon status. The US is an extant hegemon, which means it did not overturn the existing international order. As a result its dominant position is entrenched to the point that "any point to compete ... is futile."¹¹ Moreover, the US's extant hegemon position makes it both the "system maker" and a "privilege taker" so that benefits

⁹ Drezner, Daniel W. ". . . And China Isn't Beating The U.S." *Foreign Policy* 184 (2011): 67

¹⁰ Beckley, Michael. "China's Century? Why America's Edge Will Endure." *International Security* 36.3 (2012): 49

¹¹ Beckley, Michael. "China's Century? Why America's Edge Will Endure." *International Security* 36.3 (2012): 49

outweigh the costs of being a hegemon. The US can set agendas, shape normative frameworks, change range of choices without applying direct pressure.¹²

Declinists argue that the proliferation of military technology has reduced US military power, but non-declinists claim that the control of the spread of technology by the US only further strengthens the US in its position as a hegemon. The US is a sponge, soaking up ideas, technology, and people from the rest of the world. Therefore, the US can use the spread of technology to concentrate technological and military capabilities in the US.¹³

Overall, non-declinists argue that the US does not face a hegemonic rival, and the trends favor continued US dominance. Therefore, the overall goal of American foreign policy should be to preserve this state of affairs.¹⁴

The third position about US-Chinese relations posits that China is a status quo nation. Simply, China is a developing nation whose ultimate objective is to join the existing international order, and not build or change it along with its development.

Those who hold this position argue that China is participating more in international institutions, and conforming to international norms. China's diplomacy is not at odds with other major international actors. China has sought to build stable relationships with other major powers while reassuring its neighbors about its peaceful

¹² Ibid: 48

¹³ Ibid: 55

¹⁴ Ibid: 78

tensions. China has also become more active in international non-proliferation efforts while reducing exports of arms and sensitive technologies abroad.¹⁵

Scott Kastner and Phillip Saunders conducted an empirical study of Chinese state visits for both of the past two Chinese Chairmen to determine which countries top Chinese officials visited in order to determine Chinese foreign policy objectives. Their study found that China was more likely to visit countries antagonistic to the US, but also equally likely to visit rising, non-core powers than other states, along with no emphasis on US allies in the region.¹⁶ Essentially, their study found that by the frequency and types of countries that China visited, China appears to be more interested in building relationships with countries that would maintain the status quo of the international order, and less interested in those that would try and change it.¹⁷

Taylor Fravel also analyzed China's costs and benefits of Chinese military action in its territorial conflicts. From his analysis results, Fravel comes to the conclusion that China is willing to fit into the international system on a smaller scale. He argues that the potential benefits of territorial expansion are limited, and that over the next two decades, territorial conflict for China is unlikely to pay.¹⁸

The political and diplomatic costs that China would have to deal with for using its military in its territorial conflicts would be the growing doubt by other nations in the region about China's intentions, in turn cause them to begin considering what the

¹⁵ Kastner, Scott L., and Phillip C. Saunders. "Is China a Status Quo or Revisionist State? Leadership Travel as an Empirical Indicator of Foreign Policy Priorities." *International Studies Quarterly* 56 (2012): 164

¹⁶ Ibid: 175

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Fravel, Taylor. "International Relations Theory and China's Rise: Assessing China's Potential for Territorial Expansion." *International Studies Review* 12 (2010): 509

potential costs of future engagement with China would be. Second, territorial expansion against any one state would increase the likelihood that regional actors would coordinate to limit China's power and prevent further aggression.¹⁹ Fravel claims that China's ultimate strategy is to prevent the formation of coalitions targeting China.²⁰

Concerning economic interdependence and globalization, costs for aggressive foreign policy would be the damaging of decades of economic reforms in terms of lost trade, foreign investment, technology, and China's participation in an international order that has greatly facilitated its rise.²¹ With these costs being at stake for expansionist foreign policy, those who claim China is a status quo nation say that it will not implement such policy because the benefits of its economic gains are much greater than the benefits that could be gained through territorial expansion.

Last are the claims of China as a Revisionist Power. What is meant by the term "revisionist" is that China, as a developing nation, is looking to use its increased power and influence to change the international system in terms of political and economic influence to the exclusive benefit of China and its interests.

Three experts who claim that China is currently a rising revisionist nation are Robert Kagan, Dan Blumenthal, and Aaron Friedburg. Robert Kagan in his analysis on the rise of China also explains that by the beginning of the twenty-first century, China was the strongest it had ever been in modern history, and its response to this gain in

¹⁹ Fravel, Taylor. "International Relations Theory and China's Rise: Assessing China's Potential for Territorial Expansion." *International Studies Review* 12 (2010): 510

²⁰ Ibid: 511

²¹ Ibid: 506

power is wanting more.²² Kagan argues that this attitude is evident from its shift in military strategy. China's foreign policy, although it contains an element of prudence and caution in order to appear unthreatening, does not share the European view that power is an outdated school of thought, and that China is very motivated to return itself to what it believes is the traditional position at the center of East Asian power.²³ China also no longer fears invasion; as a consequence, China has become more interested in affairs beyond its borders and has subsequently upgraded its warfare technology. Kagan also posits that China's fear has turned from invasion to "obstruction."²⁴ He claims that China has progressed from a nation seeking only to survive to a nation seeking to expand its power. What is meant is that the purpose of Chinese power is not only to defend against attacks, but to also prevent international roadblocks that seek to contain or prohibit the expansion of Chinese power.²⁵

Dan Blumenthal and Aaron Friedburg, in their cooperative project to build a future strategy for the US in East Asia, do not claim that China is as aggressive as does Kagan. However, considering China's long-term strategy, they believe that China's foreign policy could turn in the direction of assertiveness, ambition, and even aggression.²⁶ They state that China currently views itself in a state of weakness compared

²² Kagan, Robert. "Ambition and Anxiety: America's Competition with China." *The Rise of China: Essays on the Future Competition*. Gary James Schmitt. New York: Encounter, 2009: 4

²³ Kagan, Robert. "End Of Dreams, Return Of History." *Policy Review* 144 (2007): 25

²⁴ Kagan, Robert. "Ambition and Anxiety: America's Competition with China." *The Rise of China: Essays on the Future Competition*. Gary James Schmitt. New York: Encounter, 2009:10

²⁵ Ibid: 11

²⁶ Blumenthal, Dan, and Aaron Friedberg. "American Strategy for Asia." *A Report of the Asia Strategy Working Group, American Enterprise Institute, 2009.*

to other more powerful nations. For that reason, China in the near future will continue to avoid direct confrontation. However, once it has gained enough power, China will attempt to use it in more openly aggressive ways even to the point of gaining geopolitical dominance in East Asia. Blumenthal and Friedburg also argue that if China continues to operate under the current authoritarian regime and is able to gain sufficient power, it is likely that anxiety from major domestic issues, such as overpopulation, corruption in the government, and an aging workforce, will prompt Chinese leaders to restrict the US's presence, influence, and access to East Asia and to limit the autonomy of Asian democracies.²⁷

Whether China is aggressive now or in the long-run, Kagan, Blumenthal, and Friedburg believe that China's ultimate strategy is to reach a position of being the "apex of an Asian and possibly global hierarchy," which would undermine US efforts to keep East Asia prosperous and free.²⁸

With these four opinions on the state of US and China, there are four scenarios that can be created to help determine the status of US-Chinese relations: US Decline/China SQ, US Not Decline/China SQ, US Decline/China Revisionist, and US Not Decline/China Revisionist. I represent these four combinations in a simple two by two graph:

²⁷ Blumenthal, Dan, and Aaron Friedberg. "American Strategy for Asia." *A Report of the Asia Strategy Working Group, American Enterprise Institute, 2009.*

²⁸ Ibid.

	US Decline	US Not Decline
China Revisionist	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
China Status Quo	Scenario 3	Scenario 4

What would these four possibilities look like in real life?

If the US is not in decline and China is looking to revise the international system, then there is going to be conflict in East Asia. If the US is continuing to maintain its influence and power around the world while China is gaining power and attempting to change the international order, another Cold War would begin to form. Both the US and China would try to form a bloc of allies to combat and counterbalance its adversary.

If the US is in decline and China is looking to revise the international order, then as stated before, the US will lose its economic and military advantages while also losing its hegemon status around various parts of the world. Meanwhile, China will take advantage of the loss of American influence, and try to create its own spheres of influence in which the countries within it will be made to serve Chinese interests. This will also most likely be a not very peaceful rise because of the shift in power. However, the US will have only limited power to stop the growth of Chinese influence and possibly its hegemony.

If the US is not in decline and China is a status quo nation then the US will be able to maintain its hegemon status by bending globalization to serve its own interests.

The US dollar will continue to be used, and the US will still be able to influence the decisions of other countries through foreign policy without conflict. The international system will remain much the same but perhaps return more to what it looked like after the fall of the Soviet Union with clear US dominance. China will continue to peacefully rise and keep integrating into a system that is led by the United States.

Lastly, if the US is in decline, but China wishes to maintain the status quo of the international order, the US would begin to lose, or already have lost, its economic and military advantages and power relative to the rest of the world. Globalization would have made other developing countries stronger – to the point to where the US no longer is really able to maintain its hegemon status in various regions around the world. China will see a peaceful rise. It will ride the globalization wave to greater economic interdependence, more participation in the international organizations, and more political influence with little conflict. Essentially China does not want to change the international order.

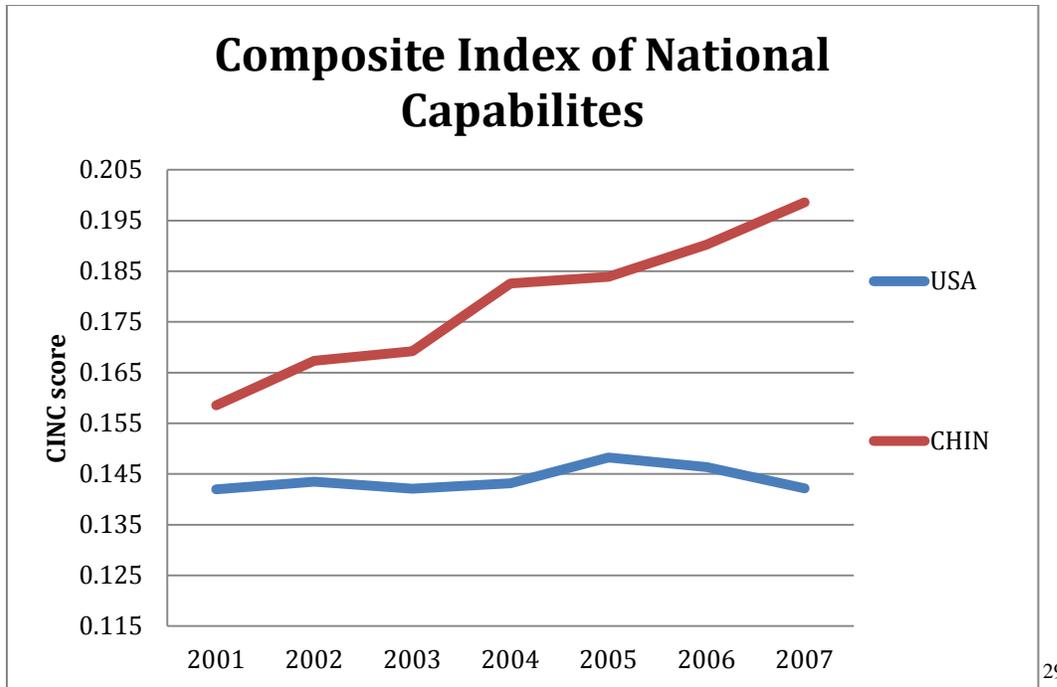
Of these four scenarios, the first and fourth ones are unlikely to appear. In the US decline/ China SQ scenario, if there is a loss in American hegemony, especially in East Asia, China will probably move to replace the US as the hegemon. This may be done peacefully if the US does not try to stop it, but China would simply not let a vacant hegemon seat to be left empty. However, this is not the case. The US would not simply bow out of the East Asian hegemon spot without a fight. This is evidenced by the recent deployment increase in Australia. China, at the same time, is openly critical of US and Western interference in various regions and conflicts around the world, indicating that China is not satisfied with current international politics. In the case of US Not

Decline/China Revisionist scenario, China's "grand strategy" as termed by Fravel, is to avoid having coalitions target China. The Cold War scenario born of this would create exactly that. Therefore as long as the US maintains its hegemon status, China will avoid directly fighting the US to challenge its hegemony.

This leaves only the second and third scenarios. Either the US is in decline and China has the potential to replace it, or the US is not in decline and everything will remain the same. Most of the literature on US-Chinese relationship is divided into one of these two camps. Part of the goal of this research project is to determine which of these scenarios is more accurate.

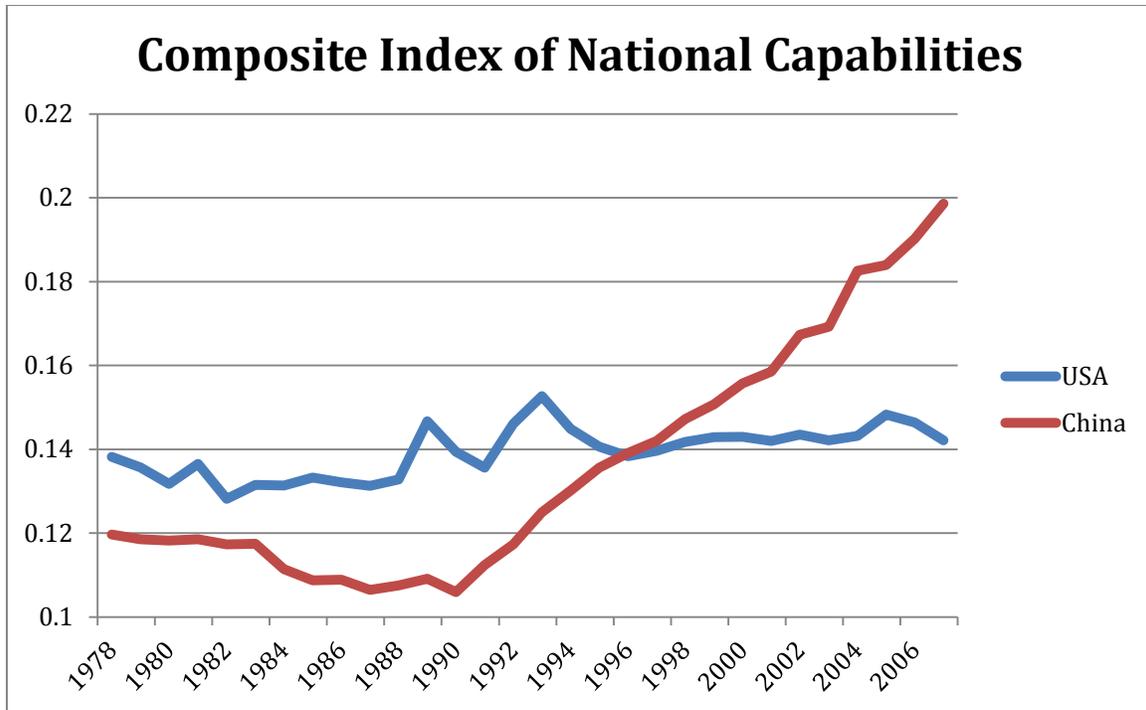
As part of the University of Michigan's political science department's Correlates of War project, J. David Singer has developed a Composite Index of National Capabilities (CINC). The CINC uses six ratios derived by the country's total divided by the world's total score in each category. The six ratios are then added to together and divided by 6 to create an aggregate ratio for each year. The six ratios include Total Population of Country Ratio, Urban Population of Country Ratio, Iron and Steel Production of Country Ratio, Primary Energy Consumption Ratio, Military Expenditure Ratio, and Military Personnel Ratio.

In determining which scenario the current US/China relation situation falls into, I used the latest CINC data to create a picture in order to compare changes in national capabilities between the United States and China:



According to the data, China's national capabilities are clearly on the rise, whereas the US's has remained relatively the same over the past decade. The chart may look like it could support scenario three's claim with the US not in decline. However, when starting from 1978, which marks the beginning of US-Chinese relations while also encompassing the entirety of modern Chinese economic development, US and Chinese CINC scores cause the picture to change:

²⁹ Singer, David. "Correlates of War." *Composite Index of National Capabilities*. University of Michigan, 08 Dec. 2011. 25 Feb. 2013. <<http://www.correlatesofwar.org/>>.



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In the greater discourse of American national capabilities, US CINC scores have certainly been higher than recent years. The downward spike in 2005 over two years, more importantly, has been one of the more significant downward shifts since 1978. Since the 2007 CINC scores, the Iraq and Afghanistan wars have become larger economic burdens on the US. In addition, the US has also had to deal with the economic recession of 2008. Therefore, I argue that this trend in the decline of US national capabilities has continued, while at the same time, China's national capabilities have continued to grow, empirically showing that scenario two is the most accurate scenario. Having proven that scenario two is the most accurate description of US-Chinese relations, Mearsheimer's theory of offensive realism can then be considered possible, and viable if proven.

³⁰ Singer, David. "Correlates of War." *Composite Index of National Capabilities*. University of Michigan, 08 Dec. 2011. 25 Feb. 2013. <<http://www.correlatesofwar.org/>>.

John Mearsheimer, an expert on the study of Great Power politics that represents the realist school of thought, wrote *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. In his book, Mearsheimer describes realism as, “The belief that the behavior of great powers is influenced mainly by their external environment, not by their internal characteristics....Realists tend not to draw sharp distinctions between “good” and “bad” states, because all great powers act according to the same logic regardless of their culture, political system, or who runs the government.”³¹ After the end of the Cold War, a “perpetual peace” euphoria sprung up, but realists such as Mearsheimer, do not believe that such a peace is possible, because competition and war still remain part of the international system. However, Mearsheimer takes realism a step further in attempt to explain relations among great powers, and argues the idea of “offensive realism.” His theory revolves around great powers because states make up the international system, and that states with the greatest capabilities get to make the most influential decisions in the international system. In addition, great powers are often determined by their military capabilities. Mearsheimer’s theory of offensive realism essentially states that “(great powers) look for opportunities to gain power at each other’s expense” and that due to the nature of great powers, “multipolar systems are more war-prone than are bipolar systems, and that multipolar systems that contain especially powerful states – potential hegemon – are the most dangerous.”³²

What makes Mearsheimer’s offensive realism theory special is that it differs from another widely accepted form of realism, defensive realism. Defensive realism states that

³¹ Mearsheimer, John J. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: Norton, 2001:

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³² Ibid: 5

there is little incentive for a state to continue its pursuit of power once it has reached a point where its sovereignty is no longer threatened. Offensive realists believe that states that are satisfied by the status quo are hardly ever present in world of politics. The benefits of gaining advantages over rivals outweigh the costs of the pursuit, creating strong incentives for a rising nation to continue growth of power. Therefore, the ultimate goal of a state is to become a hegemon.

At the end of his book, Mearsheimer applies his theory of offensive realism to the Northeast Asia region and decides that there are only two possible power shifts in East Asia. First, if China's economy starts to stagnate while Japan is still the wealthiest nation in East Asia, neither China nor Japan will become a regional hegemon. With no threat of regional hegemon on the horizon, the US will slowly pull its troops from East Asia, making Japan the most influential state in the region. The other possibility that Mearsheimer suggests is that China's economy continues to grow at unprecedented rates and emerges as a potential hegemon. If this were to happen, China would gain the ability to build a far more powerful army than either Japan or Russia, thus truly given rise to a state that could possibly compete with the US in East Asia. Mearsheimer predicts that "If China emerges as a potential hegemon, Northeast Asia's multipolarity would become unbalanced and the United States would keep forces in the region to contain China."³³

Fast-forward ten years. Beijing hosted the Summer Olympics in 2008 and China has surpassed Japan in GDP value, and has become a recognizable force in international politics, even as its economy continues to grow at unprecedented rates. So far

³³ Mearsheimer, John J. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: Norton, 2001: 400

Mearsheimer's second scenario on the discourse of power shifting in East Asia is coming to fruition.

Then what of the Chinese military? In 2001, Mearsheimer declared "China is still far away from the point where it has enough latent power to make a run at regional hegemony."³⁴ However, in 2012 it appears that China's potential military has grown along with its economy. According to the 2011 Department of Defense's report to Congress, Beijing announced a 12.7% increase in its military budget to approximately \$91.5 billion, whereas the budget was \$16 billion in 2001. In a ten-year period, the Chinese defense budget has increased 6 times over. The report also states that China is modernizing its military in areas such as cruise and ballistic missiles, nuclear capabilities, naval and air defense forces. However, China has placed special emphasis on technology development in its national defense strategy. In 2010, China conducted a record fifteen space launches that included five navigation satellites, nine remote sensing satellites, and two civilian and military communication satellites. In addition, China is also developing cyber warfare capabilities and has already targeted computer systems around the world, including US government computers, in order to extract information.³⁵

If the first prerequisite of Mearsheimer's prediction is becoming reality, then the US should respond by keeping a military presence in East Asia in order to contain China if the whole prediction is to become true. Therefore, in light of the developments of the

³⁴ Mearsheimer, John J. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: Norton, 2001: 402

³⁵ Department of Defense, comp. *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China*. Rep. 201: 2-5

Chinese military over the past decade, the next question that should be asked is how has US East Asian foreign policy progressed since 2001?

To get the full picture and context of modern US foreign policy, it is appropriate to start with the Clinton Administration's foreign policy, to see the world that was inherited by George W. Bush when he took office in 2001.

The Clinton Doctrine

After the fall of the USSR, the international system reached a point of transition; and when President Clinton took office, the United States found itself in a new position in the international system. Walt (2000), in his analysis on Clinton's foreign policy, declares that the US's position after the Cold War had changed in three ways. First, with the USSR gone, the US had a very wide range of goals it could pursue without worrying about the reactions of other nations.³⁶ Second, the US's dominant position meant that there was less the US could gain from the international stage and participating in international organizations.³⁷ Third, as a dominant power in the international system that had the ability to set agendas without worrying about repercussions from other nations, US citizens began to lose interest in foreign policy and subsequently became more adverse to US military engagement.³⁸

Within this post-Cold War environment, Clinton tried to clearly define the new goals of American foreign policy. Opinions range widely over whether or not

³⁶ Walt, Stephen M. "Two Cheers For Clinton's Foreign Policy." *Foreign Affairs* 79.2 (2000): 64

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Walt, Stephen M. "Two Cheers For Clinton's Foreign Policy." *Foreign Affairs* 79.2 (2000): 65

implementation of his policies was effective. However, most arguments about the meaning of the Clinton Doctrine are actually all fairly similar: The Clinton Doctrine was a dichotomy between spreading American values of free trade and democratic peace around the world and defending American national interests, or more simply a blend of engagement and deterrence.

Waltz defines Clinton's foreign policy into four categories: 1.) Reduce risk of major war by staying militarily engaged in Europe and East Asia; 2.) Reduce the threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction; 3.) Foster more open economies; and 4.) Build a world order compatible with American values.³⁹ Waltz argues that these goals and the overarching strategy rested on the US military being the barrier between great power rivals. However the problem at the time was that the US general population and Congress were reluctant to recommit the military to new problem areas, almost as a form of neo-isolationism. Therefore, Clinton had to get creative with his policies that created the blend of engagement and deterrence. In Kosovo, the US led the air campaign, but required the UN and NATO allies to handle much more of the responsibility of peacekeeping and reconstruction.⁴⁰ In North Korea, Clinton was able to negotiate the closing of the Yongbyon research reactor without the use of US military invasion.⁴¹

Concerning China, Waltz describes Clinton's foreign policy as extremely effective because it did nothing to appease China, while also not allowing the US-China bilateral relationship to deteriorate significantly.⁴² Clinton focused on fostering more

³⁹ Ibid: 66-67

⁴⁰ Walt, Stephen M. "Two Cheers For Clinton's Foreign Policy." *Foreign Affairs* 79.2 (2000): 68

⁴¹ Ibid: 72

⁴² Ibid: 69

open economics by giving China “most favored nation” status and supporting China’s entering into the World Trade Organization.⁴³ The US and China also focused on building economic bonds with one another as a common goal, despite differences in other issues like Taiwan. As a result, commercial ties were expanded to an extraordinary degree.⁴⁴

The Clinton administration also applied its strategy of building a world order compatible with American values to China. Clinton’s national security advisor, Anthony Lake, promoted the idea of democratic enlargement, in which the US would intervene and engage more to create democratic systems in order to protect those who were suffering around the world from human rights abuse, terrorism, and even closed market economies.⁴⁵ The idea was that solving human rights issues would create democratic societies. With more democratic societies, there would be more peace due to the theory that democracies do not fight one another. As a result, the Clinton administration was committed to forcing China to cope with its own human rights issues, especially in the wake of the Tiananmen crisis of 1989.⁴⁶ Criticisms of China’s human rights issues almost cost the US its relationship with China, but a strategy was devised to use economic development to improve the human rights situation. By using its new commercial ties, the

⁴³ Walt, Stephen M. "Two Cheers For Clinton's Foreign Policy." *Foreign Affairs* 79.2 (2000): 69

⁴⁴ Viotti, Paul R. *American Foreign Policy*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2010: 35

⁴⁵ Tucker, Nancy. "The Clinton Years: The Problem of Coherence." *Making China Policy: Lessons from the Bush and Clinton Administrations*. By Ramon Hawley Myers, Michel Oksenberg, and David L. Shambaugh. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001: 47

⁴⁶ Walt, Stephen M. "Two Cheers For Clinton's Foreign Policy." *Foreign Affairs* 79.2 (2000): 69

US could invest in programs that could provide food to rural parts of China, better health care, and better housing.⁴⁷

The Clinton administration also used military engagement strategies in East Asia to deal with the China-Taiwan crises. The default position of the US in the China-Taiwan conflict was to use force on Beijing when necessary, but also keep Taipei from provoking Beijing.⁴⁸ Therefore, the US focused on developing a stronger relationship with Taipei by developing a military relationship through sales of arms and joint military training exercises, while also deploying two US carrier groups to Taiwan in response to China's attempt to intimidate Taiwan.

With the emergence of the US as the hegemon of a unipolar world, the Clinton administration had the responsibility of defining US national interests in a post-Cold War world. As a result, the Clinton Doctrine was somewhat ambiguous. However, in the end Clinton decided to pursue goals of spreading American values and support the emergence of globalization on the surface by strengthening its ties with other major powers and encouraging free trade and more open markets, while still utilizing its new influence as the hegemon to protect its interests. In the case of China, the Clinton Doctrine combined peaceful engagement with containment efforts to deter China from threatening US interests, such as Taiwan, while also normalizing the US-China relationship in areas of common interest, such as economic development and investment.

⁴⁷ Tucker, Nancy. "The Clinton Years: The Problem of Coherence." *Making China Policy: Lessons from the Bush and Clinton Administrations*. By Ramon Hawley Myers, Michel Oksenberg, and David L. Shambaugh. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001: 48

⁴⁸ Viotti, Paul R. *American Foreign Policy*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2010: 34

The Bush Doctrine

When President Bush was elected in 2001, experts predicted that he was going to be like his father, a realist with a strategy of selective engagement.⁴⁹ However, 9/11 occurred and Bush's foreign policy changed drastically. Even to the point that some were considering it revolutionary. Critics of the Bush Doctrine declared it as an innovation of neo-conservatism, but in reality the ideas of the Bush Doctrine have long been apart of mainstream US foreign policy, including foreign policy of the preceding Clinton administration.⁵⁰

The more commonly accepted discourse surrounding the Bush Doctrine is that 9/11 significantly impacted US foreign policy for the rest of Bush's tenure as president. Melvyn Leffler argues that 9/11 not only affected foreign policy but also changed the administration's entire worldview.⁵¹ 9/11 transformed the US's sense of danger to believe that the US was much more vulnerable than expected. This in turn, lowered the threshold for what would be defined as a risk, and greatly raised the temptation to use force. This new sense of vulnerability caused the US to abandon its realist policies of calculated interests for defending American ideals that Bush believed were in danger.⁵²

On the other hand, Jennifer Mustapha claims that the Bush Doctrine was based on ideas of America's identity in the international system that formed before 9/11. Mustapha states that these notions of American identity are "nationalist myths" about how America

⁴⁹ Owens, Mackubin Thomas. "The Bush Doctrine: The Foreign Policy Of Republican Empire." *Orbis* 53.1 (2009): 24

⁵⁰ Ibid: 28

⁵¹ Leffler, Melvyn P. "Bush's Foreign Policy." *Foreign Policy* 144 (2004): 24

⁵² Leffler, Melvyn P. "Bush's Foreign Policy." *Foreign Policy* 144 (2004): 26

is to take up the position as a responsible superpower.⁵³ The events of 9/11 only served to reinforce these notions of American identity, which Mustapha claims were actualized during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

Despite the debate of Bush Doctrine discourse, the basic policies of the Bush Doctrine are the spread of democratic values, pre-emptive action, and unilateralism. Owens more specifically describes the main points of the Bush Doctrine as being: 1.) The rejection of “moral equivalency” in international relations. This implies the need for moral judgment in international relations, and that liberal democracies are superior to tyrannies. 2.) Repudiation of the “social work” theory about terrorism. The Bush Doctrine states that terrorism is born from murderous ideology and not economic factors, and that the only remedy for terrorism is democratic regime change. 3.) After 9/11, traditional approaches to threats, such as containment and deterrence, are not appropriate for dealing with terrorists, which makes preventative war necessary.⁵⁴

The Bush Doctrine of unilateralism had a profound effect on US-China relations. With the war on terrorism being placed as security priority number one and the US opting to be the main effort without major international support, building relationships with other countries, especially in matters of security not related to the war on terrorism, suddenly had much more meaning with a lot more at stake.⁵⁵ The focus on the war on terrorism provided opportunities for countries to work together and improve relationships

⁵³ Mustapha, Jennifer. "Threat Construction in Post-9/11 US Foreign Policy Discourses: (Critical) Security in Southeast Asia." *The Pacific Review* 24.4 (2011): 494

⁵⁴ Owens, Mackubin Thomas. "The Bush Doctrine: The Foreign Policy Of Republican Empire." *Orbis* 53.1 (2009): 26

⁵⁵ Gurtov, Mel. "The Bush Doctrine in Asia." *American Foreign Policy in a Globalized World*. By David P. Forsythe, Patrice C. McMahon, and Andrew Hall Wedeman. New York: Routledge, 2006: 289

on issues previously not discussed prior to 9/11. This translated into having a positive effect upon the normalization of US-China relations. The US's focus had shifted from East Asian conflicts to fighting the war on terrorism in the Middle East. As a result, the "Chinese threat" became a secondary consideration.⁵⁶ The Bush Administration still remained committed to denouncing China's military and weapons trading and expansion, human rights issues in Tibet, and defending Taiwan. However after 9/11, it began emphasizing the commonalities on issues such as stopping North Korea from developing nuclear weapons.⁵⁷

9/11 may have changed the American outlook on the world, but preemptive and unilateralist policy had been apart of US foreign policy in previous administrations, including Clinton's. However, some people such as Leffler, claim that the Bush Doctrine strategy may have worked in the past, but now a unilateralist approach to solving American security issues no longer can achieve the desired outcome. Leffler claims that there are three pillars to the Bush Doctrine: getting rid of terrorists and rouge regimes; harmonizing relations with great powers; and nurturing democracy around the world.⁵⁸ However, he claims that preemption, and unilateralism may defeat terrorism, but also undermines the two other pillars. Preemption and unilateralism breaks apart the needed harmony among great powers and makes democratization nearly impossible.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Sutter, Robert G. *U.S.-Chinese Relations: Perilous Past, Pragmatic Present*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010: 124

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Leffler, Melvyn P. "Bush's Foreign Policy." *Foreign Policy* 144 (2004): 27

⁵⁹ Leffler, Melvyn P. "Bush's Foreign Policy." *Foreign Policy* 144 (2004): 27

Therefore contrary to common belief about Bush Doctrine creating “revolutionary” policy for dealing with terrorists, the principles of his doctrine are actually similar to doctrines of previous administrations.

The Obama Doctrine

With President Obama still serving his second term, the Obama Doctrine researchers have yet to clearly define its goals and policies. Some believe there is a plan with coherency that focuses mainly on multilateralism and engagement, or rather more liberal policies.

Clarence Lusane argues that Obama foreign policy places a new emphasis on soft power to create “second-order effects.”⁶⁰ Obama wants to set the example to the world and push for developments in issues such as human rights, global poverty, and climate change that would lead to more multilateral cooperation while still keeping the United States at the center of the international community, or what Lusane calls “re-branding” US hegemony.

Douglas Feith and Seth Cropsey argue the US will gain respect by limiting itself, and that multilateralism is the best hope for achieving that goal. They claim that the US under the Obama administration has been less assertive, and less power-minded, as evidenced by Obama deciding not to intervene in Libya until the US had both the Arab

⁶⁰ Lusane, Clarence. "We Must Lead The World:" The Obama Doctrine And The Re-Branding Of U.S. Hegemony." *Black Scholar* 38.1 (2008): 34-35

League and the UN Security Council's approval.⁶¹ Bush's "doctrine of containment" has turned into "doctrine of self-containment."⁶²

On the other hand, there are those who argue lack of consistency because of reasons such as focusing on domestic policies and the goal to counter Bush's foreign policy. They also claim that lack of realist policies are not only incoherent, but have also been ineffective in their implementation.

Colin Dueck posits that Obama's chief policy interests are actually not international, but rather domestic. The implications of a focus on domestic politics over international politics are a shift in resources away from national security spending, avoiding partisan political fights over national security, and the avoidance of international entanglements.⁶³ The basic idea is that the US should be more accommodating to its rivals and adversaries, because through accommodation these groups and countries will change their actions from the US's example. However, these policies have not yielded the expected results. In 2009, the Obama administration went to the Copenhagen conference on climate control and offered to greatly reduce US carbon emissions in order to set an example and encourage other nations, specifically China, to pledge to reduce carbon emissions. The US's proposal was met with Chinese only agreeing to reduce emissions by an amount nowhere near the amount the US had pledged, but many environmentalists

⁶¹ Feith, Douglas J., and Seth Cropsey. "The Obama Doctrine Defined." *Commentary* 132.1 (2011): 12

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

believe that these Chinese emissions reductions were not effective in any practical manner.⁶⁴

Henry Nau also expresses the sentiment of doctrine ambiguity by stating that Obama foreign policy is a counter reaction to Bush's foreign policy in which Obama is pushing the foreign policy "pendulum" really far to the left.⁶⁵ Nau describes the pendulum being pushed too far with scenarios such as the fact that despite making statements at the Nobel Prize ceremony about defending human rights, Obama consistently downplays human rights issues in China in turn for finding other issues to cooperate on; or that Obama remains silent on free trade and does not press China about its currency manipulation.⁶⁶ Sending mixed messages such as these makes foreign policy ineffective and difficult to define.

This debate of defining foreign policy goals not only can be said for overall Obama Doctrine, but for the Obama Doctrine on China as well.

In the 2011 November issue of *Foreign Policy*, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton defined the foreign policy strategy in the Asia-Pacific region as "forward-deployed diplomacy" that encompasses six lines of action: Strengthen bilateral security alliances, deepen relationships with emerging powers, engagement with regional multinational institutions, expand trade and investment, forge a broad-based military presence, and advance democracy and human rights.⁶⁷ The "forward-deployed" has both forward deployment of military presence and forward deployment of American cooperation

⁶⁴ Dueck, Colin. "The Accommodator: Obama's Foreign Policy." *Policy Review* 169 (2011): 19

⁶⁵ Nau, Henry R. "Obama's Foreign Policy." *Policy Review* 160 (2010): 28

⁶⁶ Ibid: 31

⁶⁷ Clinton, Hillary. "America's Pacific Century." *Foreign Policy* 189 (2011): 4

aspects. Although specifically stated by the Secretary of State, it is still possible to see the creation of the confusion in this foreign policy strategy. In terms of defining foreign policy doctrine, building relationships with emerging powers and engaging with regional multinational institutions is very liberal in nature as engagement policies. However, strengthening security alliances and forging a broad-based military presence are forms of realist containment policies. Combining these together creates a very complex and flexible mix of foreign policies, but rather difficult to define.

With China in particular, Clinton emphasized creating effective cooperation by being honest about differences and avoiding unrealistic expectations. Clinton and the Treasury Secretary launched the Strategic and Economic Dialogue to cooperatively discuss bilateral issues such as security, energy, and human rights. Clinton also expressed the desire to forge durable military-to-military dialogues.⁶⁸ However later in the article, Clinton states that because stakes are too high to improperly deal with China, the relationship will continue to be “embedded” within a broader regional framework of security alliances, economic networks, and social connections.⁶⁹ Clinton clearly expresses optimism with engaging more with China through these bilateral talks on security and economics, but the last embedded statement also expresses pessimism about a great future in US-Chinese relations that still causes the US to focus on its regional security alliances and economic connections to other countries in the region. Because, although most of the article concerns the strategy involved with dealing with China, Clinton also still takes the time to elaborate the importance of other bilateral security alliances with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand. In terms of discussing

⁶⁸ Clinton, Hillary. "America's Pacific Century." *Foreign Policy* 189 (2011): 6

⁶⁹ Ibid: 7

strengthening these bilateral relationships, Clinton points that in Japan, the US payed \$5 billion to ensure continued presence of American forces; in South Korea, the US continues to develop combined (military) capabilities in order to deter North Korea; and in the Philippines, the US is working with the Filipino government to ensure successful counterterrorism training through the US Joint Special Operations Task Force.⁷⁰ All of these examples point to US concern in maintaining an absolute power balance within the East Asian region; and that the US is using a greater military presence to contain Chinese power growth and control of the power balance.

Daniel Drezner describes explains that this mixture of containment and engagement policies in East Asia, and the resulting confusion, by arguing that the Obama administration's foreign policy has had not one grand strategy, but two, and that the Obama administration is currently shifting from the first grand strategy to the second.⁷¹ Drezner claims the first grand strategy is multilateral retrenchment, the engagement strategy, where the US curtails overseas commitments, restores its standing the world, and shifts burdens to other global partners. In the relationship with China, Drezner said that the multilateralism entrenchment showed in the form of creating the Strategic and Economic Dialogue as an East Asian "G-2" while also allowing the G-20 to replace the original G-8 as the main international economic forum in order to allow more participation around the world. The intention was that more reserved US policy would set an example that other nations would follow.⁷²

⁷⁰ Clinton, Hillary. "America's Pacific Century." *Foreign Policy* 189 (2011): 4-5

⁷¹ Drezner, Daniel W. "Does Obama Have a Grand Strategy: Why We Need Doctrines in Uncertain Times." *Foreign Affairs* 90 (2011):

58

⁷² Ibid: 64

However, as Drezner posits, the multilateralism entrenchment strategy fell short of achieving the effect the administration had hoped for. Drezner claims that China's response to the US's reserved policy suggestions with aggressive rhetoric about grander regional aspirations. Drezner comes to the conclusion that soft power cannot accomplish a lot in the absence of the willingness to use hard power.⁷³ As a result, after 18 months in office, foreign policy strategy started changing towards what Drezner describes as counterpunching, or the more aggressive containment strategy. Where at first, the US created the Strategic and Economic Dialogue, after the policy shifted, the US instead began being more vocal in its criticisms of China's human rights and economic freedom abuses. Drezner also points out what Secretary Clinton references in her article that the US has strengthened its economic and security relationships with China's neighbors in the region in order to show a willingness to contain rising threats and reassuring allies that the US will continue its support in the region.⁷⁴

Drezner's argument of Obama's foreign policy shifting to a more containment nature is also supported by Michael Klare and his article on the US's foreign policy on China. In his article, Klare explains that Obama has chosen to commence military buildup in Australia aimed at reasserting US primacy and containing China. The US also plans as part of this re-shift in focus to bolster alliances with countries on China's periphery. Klare claims that the reasoning behind this shift in focus to East Asia is that the Pacific has become the "center of gravity" for global economics, China has taken advantage of the US's 10 year preoccupation with the Middle East, and that the US needs

⁷³ Drezner, Daniel W. "Does Obama Have a Grand Strategy: Why We Need Doctrines in Uncertain Times." *Foreign Affairs* 90 (2011): 65

⁷⁴ Ibid: 66

to make up for lost time and contest China's gains over the past decade.⁷⁵ Klare also states that the South China Sea has become a major national security concern, especially since China has begun to reclaim its sovereignty over the South China Sea territories.⁷⁶ Therefore, it can be argued that Obama Doctrine shares the parallel with the Clinton Doctrine that more ambiguous engagement foreign policies have given way to more aggressive containment policies towards China. In the discourse of US foreign policy since Clinton, Chinese military (absolute) power has continued to grow, and has continued to be a concern for the Obama administration that causes the US to respond with creating containment strategies. According to the arguments presented by these foreign policy researchers and the Secretary of State, herself, it appears that Mearsheimer's theory of offensive realism is still applicable to describing the current reality of US-Chinese relations and the power politics between them.

⁷⁵ Klare, Michael T. "Obama's China Syndrome." *Nation* 293.24 (2011): 8

⁷⁶ Klare, Michael T. "Obama's China Syndrome." *Nation* 293.24 (2011): 8

III. Hypothesis

In the course of American foreign policy since the Clinton administration, the United States has gone back and forth between a mix of engagement and containment policies to deal with a varying degree of threats. In the case of China, while the US focus has remained on China, American foreign policy has tended to be much firmer and more containment in nature over the past the past decade. It was only during the Bush administration, that of the three admisitrations was the largest supporter of containment policy, that US and China achieved some level of normalization without any major bilateral crises. However, now that the focus has returned to East Asia and China, US foreign policy is returning to its containment nature once again. Even with all the rhetoric about the goals of the Obama Doctrine being engagement and multilateralism, great power politics is forcing the United States's hand to make up for lost time focusing on the Middle East by trying to reassert our influence and control in East Asia. This is why I am going to test John Mearsheimer's theory of offensive realism as being true in the case of China-US relations. *I hypothesize that the rise of China and its military power (absolute power) has caused the United States to return its focus back to East Asia and create containment policies to balance growing Chinese power.* The use of containment policies was the predicted great powers actions and therefore fits in the parameters of offensive realism.

IV. Methodology

Using Chinese military power as the independent variable, and US foreign policy as the dependent variable, my research will focus on showing a correlation, if any, between the growth of Chinese military power and US foreign policy towards East Asia.

However, other variables will have to be used to represent both the independent and dependent variables:

Independent Variable:

Before describing which variables I will use to represent the independent variable, a description of the independent variable is needed:

According to the 2006 Whiter Paper on National Defense published by Chinese government, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) "aims at moving from regional defense to trans-regional mobility, and improving its capabilities in air-ground integrated operations, long-distance maneuvers, rapid assaults and special operations."⁷⁷ In short, the PLA has re-evaluated what it defines as strategy and goals, and has come to the conclusion and implementation of reorganizing the entire the PLA in order to modernize and diversify its fighting style.

More than just developing and buying more modern weapon systems, the PLA has changed its strategy on a theoretical level. Comparatively, the PLA is technologically behind other major powers around the world. Despite recent pushes to modernize, it still has a long way to go, therefore the PLA has reconsidered what wars or conflicts it was able to fight based upon its limitations. Nan Li argues that this theoretical change has

⁷⁷ People's Republic of China. State Council. Information Office. *China's National Defense in 2006*.

resulted in breathing room for the PLA to develop its strengths, and subsequently give rise to “pockets of excellence.” By using these pockets, the PLA has also gained the ability to systematically figure out what the PLA is good and utilize these strengths to turn “absolute inferiority” to “temporary superiority.”⁷⁸

Li posits that due to the realization that the most likely war scenarios the PLA would and could deal with is medium-sized local wars, the major theoretical change is the development of the War Zone Campaign (WZC), which is designed for medium-sized wars.⁷⁹ WZC is the total sum of all services’ sub-campaigns integrated together with equal importance as opposed to Combined Arms Group Armies (CAGA) where ground forces are the main effort like in typical total war scenarios. WZC is smaller than total war in scale, but is directly related to achieving the strategic objective; whereas certain campaigns of total war will only be a part of achieving the strategic goal.

Considering its new advantages, the WZC properly utilizes the “pockets of excellence” that may be lost or overwhelmed in a total war operation. The key principle is to use various services to asymmetrically attack other services. For example, using air power to strike ground forces, using ground forces to fight naval and air forces, or use combative forces to attack non-combat aspect like logistics.⁸⁰

In order to achieve the desired outcome of the WZC theory, the PLA has also had to pursue modernization of its weapon systems and developments in training for better mobilization and integration of these weapon systems. Milan Vego, in his analysis of

⁷⁸ Li, Nan. "The PLA's Evolving Campaign Doctrine and Strategies." *The People's Liberation Army in the Information Age*. By James C. Mulvenon and Richard H. Yang. Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1999. 146-74.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

PLA Navy (PLAN) strategies, argues that recently naval strategy has evolved from near-coast defense to far-seas defense.⁸¹ Driven by Chinese national interests slowly becoming globalized, mobilization of forces has become a major focus for PLA development.⁸² At the time Holslag's article was published, China was in pursuit of buying 34 I1-76 and 4 I1-78 refueling tanker aircraft. In addition to buying, China is investing in its own long-range aircraft development. Not only in the air, but naval developments are occurring with the commissioning of Type-071 landing platform dock, a large helicopter carrier, and China's first aircraft carrier.⁸³

In terms of integration, the PLA has also reorganized its forces into smaller units to achieve more flexibility.⁸⁴ This, coupled with modernization of weapons systems, is making the PLA far more effectively capable of dealing with various types of missions to include both low-intensity and high-intensity combat scenarios, non-combat missions, counterterrorism, and peacekeeping missions. To help integration, the PLA has also introduced new education and training techniques. In 2008, the Central Military Council set up the Military Training and Examination Program in order to develop new theories on "long-range rapid mobility" and "joint combat capability in hostile environments."⁸⁵ Vejo also explains the example of how naval combat training has become more complex

⁸¹ Vejo, Milan. "Getting To Know The Chinese." U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings 138.4 (2012): 30-34. 11 Feb. 2013.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Holslag, Jonathan. "Embracing Chinese Global Security Ambitions." *Washington Quarterly* 32.3 (2009): 105-118. 11 Feb. 2013.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

and realistic in which “known conditions” training is being replaced with “unknown conditions” training in unfamiliar water further away from territorial waters.⁸⁶

To properly represent the growth of Chinese military power, the most important variable to look at is modernization. In the development of the WZC strategy, integration and the shrinking of unit sizes is creating the desired effect of flexibility and mobility. Therefore these are two of the variables that can help to build the modernization variable.

For building the rest of the picture of the change in Chinese military power, I will be adapting from the model created by Ashley Tellis in *Measuring National Power in the Post Industrial Age*. Ashley Tellis argues that when measuring military capabilities on a universal scale, the questions that have to be answered are “What resources does the military get, and how successfully can they be transformed into effective military power?”⁸⁷ She uses 3 variables to answer these questions:

- 1.) Strategic resources a military receives from the government it serves
 - a. Defense Budget
 - b. Manpower
- 2.) Resources converted into effective capabilities
 - a. Military Academy Enrollment
 - b. Military Trade
- 3.) Combat Proficiency
 - a. Number and types of Advanced weaponry

⁸⁶ Vego, Milan. "Getting To Know The Chinese." U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings 138.4 (2012): 30-34. Web. 11 Feb. 2013.

⁸⁷ Tellis, Ashley J. *Measuring National Power in the Postindustrial Age*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND/Arroyo Center, 2000.

However, this model in the particular case of analyzing the growth of Chinese military power has several shortcomings. First, although an in-depth description of the PLA can be created from this model, it does not really describe this variable of modernization that is essential for understanding the growth in military power. For example, in the third section on Combat Proficiency, one could collect a grand list of every fighter craft, every naval vessel, every type of missile and then describe what the PLA's current capabilities are, but it would not show the difference in capabilities between the years. Even if one were to do that for every year from the past ten years, it would lead to scenarios such as: the PLA built two new fighter aircraft one year, and then a aircraft carrier the next and then trying to define which has more of an effect on total military power – which is a completely different and far more complex debate.

Second, the data the Tellis model requires is not always readily available for the PLA. Therefore, to hopelessly try to find information that perhaps is not even available on a subject that will not lead to the exact variable that is needed to solve the problem of measuring the growth in Chinese military power.

As a result, I'm will change a few of the variables, so the previously mentioned aspects of modernization are properly represented and it becomes possible to form a realistic picture of the growth of Chinese military power. The new model looks like this:

- 1.) Strategic resources a military receives from the government it serves
 - a. GDP
 - b. Military Budget

These two variables will be used to create Military Budget as a percentage of GDP to describe the trend of China's investment in its strategic resources for the years 2001 - 2012.

- c. Overall military size for the years 2005 - 2012
- d. Total number of PLA units (group armies, brigades, etc.) for the years 2005 – 2012

These two variables will be used to create average PLA troops per unit for the years of 2005 – 2012 in order to compare the rate of PLA unit size change across the given timespan.

2.) Combat Proficiency

- a. Total amount of weapons systems for every branch of the PLA for the years 2005- 2012

This variable will include weapon systems such as Tanks, Destroyers, Frigates, Amphibious Transportation, Nuclear Attack Submarines, Fighters, Bombers, and Transportation Vehicles.

3.) Rate of Integration

The rates (slopes) of the trend lines of the Average PLA Troops per Unit and Number of Weapons Systems variables will be added to form a new rate that will show the rate of integration per year for the years 2005 – 2012. When considering integration, a reduction of average unit size would have a positive effect because a decrease in unit size with the replacement of more weapons systems would show the WZC strategy being implemented by the PLA. Therefore the rate of average PLA troops per unit will need to be inverted in the rate of integration equation.

Rate of Modernization

In the formation of the Modernization variable, variable 3 (Rate of Integration) already encompasses the variables from variable 2 (Combat Capability) and part of variable 1 (Average PLA Troops per Unit). The last variable that must be included is the resource investment factor, represented by the change (rate/slope) of the Military Budget as a percentage of GDP trend line.

Using the same concept to form the Rate of Integration, the Rate of Military Budget as a percentage of GDP will be added to the Rate of Integration variable to form a new line that will represent the Rate of Modernization per year for the years 2005 – 2012.

The idea is that when resources, which at its simplest refers to monetary investment in the form of the military budget, is combined with the rate at which PLA troops are being replaced by weapons systems, the result will be a rate that can describe the PLA's rate of modernization and the implementation of the WZC strategy over the past decade at its most basic form.

Dependent Variable:

US foreign policy has gone back and forth between containment and engagement policy with China over the past decade. The dependent variables, therefore represent both ends of this foreign policy spectrum so that when compared to the changes in the Chinese military, it can be determined whether US foreign policy has responded more in terms of engagement or containment.

For representing changes in US foreign policy, I will be using variables that directly represent the type of East Asia foreign policies being implemented. US foreign policy is divided into categories of containment and engagement. Therefore the variables are also divided into containment and engagement variables:

1.) Containment

I will operationalize the containment variable by showing the trends of US military presence in East Asia. Increase in military presence is consistently quoted (and is quoted earlier on) as the main action taken by the US to counter rising Chinese power. Therefore shifts in US military presence in East Asia can be used as a barometer to measure for shifts in foreign policy focus as to whether foreign policy has become more or less containment in nature. For example, an increase in military presence would indicate the implementation of containment policy.

The two available types of data that can show military presence in East Asia are:

- a. US troops deployed in East Asia for the years 2001 – 2012
- b. US military exports by country for the years 2001 – 2011
 - a. The countries chosen are countries that China is openly aggressive to, which essentially are the countries it currently has border/territory disputes with. Two countries specifically removed from the list, however, are Russia and North Korea, because the US does not sell weapons to these countries, while China does.
 - b. In total the list includes Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Phillipines, Vietnam, and India.

The US troops deployed in East Asia variable shows the amount of military manpower in East Asia. The US military exports variable shows the US's economic investment in East Asia. With these variables together, there is hard power variable and a soft power variable available to measure the US's containment policies.

2.) Engagement

I'm operationalizing the engagement variable by using the variable:

a. Number of US students studying in China for the years 2001- 2011

The number of US students studying in China is a variable with readily available data that is representative of engagement policies. When the US government wishes to engage more with China, one policy option is to encourage and provide incentives for high school and college students to study abroad in China. The Obama administration has provided several initiatives to encourage more American students to study abroad in China. Although changes in the number of students studying in China may not only be affected by engagement policies, they can still serve as a barometer for trends in engagement policies. When the US implements engagement policies, it also will encourage and provide incentives for students to study abroad in the country that the US is engaging, thereby increasing the students studying abroad. So too for the opposite, when there is an absence of engagement policy, the US will discourage or cancel study abroad programs altogether, decreasing the number of students studying abroad.

In the final analysis of the comparison of the change in Chinese military power variable (Modernization) and the change in US foreign policy variables, I will take each US foreign policy variable, individually, and compare the trends of those individual

variables to the Rate of Modernization variable to determine what kind of correlation exists, or does not exist, between the two variables.

V. Results

At the beginning of this project, the debate surrounding US-Chinese relations were divided into four arguments: US is in decline, the US is not in decline, China is a status quo nation, or China is a Revisionist nation. These four theories were then used to create four different possible scenarios about the status of US-Chinese relations: US not decline/China revisionist, US decline/China Revisionist, US not decline/China status quo, and US decline, China status quo.

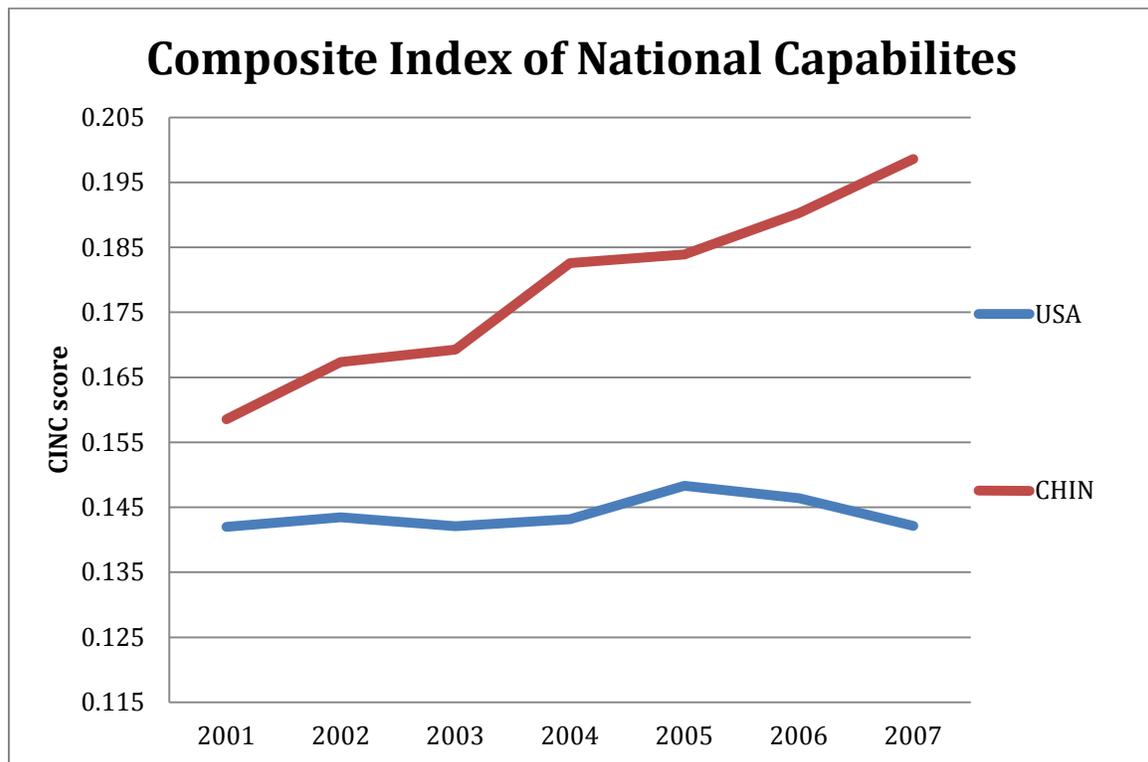
The US Decline/China status quo scenario was discarded because the decline of US hegemony would not lead to China to sitting idly by and leaving the East Asian hegemon status vacant. There would be some revision in the power structure of the international system in Northeast Asia, at the very least. The first scenario, US not decline/China Revisionist, was also discarded because at this point, China does not wish to have a bloc of nations form against it. Therefore, so long as the US remains the hegemon, China will not try revise the power structure in East Asia.

The second and third scenarios had more validity in attempting to describe US-Chinese relations. In the second scenario, China is slowly gaining power, and with the decline of US hegemony, it will be able to revise the international power structure at some point in the future, while the third scenario suggests China may be peacefully integrating into the international structure.

The scenario that I believe closest to the truth is the second, US decline/China Revisionist scenario. As discussed earlier, the University of Michigan's political science department's Correlates of War project, J. David Singer has developed a Composite Index of National Capabilities (CINC). The CINC uses six ratios derived by the country's

total divided by the world's total score in each category. The 6 ratios are then added together and divided by 6 to create an aggregate ratio for each year. The six ratios include Total Population of Country Ratio, Urban Population of Country Ratio, Iron and Steel Production of Country Ratio, Primary Energy Consumption Ratio, Military Expenditure Ratio, and Military Personnel Ratio.

In determining which scenario most accurately describes current US/China relations, I used the latest CINC data to create a picture in order to compare changes in national capabilities between the United States and China:

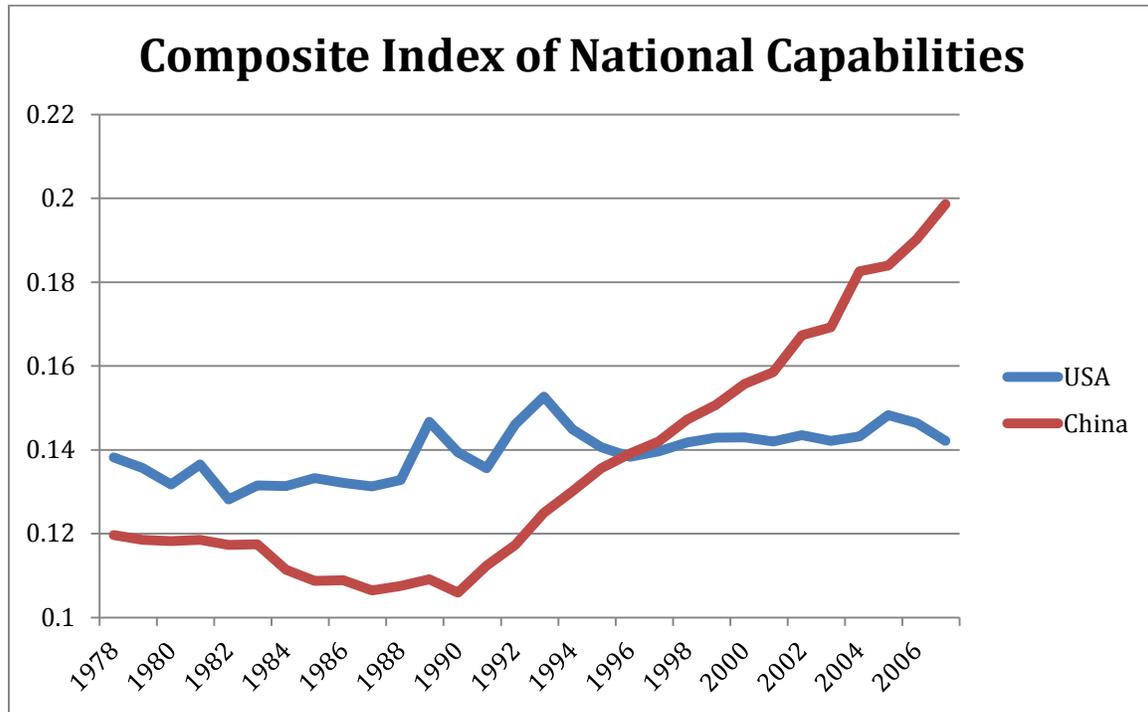


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According to the data, China's national capabilities are clearly on the rise, whereas the US's has remained relatively the same over the past decade. The chart may

⁸⁸ Singer, David. "Correlates of War." *Composite Index of National Capabilities*. University of Michigan, 08 Dec. 2011. 25 Feb. 2013. <<http://www.correlatesofwar.org/>>.

look like it could support scenario three's claim with the US not in decline, but by looking at a more extended picture of US and Chinese CINC scores from when China's economic reforms began in 1978, the picture changes a little:



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In the course of American national capabilities, US CINC scores in previous years were higher than recent years. The downward spike in 2005 over two years, more importantly, has been one of the more significant downward shifts since 1978. Since the 2007 CINC scores, the Iraq and Afghanistan wars have become larger economic burdens on the US. In addition, the US has also had to deal with the economic recession of 2008. Therefore, I argue that this trend in the decline of US national capabilities has continued, while at the same time, China's national capabilities have continued to grow.

⁸⁹ Singer, David. "Correlates of War." *Composite Index of National Capabilities*. University of Michigan, 08 Dec. 2011. 25 Feb. 2013. <<http://www.correlatesofwar.org/>>.

Having proven that scenario two is the most accurate description of US-Chinese relations, Mearsheimer's theory of offensive realism can then be considered possible, and viable if proven. Offensive realism states that once a great nation gains enough power to defend its sovereignty, it will continue to pursue power until it has reached the status of hegemon, which is a scenario that matches the second US decline/China Revisionist one. In his book, Mearsheimer applies his theory to China in 2001. His theory's integral variable is military power, and based upon it, the US in its foreign policy would react in a certain way. Specifically in the case of China, he claimed that with the rise of Chinese military power, the US military would at least remain in the East Asian region, if not deploy more, in order to contain in its military growth.

In 2011, President Obama announced a plan to open a permanent Marine Corps base in Northern Australia in order to contain Chinese military influence in the South China Sea. With such an event occurring, it would seem that Measheimer's theory is being proven. Therefore, the question that I asked is does a change in Chinese military power affect US foreign policy, and if so, how?

This question led to the discovery that Chinese military power change is best described in terms of modernization, and a numeric variable was created from it. On the other side of the equation, information was gathered about US foreign policy, not only in terms of military, but also in terms of education, and military trade.

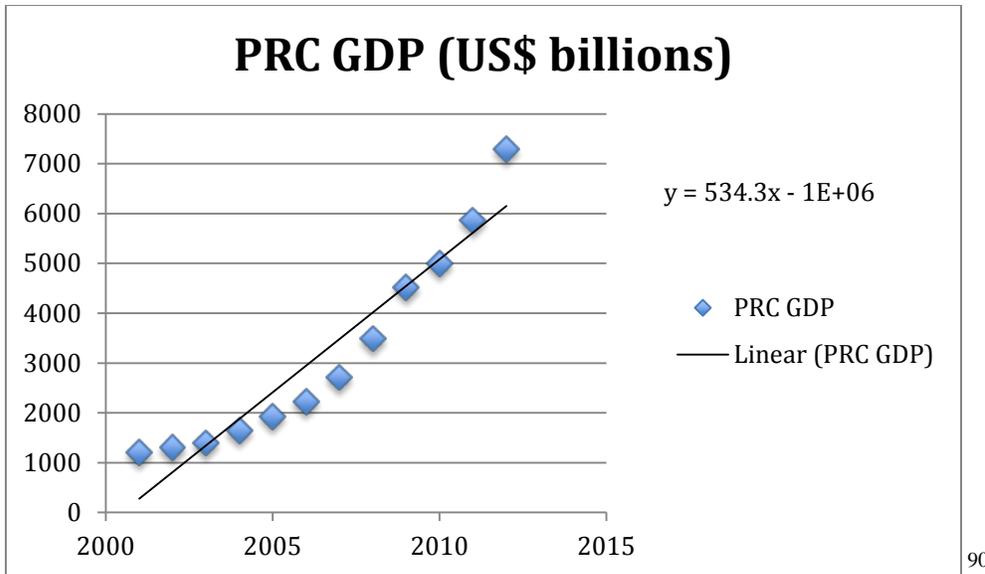
If it is found that a steady growth in Chinese military power also coincides with a steady growth in US foreign policy involvement, especially in terms of containment concerning the amount of troops stationed in East Asia and military trade with non-China friendly countries, then an argument can be made that Chinese military growth is having

an effect on US foreign policy in a manner in which the US is trying to contain this military growth and ultimately its hegemon status. Consequently, the hegemon status struggle also would indicate that China is a revisionist nation, seeking to extend its influence beyond its borders and change the power structure to better suit its national interests.

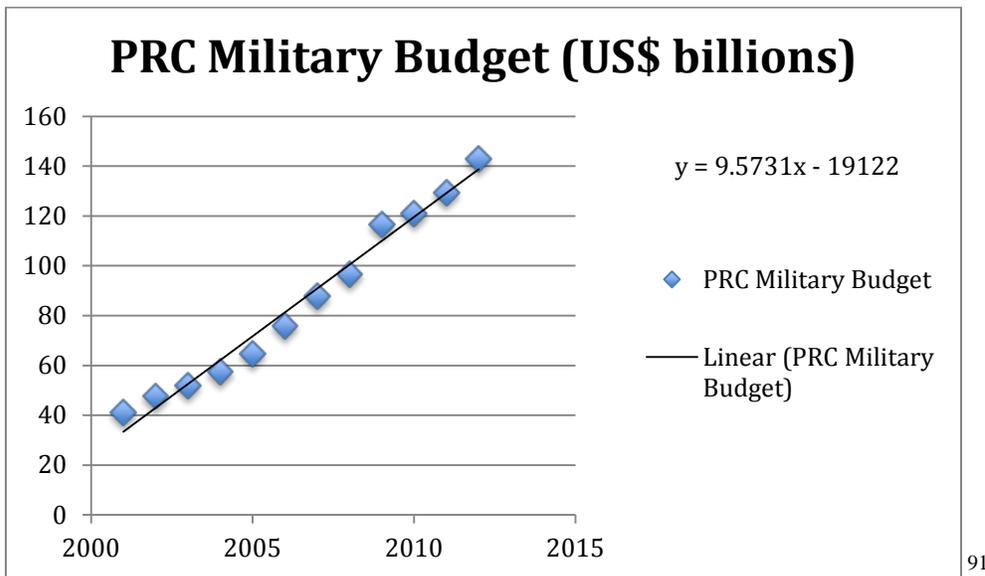
If there are discrepancies between the two variables, however, the location of the discrepancy will have to be located to determine the cause and see if the number three scenario, US not decline/China status quo, may prove to be more likely. With the US's involvement in the Middle East during the Bush Administration, it is also a possibility that despite a rise in Chinese military power, the US has not directly reacted to military power growth. This either proves that China is a status quo nation and putting a great hole in the offensive realism theory, or it shows that the US has responded in a more engagement manner in which it is not as concerned about Chinese military growth. This second possibility doesn't exactly disprove the offensive realism theory, but would indicate flaws in the idea that some amount of power shifting/military growth is possible without causing major conflict.

In the end, the two variables were compared to each other and these were the results:

The Modernization variable was created by taking the change in military resource investment, represented by the PLA's military budget as a percentage of China's GDP for the years 2001 to 2012, and adding it to the Rate of Integration.



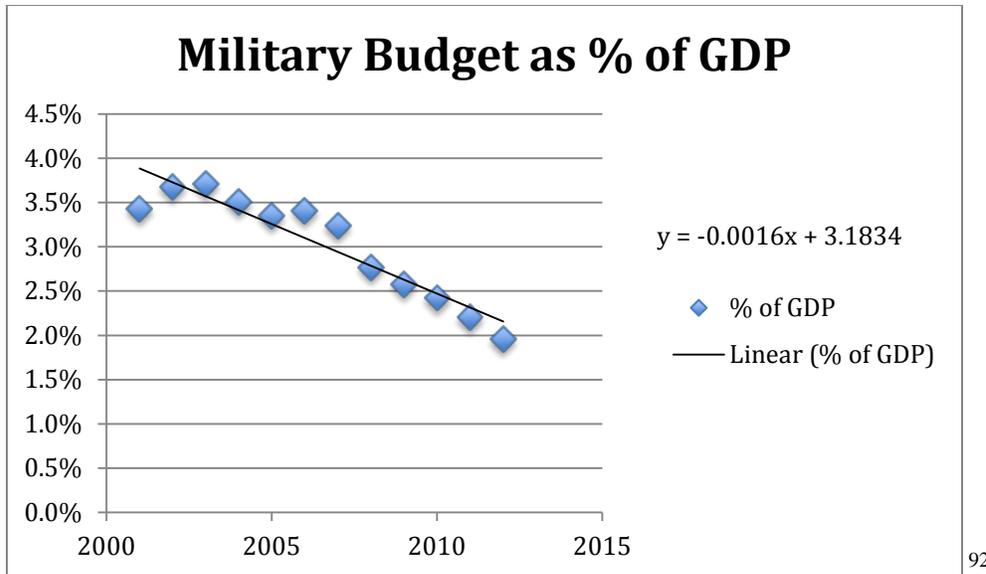
As expected from the growth represented in the CINC scores, China's total GDP has continuously grown from about \$1.2 trillion in 2001 to \$7.2 trillion in 2012.



So too, according to the World Bank, China's Military Budget has continually increased from \$41.1 billion in 2001 to \$142.8 billion in 2012.

⁹⁰ "China GDP." *China GDP*. The World Bank Group. 25 Feb. 2013. <<http://www.tradingeconomics.com/china/gdp>>.

⁹¹ "The SIPRI Military Expenditure Database." *The SIPRI Military Expenditure Database*. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. 25 Feb. 2013. <<http://milexdata.sipri.org/result.php4>>.

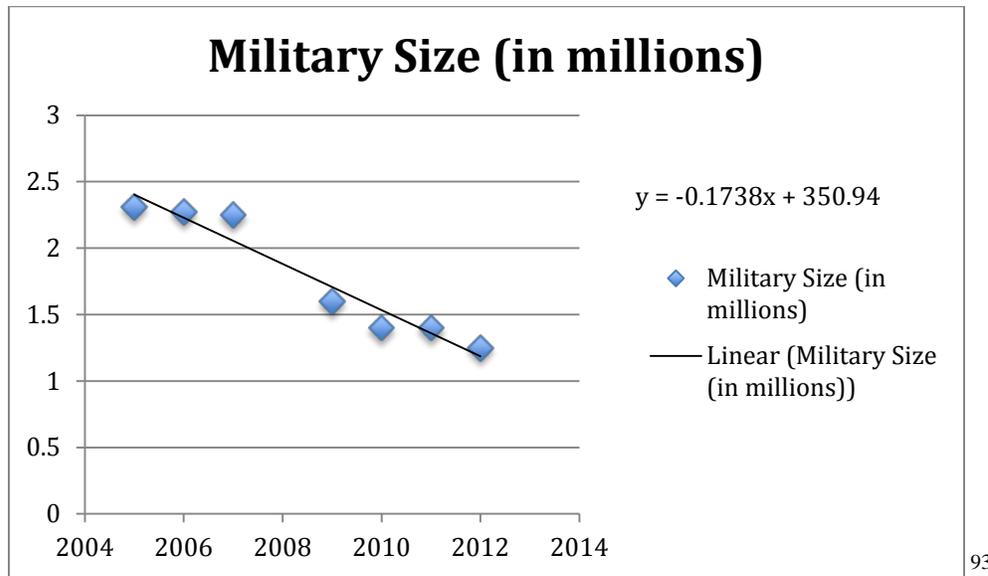


However when the military budget numbers are divided by the total GDP to create a percentage, and then the percentages are lined up from 2001 to 2012, the trend line is downward, rather than upward. The rate does not directly indicate any specific modernization policy or strategy change because an argument could be made for both modernization with the shrinking of the total military personnel and increase in technology (shown later) in order to streamline the PLA while also spending less, or the downward trend could simply be part of a grander change in national budget policies. Either way, government investment in the military still has a major influence in the developments of the Chinese military capabilities and will be factored into the modernization variable whether it mathematically affects it negatively or not.

Adding the changes in PLA troops per unit rate to the change in aggregate number of advanced weapons systems rate for the years 2005 to 2012 created the second part of the Modernization variable, the Rate of Integration. By adding these two rates together,

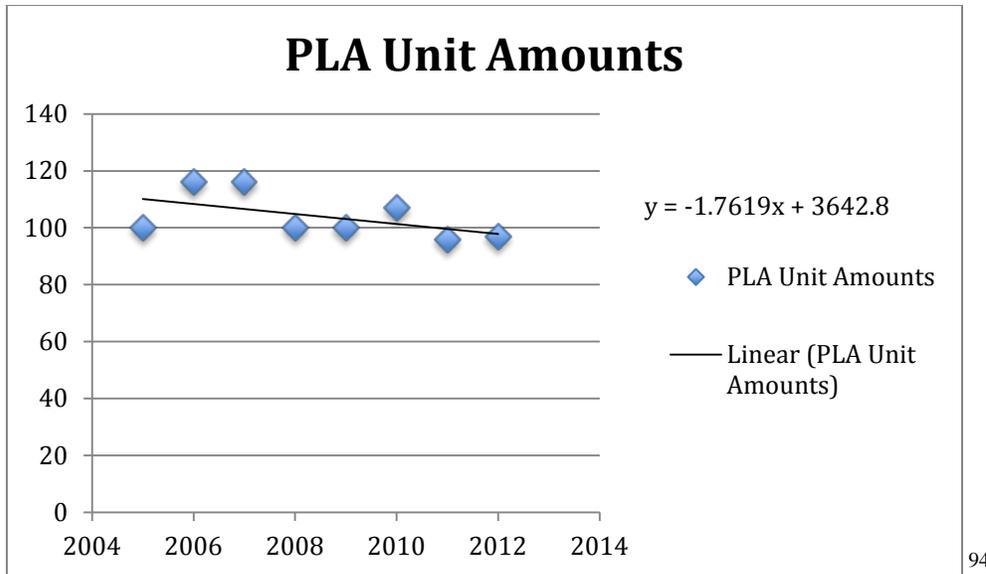
⁹² "Military Expenditure (% of GDP)." Military Expenditure (% of GDP). The World Bank. 25 Feb. 2013. <<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS>>.

the resulting rate would show the rate at which China was replacing, or integrating, advanced weapons systems in exchange for manpower.



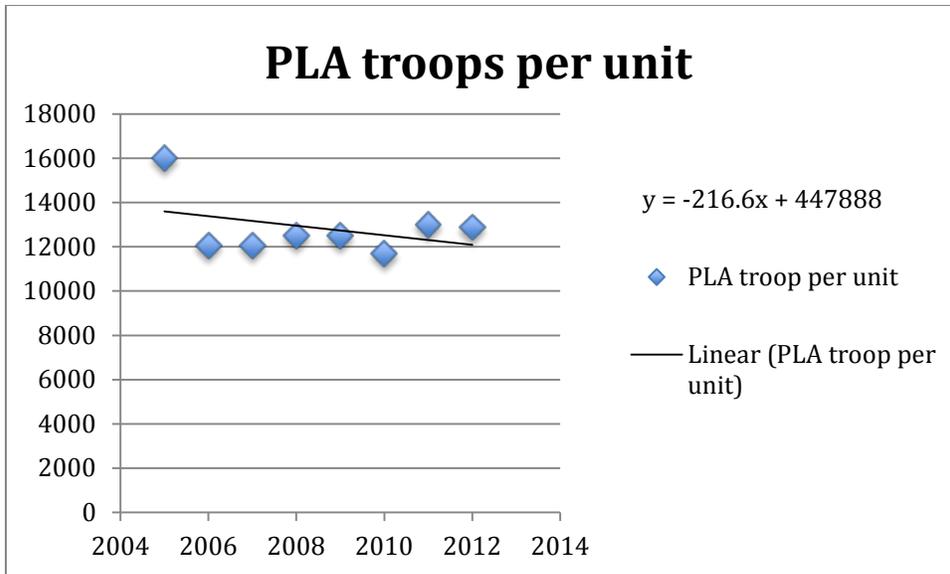
From 2005 to 2012, according to yearly DoD reports to Congress on China, the total number of people serving in the PLA has decreased from 2.31 million people to 1.25 million people in 2012.

⁹³ Statistics gathered from United States of America. Department of Defense. Secretary of Defense. *ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS Military Power of the People's Republic of China*. for the years 2005 through 2012.

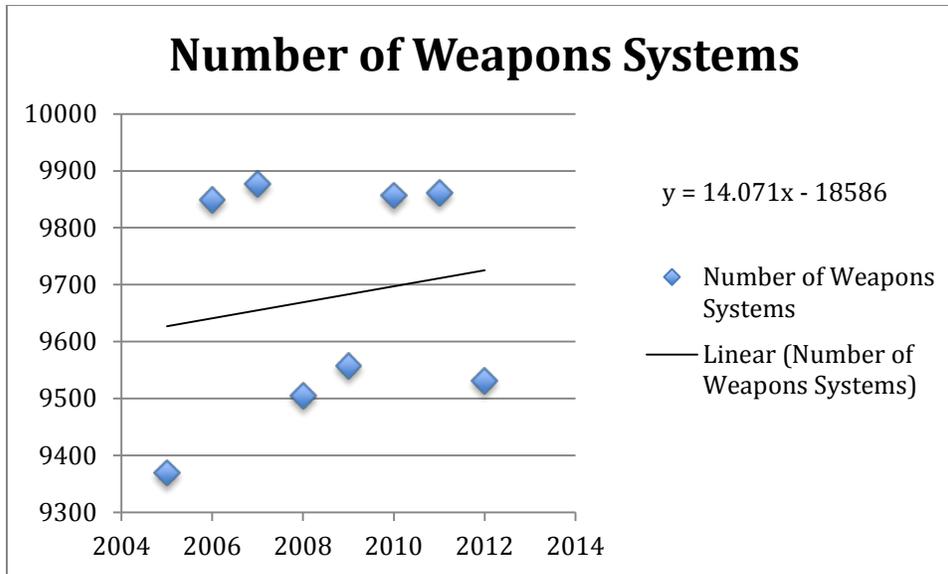


For the PLA Unit Amounts, or the total number of units within the PLA, statistics for only number of battalions and larger size units were used because these larger units would more accurately reflect strategic and larger tactical shifts, especially concerning the shift to the WZC war fighting. Therefore the units and types that were counted for this aggregate number were group armies, infantry divisions, infantry battalions, armor divisions, armor battalions, artillery divisions, artillery battalions, and marine battalions. From 2005 to 2012, the total number of units has only decreased slightly with 100 in 2004 and 116 in 2005 down to 97 in 2012, but the trend line does show a negative rate, supporting the notion of integration in which manpower is being replaced by newer technology.

⁹⁴ Statistics gathered from United States of America. Department of Defense. Secretary of Defense. *ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS Military Power of the People's Republic of China*. for the years 2005 through 2012.

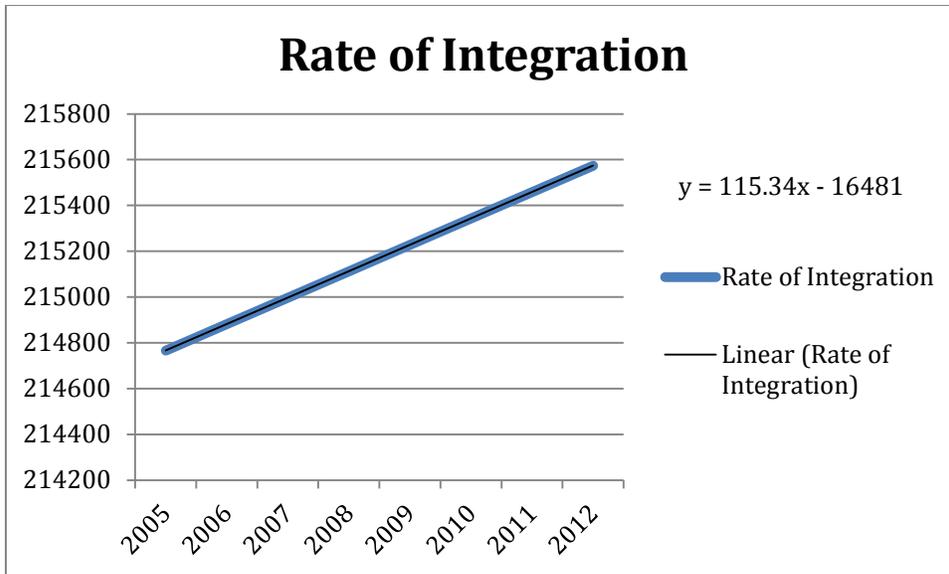


To properly represent the trend in changes in PLA manpower size, the total number of military personnel from each year was divided by that year's total number of units to create an average of PLA troops per unit for the years 2005 to 2012. This value shows a more dramatic change in average unit size from 16,000 in 2005 down to 12,887 in 2012. The average rate of change, according to the trend line, is a decrease in about 216 troops per unit every year.



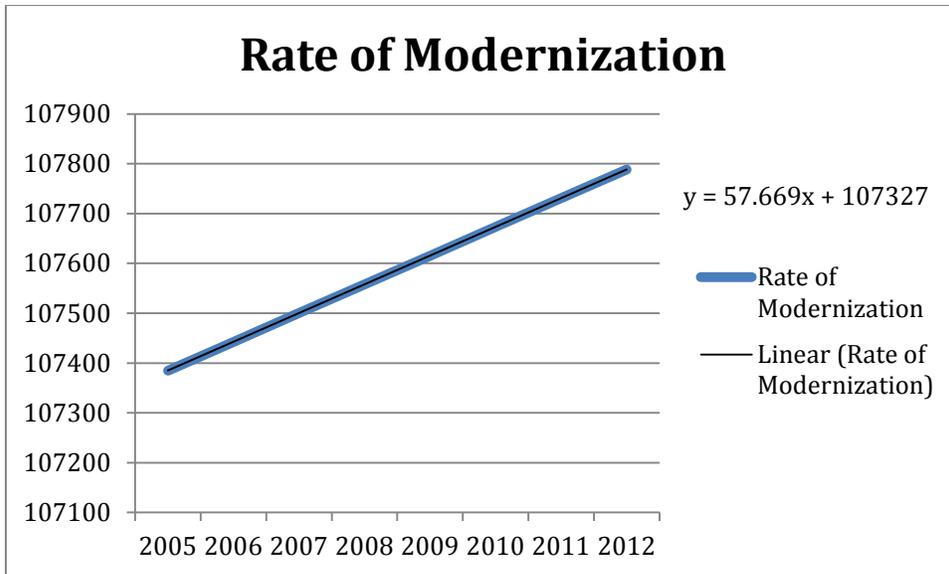
The other half of the integration variable is the number of weapons systems used or developed in the PLA every year. The weapons systems that were added up in this count were the total number of tanks, destroyers, frigates, amphibious transportation, nuclear attack submarines, fighters, bombers, and all transportation vehicles. There are some significant jumps on the graph, but in reality it is only a change in about 300 different weapons systems between the years with jumps. The trend line indicates, however, a generally positive increase of about 14 new weapon systems every year.

⁹⁵ Statistics gathered from United States of America. Department of Defense. Secretary of Defense. *ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS Military Power of the People's Republic of China*. for the years 2005 through 2012.



With the increase of weapon systems and decrease in average PLA unit size, the numbers support the claim that manpower is being replaced by more modern weapon systems. However, in the actual math required for the variable, the decrease in average PLA unit size has a positive effect on the integration variable. Therefore, the value of the slope was inversed to a positive number. The average PLA unit size rate was then added to the rate of number of weapon systems in the PLA. The resulting rate equals for every single new weapon system being added per year, there is a decrease in military personnel by approximately 115 troops per unit.

To complete the creation of the Modernization variable, the Rate of Integration was then added to the change in military budget as a percentage of GDP.



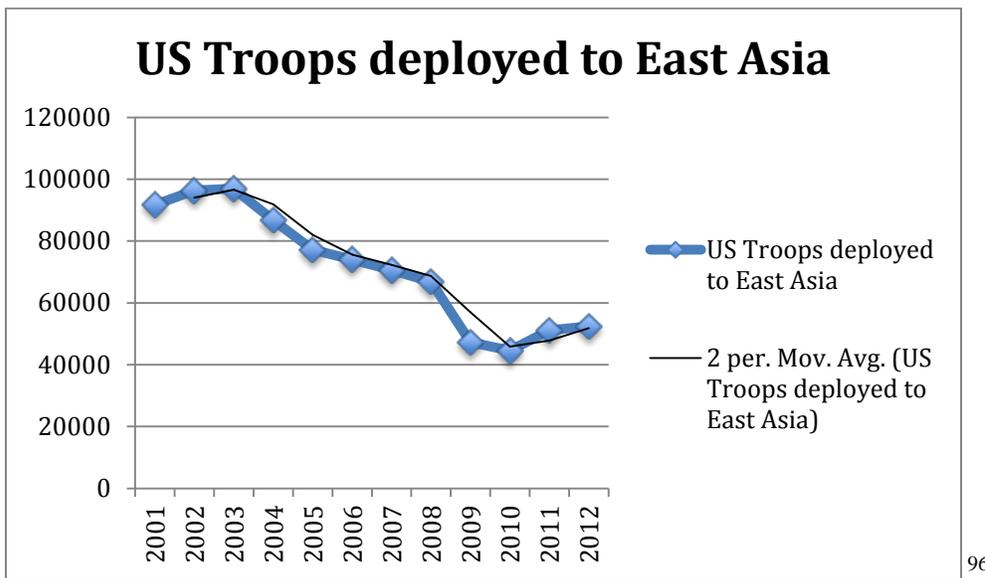
The resulting rate is that for every decrease in the military budget as percentage of GDP by 1%, the PLA integrated at a rate of approximately 57 per year, or a new weapon system was added with the decrease in 57 troops per unit per year.

In terms of Chinese military power and strategic changes, these statistics support Nan Li's argument of the development of the WZC doctrine in which smaller unit sizes with more advanced weapons can be used to exploit "pockets of excellence" and fight asymmetrical, medium-sized warfare. The Modernization variable may not be able to assign a magic number that accurately describes aggregate military strength that then can be compared to other countries' magic military strength numbers, it does, however, accurately show change and its rate in the Chinese military over the past decade, which is more important in discerning its effect on US foreign policy and describing the relationship between the US and China as a whole.

Now that the independent variable has been calculated, it can be compared to trends in US foreign policy.

As stated earlier, recent US foreign policy has gone back and forth between containment and engagement policy with China. The dependent variables, therefore represent both ends of this foreign policy spectrum so that when compared to the changes in the Chinese military, it can be determined whether US foreign policy has responded more in terms of engagement or containment.

The first comparison is between the changes in Chinese military and the containment variables: US troops deployed to East Asia and total military exports from the US to China non-friendly countries.

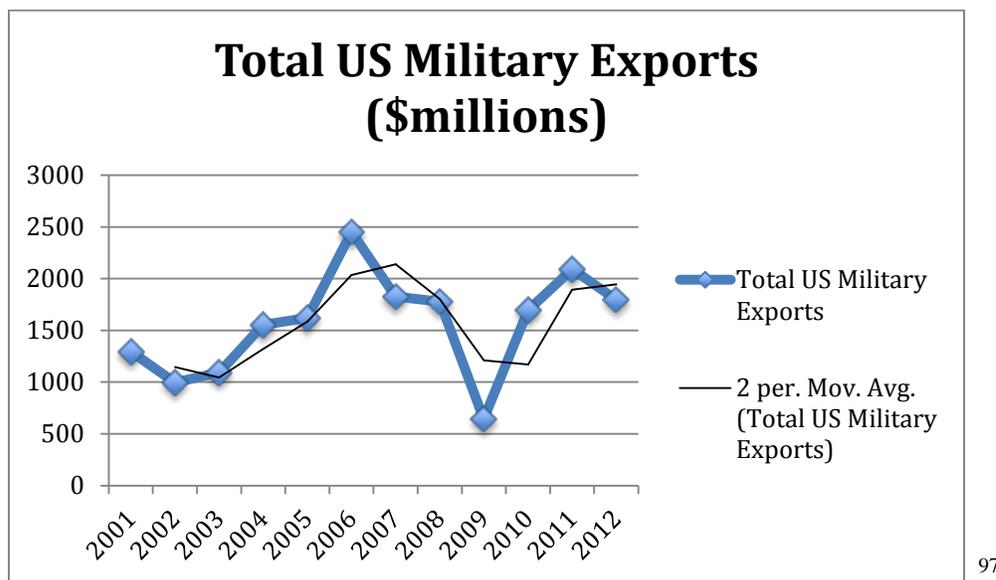


From 2001 to 2012, the number of US troops deployed to the East Asian Theater has overall decreased from approximately 92,000 to 52,00. In comparison to China's modernization variable, the trends have an inverse relationship with one another. It is significant to mention for my analysis later on that the two increase/decrease shifts in troop deployment coincide with the dates of the war in Iraq. The decrease began in 2003,

⁹⁶ "Military Personnel Statistics." *Military Personnel Statistics*. Department of Defense, 31 Mar. 2012. 25 Feb. 2013. <<http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/MILITARY/miltop.htm>>.

which coincides with the beginning of the war in Iraq, and a new increase in troops started again in 2010, which also coincides with the closing of the Iraq war. In terms of its relationship to the Chinese military power, US deployment has decreased overall either as a result of Chinese military growth, which seems unlikely due to the recent redeployment of troops since 2010, or Chinese military growth has had little to no effect on US deployment to East Asia.

The other containment variable is total US military exports in monetary value to countries that have disputes with China in the East Asian region.

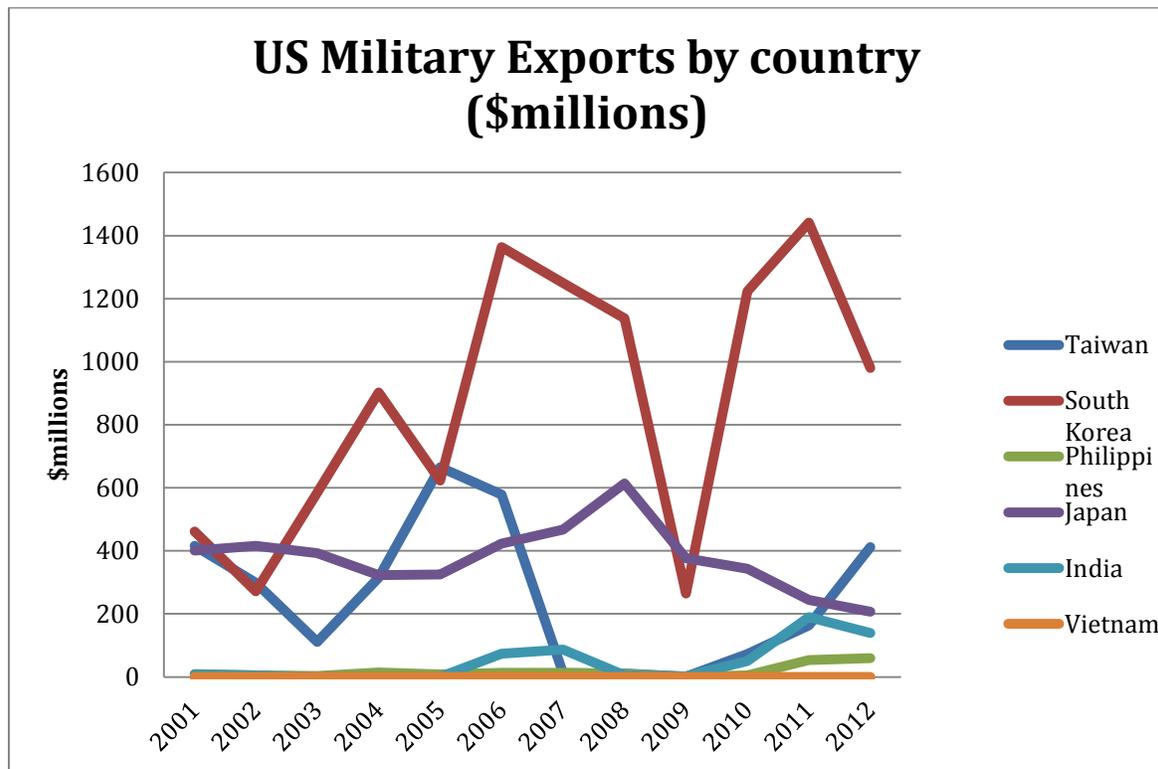


This trend line also reflects little to no correlation with the growth of the Chinese military. It cannot even be argued that Chinese military growth has decreased US military exports because it has seen both a dramatic increase and decrease since 2005. Total US military exports have continuously increased since 2009, which coincides with the

⁹⁷ "SIPRI Arms Transfers Database." *SIPRI Arms Transfers Database*. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. 25 Feb. 2013. <<http://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers>>.

increase US troop deployment in East Asia, but the overall trend is a result of total regional bilateral relations.

If the total US military exports line is broken up into US exports by country, the graph appears as:

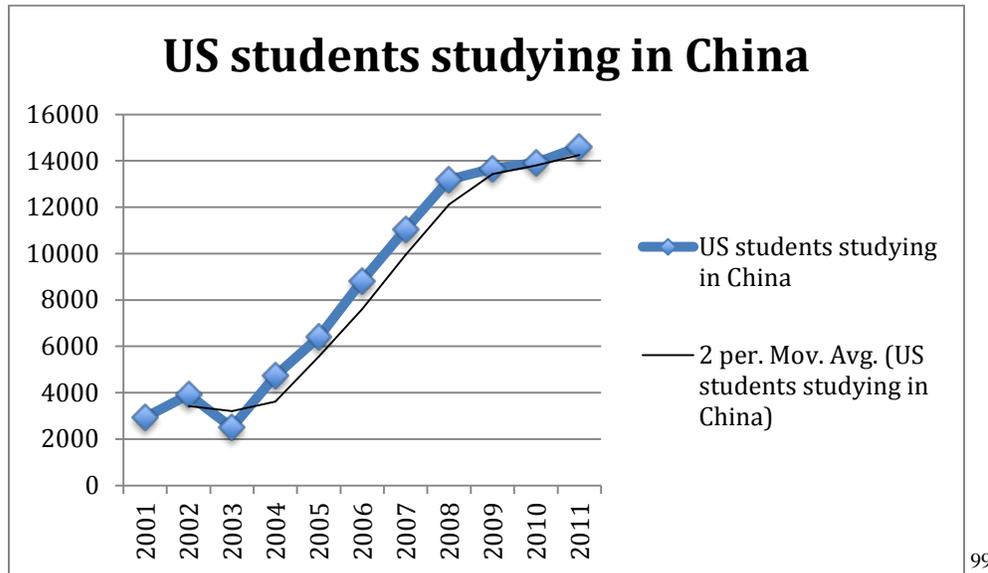


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Overall, the US and each country it invests in reached a high point around 2005-2006, but then quickly dropped by 2009. This may be a result of the economic crisis of 2008, but at the same time it is significant to point out that US military exports with the Philippines has remained consistently low up until 2010 in which all countries export values also increased, and now it is at Taiwan's level of military export values.

⁹⁸ "SIPRI Arms Transfers Database." *SIPRI Arms Transfers Database*. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. 25 Feb. 2013. <<http://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers>>.

The containment variables do not do well in the comparison to the Modernization variable, but the engagement variables do much better in following the rate of Modernization.



This variable, however, actually follows the steady increasing trend along with the modernization of the Chinese military power. I don't believe that Chinese military growth and US students studying in China share a direct correlation due to the nature of the two professions, but an argument could be made that the growth in Chinese military power could indirectly create more interest in studying China or Chinese for students in the US. However, the modernization variable trend also is similar to overall Chinese growth that was reflected in the CINC scores. A more likely argument, therefore, is that overall Chinese growth, including growth in Chinese military power, has created more interest in US students for studying abroad in China.

⁹⁹ "Open Doors Fact Sheet: China." *Open Doors Fact Sheet: China*. Institute of International Education, 2012. 25 Feb. 2013. <<http://www.iie.org/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors/Data/Fact-Sheets-by-Country/2012>>.

VI. Conclusion

What these results imply is that overall Chinese military power is steadily on the rise, and it has had a varying effect on US foreign policy since 2001. In terms of the implementation of engagement or containment policy, both of the containment variables failed the test to have a positive relationship with the modernization variable. The engagement variable, however, did pass the test, indicating that the US's foreign policies with China over the past decade have been more engagement in nature than containment despite the modernization of the Chinese military.

The US deployment in East Asia variable also supports this hypothesis due to the fact that the changes in US deployment coincide with the status of the Iraq war that the US was fighting at the time. When the war began, troops in East Asia began decreasing in number, and have begun increasing again since the closing of the Iraq war.

Overall, only the engagement variables follow the rate of Modernization, indicating that the US has implemented engagement policies towards China within the past decade. However since 2009, both of the containment variables also appear to be becoming positive trends like that of the modernization variable. It has only been a few years since the closing of the Iraq war, but with policies such as the establishment of the permanent Marine base in Australia, the trend of US foreign policy is shifting from engagement to containment.

If the US is implementing more containment policies, what does this imply for the nature of the US-China relationship and Mearsheimer's prediction?

According to the Composite Index of National Capabilities, China is clearly on the rise and the US has seen decline in recent CINC scores. Scenario two of US decline/China revisionist, therefore, is still a very possible explanation of the current

nature of the US-China relationship. However, Mearsheimer's prediction clearly does not explain why US foreign policy has been more engagement in nature towards China as opposed to being more containment during the period of 2003 to 2009.

What Mearsheimer's theory on offensive realism is not considering in the US-Chinese relationship is the effect that the War on Terrorism had on international and great power politics. Terrorism, created by forces that operate on an extra-state level were able to alter the course of great power politics between the US, the hegemon, and China, the rising hegemon to the point that it reversed containment policy to engagement policy for a period of about 7-8 years.

However, if only looking at the years since the closing of the war in Iraq and the overall pullout from the Middle East Theater, then the trend line looks a lot more like what Mearsheimer predicted with increases in US military presence and military trading in East Asia in order to combat the expansion of Chinese military power and influence. Now that the War on Terrorism is no longer at the top of the list of US national security issues and the pullout of both Iraq and Afghanistan has begun, I believe great power politics have begun to return back to normal because the situation has returned back to conflict between to very influential state actors, and the US has begun to respond to China's military power growth in more of a containment manner as Mearsheimer predicted.

The US is no longer distracted by the smaller threats of Middle Eastern insurgencies because many major terrorist organizations have been destroyed or have been rendered combat ineffective due to counterinsurgency operations of the past decade. As a result, the US has now realized that while it was fighting its wars in the Middle East,

China has been continually developing new modern warfare technology and its high-intensity war-fighting capabilities, thus making it the next greatest threat to US national interests in East Asia.

What makes the Chinese threat unique, and more likely to follow the path that offensive realism predicts, is that China has become a rising power that has the potential to truly challenge US hegemony. The situation is made more tense by the fact that China is not satisfied with the current status quo of the international order. Therefore, if it were to become the hegemon in East Asia, it would alter the power dynamics of the region, amplified by the probable use of its new war-fighting strategies and capabilities, and change the system to where the US would benefit less. The US will be forced to increase its military presence in East Asia and implement economic policies that would attempt to contain unrestricted economic growth, which it has already begun to implement.

Despite growing tensions, war with China is not inevitable. Containment does not necessarily equal war. Neither the US nor China wish to directly go to war with one another, for fear of the cost being too great, which will force any type of armed conflict between China and the US to reach the form of proxy wars at the worst. In an all out war with the US, China still would most likely suffer the most casualties, which in the end means that the US will always have the ability of effectively containing Chinese growth in power. Situations such as the Diaoyu islands or South China Sea territorial conflicts could result in use of military force, but not at the level at which the US would invade the Chinese mainland. Even if the Taiwan conflict were to escalate, US containment of China would still not lead to US invasion of the Chinese mainland.

However, these are all worst-case scenarios. The continuing rise of Chinese military power will force the US to implement more containment policies towards China within the next decade to curb its growing power. This will cause growth in tensions between the two nations, but the US and China will not directly go to war with one another, and the US hegemony will be able to outlast the growth of China as long as the entire international status quo remains the same.

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