

China and the New Asia:  
Policy Recommendations

Tasha Haug

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Thomas J. Metallo, Ph.D.  
Thesis Chair

---

Stephen M. Parke, J.D.  
Committee Member

---

Janet M. Brown, Ph.D.  
Committee Member

---

James H. Nutter, D.A.  
Honors Director

---

Date

### Abstract

The People's Republic of China is an indispensable political and economic force in Asia. With the majority of the United States' foreign economic interests invested in the Asia-Pacific region, the leading role that China is taking is a major concern. The Asia-Pacific region is strategically important to the US. How US policy makers craft foreign policy toward Asia has a direct impact on US involvement in the region. Unless the US becomes more invested in Asia, develops a comprehensive understanding of China's role in the region, and proactively pursue strategic relationships, US influence in Asian affairs will become a thing of the past. This paper will explore the growing economic role that China is playing in the Asia region, and provide future foreign policy recommendations for the US government.

## China and the New Asia:

## Policy Recommendations

*“We cannot enter into alliances until we are acquainted with the designs of our neighbors.”*

*-Sun Tzu, Art of War*

Over the past several years, China has become one of the most influential and powerful nation states in the world, and has become an indispensable economic force in Asia. China’s increased political activism and involvement in Asia is rapidly overshadowing US influence in the region, and the leading role that China is taking is a major concern. An increase in assertive and defiant Chinese attitudes toward US presence in Asia is a threat to US foreign policy. Unless significant policy changes are made that reflect recognition of China’s strategic role in the region, US influence in Asia will become insignificant. In order for the US to have a realistic, practical foreign policy toward China, US policy makers must have a comprehensive understanding of how China interacts with various countries in Asia on a local and regional level. The US government must recognize China’s leading role in the region, and develop a comprehensive strategy where the US can “help influence the direction that China takes in its new role.”<sup>1</sup>

For middle power and third world countries in the Asia region, China’s economic rise has been viewed in a positive light. The current Obama administration has publically promised to reengage with the Asia region. However, US influence and involvement in foreign affairs has

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<sup>1</sup> Ralph A. Cossa, Brad Glosserman, Michael A. Meevitt, Nirav Patel, James Przystup, and Brad Roberts, *The United States and the Asia-Pacific Region: Security Strategy for the Obama Administration* (Washington, DC: Center for New American Security, 2009), 52.

been stretched throughout the western and eastern hemisphere, limiting the resources that can be focused on the Asia region. The US must learn to strike a delicate balance between allocating their resources wisely in order to maintain a constant presence in the Asia region, without appearing to be an overbearing power interfering with the sovereignty of countries in the region. Although it may be impossible for China and the US to become allies in the near future, if US policy makers can make well informed decisions, hostile relations between the two countries can be avoided and Beijing and Washington can become strategic economic partners. The US must pursue strategic relationships among the core countries in the Asia region, recognizing that China's relationship with its neighbors ultimately affect how Beijing relates to Washington. Although China will not surpass the US economy in the near future, China is and will continue to be a leading economic power house in the Asia region, and continue to largely contribute to the global market. This paper will investigate China's rise and its strategic role in the Asia region, and provide future strategic foreign policy recommendations for the US government.

## **The Significance of the Asia Region**

### **The Rise of China**

China is arguably becoming one of the most important countries in the Asia-Pacific region. With the strengthening of the People's Liberation Army, and the nation's growing population, Western powers are becoming increasingly concerned about the country's foreign policy intentions. However, in sharp contrast to former president Jiang Zemin, current Chinese President Hu Jintao is practicing a more flexible and open form of foreign policy, which China

has never displayed in the past.<sup>2</sup> The driving force “... behind Chinese foreign policy under Hu has been the need to access energy and raw materials to support China’s rapid economic growth.”<sup>3</sup> However, Hu has recognized that a healthy relationship between the US and China is crucial to improving and developing the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>4</sup> In January 2011, during a speech at the US-China Business Council in Washington, Hu presented a five-point diplomatic plan encouraging greater cooperation between China and the US.<sup>5</sup> During the speech, Hu promised that “China would ‘never seek hegemony or pursue an expansionist policy’ in foreign affairs.”<sup>6</sup> The Chinese seem to understand that the Sino-US relationship is based on “cooperation and friendship,” yet is “complicated and challenging.”<sup>7</sup> Although China has been diplomatic in its relations with its strategic partners as of date, there is concern over how far China is going to exert its growing power over nations if resources become a rare commodity. For example, China “controls more than 90% of current global supply of rare-earth metals ...” and have begun to stockpile their ample supply of them, while simultaneously reducing exports to countries that need them.<sup>8</sup> Beijing introduced a plan last year that would allow state run companies to merge industries and modify exports, which would drive up the prices.<sup>9</sup> This should be of concern to the US because according to the Pentagon, “while only 5% of demand for rare-earth metals in the

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<sup>2</sup> “China and Northeast Asia- External Affairs,” Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment, 2009, <http://sentinel.janes.com>. (accessed March 27, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> “China and Northeast Asia- External Affairs,” Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment.

<sup>4</sup> Bob David and Patrick O’Conner, “Lawmakers Try, Fail to Pin Down Hu,” *The Wall Street Journal*, January 21, 2011, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704881304576093830120490372.html>. (accessed Feb 26, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Le Yucheng, “Harmonious Relationship,” *China Daily*, Jan 31, 2011, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2011-01/31/content\\_11943162.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2011-01/31/content_11943162.htm). (accessed Mar 29, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> James T. Areddy, “China Moves to Strengthen Grip Over Supply of Rare-Earth Metals,” *Wall Street Journal*, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704124504576117511251161274.html> (accessed Mar 29, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> David Barboza, “China Weighs Tighter Controls on Rare Elements,” *New York Times*, June 2, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/03/business/energy-environment/03rare.html>. (accessed Mar 29, 2011).

U.S. comes from the military, the U.S. is nevertheless ‘completely reliant on China for the production of some of [the Pentagon's] most powerful weapons.’”<sup>10</sup>

With the majority of US foreign interests invested in the Asia-Pacific region, the leading role that China is taking in the region should be causing major concern. America should not ignore the Asia-Pacific region for the following reasons: First, the region’s economic role is strategically important, generating “30 percent of global exports,”<sup>11</sup> and holding “two-thirds of global foreign exchange reserves.”<sup>12</sup> Second, China owns “more than \$1trillion of US debt,”<sup>13</sup> and holds over “\$3 trillion in foreign reserves.”<sup>14</sup> Globalization has caused nations to become closely intertwined, and the countries with the largest populations, natural resources, and economic advantage, such as China, South Korea and India, are rapidly taking the lead in Asia. China, Asia’s largest communist nation, and the region’s largest capitalist country, is playing a significant role in economic growth in the region.

As Beijing expands its influence in Asia, the US’ relationship with China has become increasingly important. This year, China officially claimed the status of the world’s second largest economy, overtaking Japan’s 40 year hold on the position.<sup>15</sup> China’s rapid growth and political leverage is seen among many Western states as a threat to Asia. However, Asian countries that economically depend on China for their resources and financial investments see China’s growth as an opportunity to increase their financial revenue. China actively invests in its

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<sup>10</sup> David Barboza, “China Weighs Tighter Controls on Rare Elements.”

<sup>11</sup> Cossa, et. al. *The United States and the Asia-Pacific Region*, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Shaun Narine, “From Conflict to Collaboration: Institution-building in East Asia,” *Behind The Headlines* 65, no. 5 (2008): 2.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>15</sup> Justin McCurry and Julia Kollewe, “China overtakes Japan’s world’s second-largest economy,” *Guardian.co.uk*, Feb 14, 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2011/feb/14/china-second-largest-economy>. (accessed April 3, 2011).

neighbors, recognizing the importance of capitalizing on other's natural resources. Asian countries in the Southeast Asia region are predicted to grow an average of 6.8% by 2012, positively correlating with the projected numbers for China's growth.<sup>16</sup> For Asian countries, a decline in Chinese growth would have devastating effects.

The annual increase of China's overseas direct investment (ODI) is a good example of how heavily Beijing is investing in the Asia region. The Chinese standard when dealing with foreign countries is very lax, demonstrating a willingness to do business with corrupt governments and underdeveloped countries with unstable legal structures.<sup>17</sup> This provides Beijing with a much wider portfolio and more investing opportunities than the US, who is very cautious when it comes to business dealings with foreign business and governments.<sup>18</sup> China is invested in over 180 countries, and its ODI is mainly focused on the service industry, natural resources, and technology.<sup>19</sup> An analysis of China's foreign direct investment shows that Beijing has been increasingly focusing on infrastructure projects, and "ranks first among developing countries, and 5<sup>th</sup> among all countries" in infrastructure investments.<sup>20</sup> This type of ODI investment is vastly different from the US portfolio which focuses on outsourcing and accessing foreign markets.<sup>21</sup> These trends are significant because every investment that the Chinese make is "aimed at strengthening production at home."<sup>22</sup> In 2009, China's Export-Import Bank lent over

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<sup>16</sup> "China's economy will continue to drive Asian growth," *Economist Intelligence Unit*, March 16, 2011, <http://gfs.eiu.com/Article.aspx?articleType=rf&articleId=1147886899&secId=3>. (accessed Mar 24, 2011).

<sup>17</sup> Le, "Harmonious Relationship."

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Yiping Huang, "Traps for Chinese investment overseas," *East Asia Forum*, Sept 10, 2010, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2010/09/10/traps-for-chinese-investment-overseas/>. (accessed Mar 25, 2011).

<sup>20</sup> Huang, "Traps for Chinese investment overseas."

<sup>21</sup> Le, "Harmonious Relationship."

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

\$174.2 billion, investing in agriculture and natural resources around the world.<sup>23</sup> In contrast, The World Bank lent only one fourth that amount in 2009.<sup>24</sup>

China is the world's largest exporter and manufacturer, and with a booming economy, China attracts a large amount of Foreign Direct Investment from various countries.<sup>25</sup> In an effort to capitalize on investment opportunities in the PRC, "China received about 20 percent of all FDI to developing countries over the last 10 years."<sup>26</sup> Over 50 percent of China's exports and imports are a result of foreign invested enterprises.<sup>27</sup> In addition, the local sales of products made by US companies located within China grew 431 percent "between 2000 and 2008."<sup>28</sup> Moreover, "more than 90 percent of sales by US majority-owned companies operating in China over the last decade were to China or other foreign markets, with a mere 8 percent being exported back to the United States."<sup>29</sup> Needless to say, economic trade with China has become a crucial element of growth and profit for the US economy and US owned businesses. With investments in agricultural and resources, China is leaving footprints all across Asia, indirectly influencing domestic policies in various countries as a result.

On March 5, 2011 Premier Wen Jiabao announced his country's economic growth target during the opening assembly of the National People's Congress. For 2011, Wen announced that

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<sup>23</sup> Lindsey Eckelmann, "Complex Connections: Ecological Impacts of Chinese Investment in Southeast Asia," *Wilson Center*, Oct 20, 2010, <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/ondemand/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.play&mediaid=EE526568-D563-3550-0D8643B908AD3697>. (accessed 21 March 2011).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> The World Bank, "Securing the Present, Shaping the Future," *World Bank East Asia and Pacific Economic Update 2011* Vol. 1, 21 Mar 2011, 6, [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEAPHALFYEARLYUPDATE/Resources/550192-1300567391916/EAP\\_Update\\_March2011\\_fullreport.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEAPHALFYEARLYUPDATE/Resources/550192-1300567391916/EAP_Update_March2011_fullreport.pdf), (accessed Mar 24, 2011).

<sup>26</sup> World Bank, "Foreign Direct Investment-the China Story," July 17, 2010, <http://go.worldbank.org/HNQ2VVW7H0>. (accessed Mar 25, 2011).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> US Business Council, "US-China Trade Policy: Issues and Solutions."

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

China will aim to increase its economic growth by “around 8 percent.”<sup>30</sup> This is the same modest target amount that was set in 2010, where China’s real GDP growth increased from 9.2% in 2009 to 10.3% in 2010.<sup>31</sup> Although China’s GDP growth is predicted to fall below 9% by 2012, these numbers are significantly higher than US GDP growth which is expected to fall below 3% by 2012.<sup>32</sup> In 2009, China was America’s “third-largest export market for goods” and the numbers released for 2010 have completely surpassed those of 2009.<sup>33</sup> These numbers have generated unwarranted fears that China will overtake the US in the near future.

Some researchers have predicted that China may overtake the US as the world’s largest economy in the next twenty years.<sup>34</sup> However, these predictions are merely based on China’s economic trends over the past 30 to 60 years. The China that will exist in 2040 will be vastly different from the China in 1979, just as the China in 1979 was different from the China of 1949.<sup>35</sup> Any number of events, nature or man-made, could drastically alter China’s internal order. Forecasting too far ahead, especially in regards to such a large communist nation as China can prove to be pointless. If the PRC’s demographic trends, economic growth, and GDP data is analyzed correctly, one can conclude that it is highly unlikely that China will surpass the US economy in the near future. Although China is the largest capitalist nation in the region, its core is still driven by deep communist policies. The Chinese economic growth is closely monitored

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<sup>30</sup> Andrew Higgins, “Chinese Parliament Opens With Grand Pledges,” *The Washington Post*, March 5, 2011 [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/03/04/AR2011030406785.html?wpisrc=nl\\_cuzhead](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/03/04/AR2011030406785.html?wpisrc=nl_cuzhead). (accessed March 5, 2011).

<sup>31</sup> “China’s economy will continue to drive Asian growth,” *Economist Intelligence Unit*.

<sup>32</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, “Global Outlook Summary,” March 12, 2011, *Economist Intelligence Unit Limited 2011*, March 12, 2011, [gfs.eiu.com](http://gfs.eiu.com), 4. (accessed Mar 24, 2011).

<sup>33</sup> US-China Business Council, “US-China Trade Policy: Issues and Solutions,” *Testimony of the US-China Business Council, before the House Committee on Ways and Means, United States Senate*, Feb 9, 2011. (Washington, DC), 1, [http://www.uschina.org/public/documents/2011/02/china\\_trade\\_policy.pdf](http://www.uschina.org/public/documents/2011/02/china_trade_policy.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> The World Bank, “World Bank East Asia and Pacific Economic Update,” 6.

<sup>35</sup> Derek Scissors, “10 China Myths for the New Decade,” Jan 28, 2010, *The Heritage Foundation*, <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2010/01/10-China-Myths-for-the-New-Decade>, (accessed 22 Mar 2011).

and restricted by the state government, and if reforms in the system are not made, it will inevitably lead to an economic halt, destabilizing the country's industrial drive.

Another reason that China will most likely not overtake the US economy is the country's demographics. China's favorable demographics of the working class have contributed to its increased growth over the past few decades. However, over the next 30 years or so, the Chinese population will begin to age, and reflect statistics and an environment that is more reminiscent of Japan's current aging population.<sup>36</sup> If current trends continue, China's working-age population will decline from the overpowering 47 percent in 1985 to merely 26 percent in 2030.<sup>37</sup> China's real GDP growth is also often misinterpreted. GDP growth is what is generally used to measure a country's economic contribution and expansion. Instead of significantly leading the world in economic growth, China actually "detracts from the rest of the world's growth in gross domestic product (GDP)."<sup>38</sup> At first glance, because China has a large amount of trade surplus, China appears to be the leading global power in economic growth in GDP. However, trade surplus merely "adds to GDP and a trade deficit takes away from it."<sup>39</sup> Therefore, due to China's overwhelming trade surplus, "the rest of the world runs a large trade deficit with the PRC."<sup>40</sup>

Americans have become privy to the politicization of information, and have become increasingly pessimistic of America's leading economic role in the world, becoming weary of China's growing influence in world politics and in the international marketplace. When Americans were asked what country they believed was the "leading economic power in the world today," and were asked to choose between the US, the European Union, Russia, China,

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<sup>36</sup> Scissors, "10 China Myths for the New Decade."

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

Japan, and India, 52% of the respondents said China, while only 32% answered the United States.<sup>41</sup> Public perception plays an important part in politics and government morale. Although the US is still the world's leading power, it appears that "the majority of Americans believe the U.S. has already lost the challenge."<sup>42</sup> Another poll conducted by the Pew Research Center, the Washington Post, and ABC news also validated this concern when 61% of respondents considered "China as a threat to jobs and economic security."<sup>43</sup> It seems that Americans are no longer confident that the US will continue to play a strong role in foreign affairs. Although China will not surpass the US economy in the near future, China is and will continue to be a leading economic power house in the Asia region, and continue to largely contribute to the global market. Although the global benefit of economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region is tremendous, the region's restrictions on capitalism and open markets could hinder the global economy in the long run.<sup>44</sup>

In an op-ed by a member of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was quoted as saying that although China and the US are "walking on different roads," they are headed "to the same destination with a shared future and responsibilities."<sup>45</sup> The author of this op-ed integrated Hillary Clinton's comment with his own thoughts, concluding that "selfish interests" should not get in the way of the growing cooperative Sino-US relationship.<sup>46</sup> The author, however, did not define or specify what he meant by selfish interests. The US and China have very different cultures, values, and history of government. The bilateral relationship

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<sup>41</sup> Lydia Saad, "China Surges in American's Views of Top World Economy," Feb 14, 2011, *Gallup*, Mar 21, 2011, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/146099/china-surges-americans-views-top-world-economy.aspx>. (accessed April 3, 2011).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Cossa et al., *The United States and the Asia-Pacific Region*, 7.

<sup>45</sup> Yucheng, "Harmonious Relationship."

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

among the two nations will always be driven by the host country's national security interests. If the author is hoping that both countries will put aside their own nations' interests when negotiating and dealing with each other, he is unaware of the true nature of the current state of affairs.

### **US Involvement**

After the Cold War, with the threat of Communism suppressed, many Americans believed it was no longer necessary to invest politically, economically, and militarily in the Asia-Pacific region. Fortunately, however, the US was aware that stifling Communist expansionism was leaving a deep and dangerous void in Asia that was going to be filled by either another ideology or a hegemonic nation. Thus, America sought to utilize their profitable relationships in Southeast Asia to help stabilize the region and promote democratic values. US military presence in the region post WWII and post Cold War helped stabilize Asia, allowing Asian nations to focus solely on rebuilding their government and growing economically without concerning themselves with security threats. For example, the US placed permanent military troops in Japan, securing a stronger relationship between the two countries, and providing assurance for the Japanese that they would be protected if they were attacked by a foreign power. The US also led diplomatic discussions and the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in an effort to discourage Russian expansion. The Japan-America Security Alliance, the Korea-America Security Alliance, and the Australia-New Zealand-United States treaty are also just a few examples of security agreements that have reassured Asia of US interests and presence in the region.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Chin Kin Wah and Pang Eng Fong, "Relating the U.S.-Korea and U.S.-Japan Alliances to Emerging Asia Pacific multilateral Processes: An ASEAN Perspective," *Shorenstein APARC*, (March 2000), 24, [http://aparc.stanford.edu/publications/relating\\_the\\_uskorea\\_and\\_usjapan\\_alliances\\_to\\_emerging\\_asia\\_pacific\\_multilateral\\_processes\\_an\\_asean\\_perspective/](http://aparc.stanford.edu/publications/relating_the_uskorea_and_usjapan_alliances_to_emerging_asia_pacific_multilateral_processes_an_asean_perspective/). (accessed Mar 25, 2011)

Shortly after the tragic terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, the US government expressed a renewed interest in Southeast Asia. Former President George W. Bush declared that “Southeast Asia was the second front in the global war on terrorism.”<sup>48</sup> This second front, however, was short-lived. Due to the recent US economic crisis and increased focus on counterterrorism efforts in the Middle East, American interests and investment in the Asia-Pacific region have been moved to the periphery. There has been an increased focus on strengthening multilateral ties and engaging in dialogue exclusively among Asian nations, which has quietly begun to alienate America from input in the region. It is in the US’ national security interests to encourage and promote a secure non-threatening environment in Asia that will benefit the US. However, it is impossible for the US to pursue an effective foreign policy plan if policy makers in Washington are not intimately aware of the geopolitical trends of the region, and how it affects US national security. US foreign interests need to be refocused, reevaluated, and readjusted to the new evolving environment in order for the US to fulfill its national security objectives and pursue the nation’s best interest in the region. It is crucial to understand China’s significant relationship with its geopolitical neighbors, and its influence over Asia’s political, military, and economic policies. With the majority of the US foreign economic interests invested in the Asia-Pacific region, the leading role that China is taking in the region is a major concern.

### **China’s Role in the Region**

#### **China’s Worldview**

China has a very different view of international relations and foreign policy compared to the West. Rosemary Foot explained the situation well when she described China’s view of the

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<sup>48</sup> Donald E. Weatherbee, *International Relations in Southeast Asia: The Struggle for Autonomy*, (Rowmand & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2005), 1.

world as a "... concentration on trends in world politics, a concern to be taken seriously as a peer by dominant states, and a felt need to express a leadership role towards the developing world."<sup>49</sup>

Chinese understanding of globalization also reflects its future goals and global aspirations.

According to an article in *International Security*, the Chinese define globalization as "... there are no absolute winners or absolute losers' and implies that we do not live in a 'zerosum' world."<sup>50</sup> For US policy makers, understanding the Chinese definition of globalization is important because it sheds light on the fact that the Chinese see negative aspects of a market based economy and international involvement. For Beijing, some aspects of globalization are seen as negative because their nation—especially their financial market place—is vulnerable and affected by the stability or instability of other nations.<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, global trading can also be used as leverage for influencing international affairs. The US is so closely connected to China that Beijing's economic investment can "act as a restraint on US power."<sup>52</sup>

The Chinese mindset of treating the region and its countries as one entity (*tianxia*) has been very successful in regards to multilateral arrangements in Asia. One reason for this is when small nations ally themselves with China, they believe that they no longer have to fear China trying to "mold them into their image." America often requires drastic changes such as halting human rights violations, or insisting on major democratic reforms, before they are willing to partner with foreign countries. China, on the other hand, openly engages in business dealings with corrupt governments, consequently able to build a wider and more global economic

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<sup>49</sup> Rosemary Foot, "Chinese Strategies in a US-Hegemonic Global Order: Accommodating and Hedging." *International Affairs* 82, no. 1 (2006): 79 <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=19495911&site=ehost-live>, (accessed Feb 7, 2011).

<sup>50</sup> Foot, "Chinese Strategies in a US-Hegemonic Global Order," 82.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

portfolio than the US. In addition, when US policy makers focus solely on larger nations in the region, it communicates to the surrounding countries that they are not as important. Although Washington cannot completely ignore human rights abuses or disregard governmental corruption, the US must create a more robust foreign policy strategy that is prepared to deal with the complex dynamics of the region.

### **Taiwan: Chinese vs. US Policy**

Currently, one of the most important and disputed topics in Chinese relations is the delicate and tense diplomatic and military dance between Mainland China and Taiwan. This has resulted in a cultivation of feelings of resistance toward US presence in the region and hostility towards America's attempt to intervene in China's domestic affairs. This anti-American shift is a threat to US foreign policy, and could cause major damage to US presence and influence in the region. Chinese officials have publically criticized US policies numerous times on issues of vital US interests, especially in regards to Taiwan. For example, China's foreign minister Jiang Yu made a public statement about the selling of arms to Taiwan: "We urge the US to clearly recognize the severe consequences of arms sales to Taiwan and adhere to the three Sino-US joint communiqués, especially the principles established in the Joint Communiqué on August 17, 1982."<sup>53</sup> The Chinese believe that this communiqué clearly does not allow for the US to continue selling arms to Taiwan. However, a close examination of the document shows the Taiwan arms issues was not resolved between President Ronald Reagan and Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang. The second point of the communiqué reads: "The question of United States arms sales to Taiwan was not settled in the course of negotiations between the two countries on establishing

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<sup>53</sup> Armen Hareyan, "US China Hostility Tops The 2010 List of Risks," *Huliq*, Jan 7, 2010, <http://www.huliq.com/1/90196/us-china-hostility-tops-2010-list-risks>. (accessed Mar 21 2011).

diplomatic relations. The two sides held differing positions, and the Chinese side stated that it would raise the issue again following normalization. Recognizing that this issue would seriously hamper the development of United States-China relations, they have held further discussions on it, during and since the meetings....”<sup>54</sup>

For years, the US has naively held a contradictory China—Taiwan policy. America has continued to pursue a “one China” policy, discouraging Chinese aggression toward Taiwan, while simultaneously selling defensive weapons to Taipei through the Taiwan Relations Act. The “one China” policy prevents Washington from intervening in Taiwan-China relations, even if it is in US interests.<sup>55</sup> The Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), passed by Congress in 1979, demonstrated US commitment towards Taiwan, and has contributed to the creation of a quasi-ally relationship between Washington and Taipei.<sup>56</sup> Politicians in Washington must realize that the meaning of “one China” is significantly different when used in America and China. To the PRC, it means stifling advancement, creativity, and progress, and subjugating the people of Taiwan to the historical communist state of China.<sup>57</sup> When the US promotes a “one China” policy in diplomatic and political circles, they are hoping to communicate the desire for a peaceful compromise and a world where communism and democracy can live together under a flexible government. In the “Shanghai Communiqué,” President Nixon agreed that “there is only one China and that Taiwan is a part of China.”<sup>58</sup> According to Nixon, the Shanghai Communiqué allowed Washington and Beijing to “temporarily set aside the ‘crucial question

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<sup>54</sup> Nuclear Threat Initiative, “Sino-US Joint Communiqué,” August 17, 1982, <http://www.nti.org/index.php>. (accessed 21 Mar 2011).

<sup>55</sup> John J. Tkacik Jr., ed. “Reshaping the Taiwan Strait.” *The Heritage Foundation* (Washington, DC, 2007), 188.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>58</sup> U.S. Department of State, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, “Background Note: China,” 2010, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/18902.htm>. (accessed Feb 23, 2011).

obstructing the normalization of relations.”<sup>59</sup> To endorse freedom, democracy, and peace, and help other countries secure these ideals for their own country, the US must learn when to intervene in another country’s affairs, and when to refrain. US policy toward Taiwan and China must be realistic and achievable, and have its national interest always in mind. However, promoting democracy and freedom is always in America’s national interest.

There has been a dramatic increase in Taiwanese self-identification, and Chinese hostility has further increased the unity of the island. The Chinese people's identity has begun to wane, and the people of Taiwan have begun to distinguish themselves as Taiwanese. Author J. Bruce Jacobs appropriately refers to this trend as the “Taiwanisation” of Taiwan.<sup>60</sup> In 1992, the Election Study Center at National Chengchi University began to conduct a survey to study the trend of nationalization in Taiwan. By 2004, the respondents who answered that they were “Taiwanese” only, rather than “Chinese,” increased two and a half times.<sup>61</sup> In 2005, the Gallup Organization conducted a worldwide survey consisting of ordinary citizens and world leaders, and discovered that more than 60% of those surveyed “saw Taiwan and China as two separate countries.”<sup>62</sup>

China is entirely opposed to Taiwan independence and its desire to join the UN as an independent state.<sup>63</sup> According to Chinese official documents, the Taiwan issue has already been solved, and Taiwan is currently considered as China’s 23<sup>rd</sup> province.<sup>64</sup> China is already heavily invested in Taiwan, and has a strong national interest in keeping the state stable. For example the

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<sup>59</sup> U.S. Department of State, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, “Background Note: China.”

<sup>60</sup> Tkacik Jr e.d., “Reshaping the Taiwan Strait,” 173.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>63</sup> Richard Weitz, “China-Russia Security Relations: Strategic Parallelism Without Partnership or Passion?” *Strategic Studies Institute*, (US Army War College, 2008).

<sup>64</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Background Note: China.”

PRC and Hong Kong contribute to 40% of Taiwan's exports.<sup>65</sup> According to China's National Defense White Paper in 2008, "The attempts of the-separatist forces for "Taiwan independence" to seek "*de jure* Taiwan independence" have been thwarted, and the situation across the Taiwan Straits has taken a significantly positive turn."<sup>66</sup> On the other hand, in the same report, "separatist forces seeking 'Taiwan Independence'" are listed as one of the major security threats to the country.<sup>67</sup>

Operating under the assumption that Taiwan is already a part of China, Beijing has used its resources, political influence, and leverage to isolate Taiwan from joining important international organizations and participating in vital global conferences as an independent country whenever possible.<sup>68</sup> For example, China has limited Taiwan's participation in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), rejected its request to join the United Nations and the World Health Organization as an independent state, and has aggressively implored foreign nations to support a "One China principle."<sup>69</sup> China has been unwilling to budge on their policy toward Taiwan, as was evidenced in Hu's recent speech where he stated that their relationship with Taiwan "concern China's sovereignty and territorial integrity" and represent China's "core interest."<sup>70</sup> China has increased "the numbers of short-range ballistic missiles aimed at Taiwan" and has also invested money and resources into improving and empowering its blue water

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<sup>65</sup> The Economist, "Taiwan's commonsense consensus," Feb 24, 2011, <http://www.economist.com/node/18229208>. (accessed Mar 24, 2011).

<sup>66</sup> China.org.cn, "China's National Defense in 2008." [http://www.china.org.cn/government/whitepaper/node\\_7060059.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/government/whitepaper/node_7060059.htm), (accessed Feb 6, 2011).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>69</sup> Philip C. Saunders, *China's Global Activism: Strategy, Drivers, and Tools*, Institute for National Strategic Studies, (National Defense University: NDU Press, 2006): 9.

<sup>70</sup> David and O'Conner, "Lawmakers Try, Fail to Pin Down Hu."

navy.<sup>71</sup> Not only has China been increasing its military capabilities, it is also utilizing political pressures to subjugate Taiwan. In 2005, an Anti-Succession Law was passed in China, banning any speech in favor of Taiwan independence.<sup>72</sup> China has also aggressively attempted to isolate Taiwan from the rest of the world, discouraging foreign countries from developing diplomatic relationships with Taiwan by offering monetary incentives such as foreign aid.<sup>73</sup> Taiwan's unofficial status and Beijing's insistence on a "one China" policy has prevented Taipei from improving its international status and economic relations with strategic neighbors. In addition, although Taiwan has been able to build official relations with several pacific nations such as the Solomon and Marshall Islands, relations with these "failed states" have not proven to be mutually beneficial.<sup>74</sup> Recognizing the importance of Taiwan's contributions to the region, the US must discourage the spread of communism, and promote the growth of democracy by example. This can be done through encouraging other nations to partner with Taiwan economically and cooperate in various global efforts such as counterterrorism.<sup>75</sup>

Predicting that Beijing and Moscow would most likely retaliate with military force, Washington has continually urged Taiwan to refrain from seeking independence as doing so would cause major damage and instability in the region.<sup>76</sup> China has maintained a strong "one-China policy," and has sought regional support on the issue.<sup>77</sup> China has become more aggressive and manipulative in its policy against Taiwan, and until the circumstances are resolved, the "pressure" and "strong suggestions" that the ASEAN Regional Forum makes in

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<sup>71</sup> Tkacik Jr. ed., "Reshaping the Taiwan Strait," 175.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>76</sup> Weitz, "China-Russia Security Relations."

<sup>77</sup> Jane's, "China and Northeast Asia- External Affairs."

recommendation of China's actions will not change China's mind. "Such is the constitutive power of Chinese realism, which enables China to change while actively fashioning the world in her own image."<sup>78</sup>

Taiwan's democratic government and free market policies have created a gateway for positive US influence in the region. Nevertheless, Washington has continued to publicly support Beijing, a communist authoritarian-totalitarian regime, while downplaying democratic Taiwan's quest for independence.<sup>79</sup> China has become a major political and military power in Asia, and the risks of supporting an independent Taiwan has significantly increased. According to former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, the US is responsible for keeping China's growth from becoming a threat to the region.<sup>80</sup> Interestingly, for US policy makers, supporting a democratic and independent Taiwan is not considered as one of the options for decreasing China's threat in the region.

### **Why Taiwan?**

Despite Washington's seemingly apathetic attitude, the US should have a significant interest in Taiwan remaining separate from communist China, and maintaining its own democratic government. China's economic growth, however, has provided Beijing with the ability to use "soft power" to encourage their neighbors to pursue specific policies, and Taiwan is the key to China's diplomatic power in the region.<sup>81</sup> Taiwan is strategically important to America, and plays a vital role in the Asian economy. Taiwan is the third largest exporting

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<sup>78</sup> Evans, "PRC's Relationship with the ASEAN Regional Forum," 763.

<sup>79</sup> Tkacik Jr. ed., "Reshaping the Taiwan Strait," 9.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>81</sup> Jacques deLisle, "Soft Power in a Hard Place: China, Taiwan, Cross-strait Relations and U.S. Policy," *Orbis* 54, no. 4 (2010): 493.

country in the region, America's ninth largest trading partner."<sup>82</sup> Maintaining Taiwan as an ally would also provide the US with access to geostrategic chokepoints in the Asia region. It is in close proximity to Japan's main sea-lane and pathway to the Middle East, and a strategic access point for trade and transportation in the Pacific Ocean for the US and East Asia as a whole.<sup>83</sup>

Taiwan and the US cooperate in defense and intelligence issues as well. Taiwan is one of America's biggest importers of defensive weapons. The selling and purchasing of fighter aircraft has also opened up a new market for American products and labor in the country, improving relations between Taiwan and the US.<sup>84</sup>

There are several problems with current US policy toward Taiwan. First, it was created to maintain the "status quo." The term "status quo," however, has never been defined. Second, Taiwan is a democracy, and therefore the Cold War strategy of deterrence is ineffective. The current "one China" policy is also undermining the US' ability to promote its national security interests. In the past, the US has been able to set trends in economic and political policy. In order to secure one of America's most important democratic relationship in Asia, Washington must increase their trade with Taiwan, and focus on strengthening various partnerships and cooperate on non-defense type projects such as health, the environment, and humanitarian aid.<sup>85</sup>

### **Regional Integration**

Globalization has caused nation-states to no longer be the only primary actors in the Asia region. The globalization of the world and the ability to easily communicate with foreign countries and foreign leaders has birthed an intricate connection between nations that is

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<sup>82</sup> Tkacik Jr. ed., "Reshaping the Taiwan Strait," 16.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 53.

unprecedented. The instantaneous sharing of information through technology and the internet has increasingly fueled globalization, and has provided the world's eastern hemisphere with the tools to rapidly grow and expand its sphere of influence. This has spurred many states to begin investing time, energy, and resources into building multilateral and regional organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to guarantee security from threatening non-state actors and to ensure border security.<sup>86</sup>

Political and economic problems are more often than not agitators and motivators for instability in the region. Regional integration, or regionalism, is an integral part of Asia, especially in the area of politics.<sup>87</sup> There has been a growing effort to focus on transnational security and cooperation in Asia, and geopolitics has taken on an increasingly important role over the past ten years in the Asia-Pacific region, due to the numerous traditional and nontraditional threats that have begun to surface. The interdependency among Asian nations due to trade, global capitalism, and commerce has shifted the focus from domestic concerns to transnational security concerns. The Asia region's "increasing interest in multilateral cooperation," has drawn international attention.<sup>88</sup> The creation of ASEAN, the SCO, the East Asia Summit, and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation are just a few yet prominent examples of the region's attempt to build a community and a regional identity.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Thammy Evans, "The PRC's Relationship With the ASEAN Regional Forum: Realpolitik, Regime Theory or a Continuation of the Sinic Zone of Influence System?" *Modern Asian Studies* 37, no. 3 (2003), 737.

<sup>87</sup> Deepak Nair, "Regionalism in the Asia Pacific/East Asia: A Frustrated Regionalism?" *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 31 no.1 (2009): 1.

<sup>88</sup> Cossa et.al., *The United States and the Asia-Pacific Region*, 7.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

As China increases its power and influence in the region, China and its neighbors are creating allies of their own without US support or involvement. China is involved in multiple regional security dialogues, including the APT, ASEAN Plus One, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Asia-Pacific countries do not necessarily consider China's growing power to be negative as long as China is investing in other countries and becoming better integrated in the international society. China's neighbors hope that through security and economic integration, China will be more willing to keep their interests in mind in accordance to the Regime Theory which states that "mutual interests can instigate compliance with regime norms among members."<sup>90</sup>

The phenomenon of strategic assimilation within Asia is important to the US, because these multilateral organizations and economic and political dialogues often exclude the US and other Western countries. Ironically, although the majority of regional organizations in Asia focused on conception to contain China and communism, Beijing has become one of the most active participants in Asian regional dialogues.<sup>91</sup> Although US presence has been appreciated in the past, US presence in the region, especially military presence, has become viewed in a more negative light. Catchy phrases such as "places, not bases," has begun to circulate throughout the region.<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, in recent years, Washington has appeared oblivious to the fact that they are being precluded from discussions over key issues and concerns in the region. In order to improve the overall economic and security issues in the Asia region, US policy makers must proactively participate in core dialogues, and analyze and respond to the unique regional issues. For the US to develop healthy relationship with China, they must first understand the Asia-

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<sup>90</sup> Evans, "The PRC's Relationship With the ASEAN Regional Forum," 747.

<sup>91</sup> Wah and Fong, "Relating the U.S.-Korea and U.S.-Japan Alliances," 3.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 9.

Pacific region. This can be accomplished through actively investing in the region through investing and participating in regional multilateral diplomatic discussions such as the Asian Regional Forum and East Asia Summit and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Plus dialogues.<sup>93</sup>

### **The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**

China's dynamic relationship with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), directly impacts how much leverage and influence Beijing has with neighboring governments. The most recognized regional organization in the Asia-Pacific region is ASEAN. ASEAN currently has ten members: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.<sup>94</sup> Accurately identifying and comprehending China's strong rapport with members of ASEAN, the SCO, and other regional organizations in the region is a vital step in pursuing America's best interest in the region. What has contributed to ASEAN's ability to thrive has been the agreement of non-interference and respect for sovereignty. This agreement is documented in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC). The US government signed the TAC in order to demonstrate how serious the Obama Administration was on investing in the Asia region. The signing of this treaty reflected the contrasting behavior between the current US administration, and previous administrations. Former president Bush, weary of being regulated

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<sup>93</sup> Allan Gyngell, "Design Faults: The Asia Pacific's Regional Architecture," *Lowy Institute For International Policy*, (2007): 8.

<sup>94</sup> Association of Southeast Asian Nations, "Member Countries," 2009, <http://www.aseansec.org/74.htm>. (accessed March 2, 2011).

by the non-interventionist ASEAN Way, adamantly refused to sign the TAC. Bush believed that not being able to act freely would not be in America's best national interest.<sup>95</sup>

The maritime territory of the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) encompasses various economic strategic chokepoints. ASEAN's compliance and defiance of certain Chinese policies directly affect China's international trade, territorial claims, and political and military ambitions. ASEAN today has "emerged as a hub of regional multilateral diplomacy," and has expanded into a multifunctional union, forming a type of umbrella organization. ASEAN currently encompasses many dialogues, including ASEAN Plus Three, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, and the ASEAN Regional Forum.<sup>96</sup> ASEAN has had the most impact on Asian policy compared to any other regional security organization in the world, including the United Nations.

Having recently celebrated its 43rd anniversary in 2010, ASEAN is currently dealing with a vastly different state of affairs in the region than when it was first established. ASEAN is no longer the only dominant regional organization in the region, and is now surrounded by separate entities and organizations that are striving for similar security goals in the region, such as the SCO. There are also several major dialogue forums such as the East Asia Summit, the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue, and the Shangri-La Dialogue. China is the most dominant country in the region, and is intimately involved in almost every one of these regional organizations. These numerous institutions link almost every South Asian country together in one form or another—whether it is economically, through defense and security cooperation, or by shared

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<sup>95</sup> Jane's, "China and Northeast Asia-External Affairs."

<sup>96</sup> Nesadurai, "The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)," 235.

borders or sea. Aside from the US, China is the largest ASEAN trading partner, and the biggest exporting target in Asia among the ASEAN members.<sup>97</sup>

Beijing is creating allies of its own, and will soon no longer need the US' support to maintain internal stability. China's activities in the Asia-Pacific region have always been one of concern for ASEAN members. For example, in the late 1990s, China invaded the Mischief Reef, placing its soldiers on declared Filipino territory. Consequently, the Philippines became the first "ASEAN member ... directly involved in a military stand-off with China."<sup>98</sup> Afraid of offending China, ASEAN was more concerned about China's influence in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and did not want to hurt their Sino-ASEAN relationship by confronting China over the disputed Philippine islands. With the unpredictability of China's actions, and more importantly since it was the most significant contributor in the ARF, China simultaneously became ASEAN's strongest and "weakest link."<sup>99</sup>

Some say that the ASEAN Regional Forum was created in 1994 exclusively for the purpose of restraining China's influence in the region.<sup>100</sup> Although China is not a member of ASEAN, it is an active member of the ASEAN Regional Forum. The majority of ASEAN members have joined the organization out of necessity. Therefore it is very curious why China joined the ARF, despite the international leverage and power that it already possessed.

According to the *Modern Asian Studies* journal, China was invited to join the ARF because ASEAN assumed that America would eventually withdraw from the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>101</sup> In

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<sup>97</sup> Thomas J. Christensen, "Fostering Stability or Creating a Monster? The Rise of China and U.S. Policy toward East Asia," *International Security* 31, no.1 (2006): 10.

<sup>98</sup> Samuel Sharpe, "An ASEAN Way to Security Cooperation in Southeast Asia?" *The Pacific Review* 16, no. 2 (2003): 241.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.

<sup>100</sup> Evans, "PRC's Relationship with the ASEAN Regional Forum," 737.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

addition, if China refused the offer to join the ARF, it would appear as if Beijing was actively seeking to become a supreme isolationist hegemony in the region. With the absence of US influence, it was assumed at the time that Japan would decide to grow militarily, and in response, China would increase its power in the region, and no other country would have the ability to restrain China or balance its power.<sup>102</sup> China is no longer isolationist, and in the post-Cold War era has become more aggressive in its policies. The question has become whether the ARF has succeeded in better integrating China into the international community, or has created a power-hunger entity that has the proper tools to get what it wants. However, it is most likely that China joined the ARF because it wanted to have a platform where it could influence the region's politics. Unlike ASEAN, the ARF is a unique structure that provides extra regional powers to engage in discussions as well.<sup>103</sup> If China succeeds in convincing other ASEAN members to agree with its policies, Beijing will be able to more effectively resist pressures from the West, especially in regards to amending China's human rights policies.<sup>104</sup> With the minimal role that the US has played in the ARF, China has had a chance to influence the ARF's policies from inside the organization.<sup>105</sup>

Joining the ARF was also a way of reassuring other states that China was willing to cooperate with its neighbors. In addition, everything discussed and decided in the ARF would directly affect China. It was in Beijing's best interest to slip into a position where it could "guide" the ARF in the right direction.<sup>106</sup> Before joining the ARF, China was merely economically interdependent with ASEAN members. Joining the ARF caused China to become

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<sup>102</sup> Evans, "PRC's Relationship with the ASEAN Regional Forum," 743.

<sup>103</sup> Wah and Fong, "Relating the U.S.-Korea and U.S.-Japan Alliances," 14.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Evans, "PRC's Relationship with the ASEAN Regional Forum," 745.

linked to the region in the area of security and defense as well. According to the Regime Theory, now that China was actively in dialogue with these other nations, Beijing not only had an invested interest in protecting their own borders, but in providing for the national security of their economic partners as well.<sup>107</sup> In recent years, China has reached out to aid the underdeveloped nation states in the region, and has generally respected each nation's sovereignty.<sup>108</sup> This has improved Beijing's reputation among ASEAN states that regard non-interference and sovereignty as the single most important aspect of multilateral foreign policy. Joining the ARF has helped China to become more integrated into the global system.<sup>109</sup> Overall, there have been both positive and negative aspects to China's membership in the ARF. Through China's membership and participation in the ARF, Beijing has become somewhat more integrated with the international community and has on occasion cooperated with other countries, staying open to dialogue. This is a significant improvement of attitude compared to China's foreign relations approach in the late 60s and early 70s.

According to Dr. Surin, Secretary-General of ASEAN, "China's economic growth and strong investment expansion is energizing the region and is providing ASEAN with a diversified market in an environment of slowing growth in its traditional partners."<sup>110</sup> ASEAN planned to create a China-ASEAN Free Trade Area (FTA) by 2010, and in January 2010, as planned, the FTA was fully implemented.<sup>111</sup> In 2008, China comprised "11.3% of total ASEAN trade."<sup>112</sup> Dr. Surin sees this new FTA as very beneficial to ASEAN, and believes it will boost the

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<sup>107</sup> Evans, "PRC's Relationship with the ASEAN Regional Forum," 747.

<sup>108</sup> Jane's, "China and Northeast Asia-External Affairs."

<sup>109</sup> Evans, "PRC's Relationship with the ASEAN Regional Forum."738.

<sup>110</sup> ASEAN Secretariat, "ASEAN-China Free Trade Area: Not a Zero-Sum Game." *Association of the Southeast Asian Nations*, <http://www.aseansec.org/24161.htm> (accessed April 3, 2011).

<sup>111</sup> ASEAN Secretariat, "ASEAN-China Free Trade Area: Not a Zero-Sum Game."

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

organizations status in the region while politically and economically as well. “ASEAN needs to organise and prepare itself in terms of a stable and hospitable investment climate, a well-trained work-force and improved logistics to take advantage of the new investment prospects arising from this next wave of China’s expansion.”<sup>113</sup>

China has invested billions of dollars in infrastructure projects among members of the organization.<sup>114</sup> Joining the ARF has provided China with the ability to significantly promote its own agenda and convince other countries to accept their policies, without having to comply with international norms. Although China has historically harbored some aggressive domestic and international policies, President Hu’s administration has focused more on cooperation with its neighbors and partners, and as a general rule has respected the sovereignty of its surrounding nation states.<sup>115</sup> Beijing has expressed an invested interest in its neighbors and has led discussions on topics such as the denuclearization of North Korea.<sup>116</sup> Hu’s policies closely align with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations’ policy of noninterference and respect for a nation’s sovereignty, referred to as the ASEAN Way. Hu has also increasingly participated in multilateral discussions in an effort to engage in the international arena. This has helped calm some ASEAN nation’s suspicions that China is becoming an Asian hegemony, seeking to dominate the region. Hu’s rallying support of like-minded states is certainly serving Beijing’s self-interest, and through emphasizing noninterference and respect for sovereignty, has created a

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<sup>113</sup> ASEAN Secretariat, “ASEAN-China Free Trade Area: Not a Zero-Sum Game.”

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Yucheng, “Harmonious Relationship.”

way to keep other nations from pressuring and interfering in China's human-rights violations, not excluding the recent controversy over the imprisonment of Liu Xiaobo.<sup>117</sup>

### **The Shanghai Corporation Organization (SCO)**

In addition to participating in multilateral discussions such as the ARF, China has made further efforts to create a type of buffer against the US and Western influence in East Asia.<sup>118</sup> The SCO, established in 2001, is a regional organizational alliance between Uzbekistan and the Shanghai Five: Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and China. After the Cold War, China was afraid that there would be a power-vacuum in Central Asia that would cause regional instability. The close relationship between the "Shanghai Five" is beginning to fill the void that was left in the area after the collapse of the USSR. The SCO has the capability to become the most threatening, successful and powerful security organization in Asia.<sup>119</sup> By establishing relationships with Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific through ASEAN, and with East Asia through the SCO, China has created a perfect lateral buffer zone against the US, surrounding itself with allies with an invested interest in Beijing. China bellies that US influence in the area challenges their "political and economic status quo."<sup>120</sup>

Although SCO is roughly 10 years old, it has demonstrated competency in dealing with a multitude of transnational and nontraditional issues such as terrorism and competition over energy resources. SCO is not purely a security organization, but aims to enhance collaboration in "trade, science and technology, culture, energy, and the environment" among its members.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Jane's, "China and Northeast Asia- External Affairs."

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Marc Lanteigne, "In Medias Res: The Development of the Shanghai Co-operation Organization as a Security Community," *Pacific Affairs*, 79 no. 4 (2006-2007): 605.

<sup>120</sup> Jeffrey Reeves, "US Cooperation with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Challenges and Opportunities," *Small Wars Journal*, (2010), <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/648-reeves.pdf>, 2.

<sup>121</sup> Lanteigne, "In Medias Res," 610.

The SCO has voiced support for the ARF and other Asia-Pacific multilateral organizations, claiming to agree on security issues such as how to address the nuclearization and possible unification of the Korean peninsula. However, it took the SCO an entire year to even issue a statement on the 9/11 terrorist attack. Critics point out that SCO's failure to make a statement immediately as a unilateral body against the terrorist attack showed a lack of collaboration within the organization.<sup>122</sup>

Similar to the ASEAN Way, SCO operates under what is called the "Shanghai Spirit" when dealing with security and political relations within the region. The Shanghai Spirit promotes an "international security co-operation based on equality, mutual trust and respect."<sup>123</sup> By treating each member with equality, SCO is making an effort to depart from the hierarchical structure that is often seen in Western organizations. Nevertheless, the power gap between the member countries in the organization forces some type of hierarchical structure.<sup>124</sup> Although the SCO functions in a similar fashion as ASEAN, they have not been as successful in bringing nations together to participate in multinational dialogue to the extent that the Asian Pacific organization has.

The SCO successfully extended their presence into the Asia region, while simultaneously characterizing the West as a harmful force. American and Western presence has often been blamed for local uprisings and protests, no matter how involved they were in reality. The SCO has now attained the status of "an alternative force in regional co-operation."<sup>125</sup> Although the SCO is rapidly rising to the status of a "balancing" power against the US in the region, the SCO

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<sup>122</sup> Jane's, "China and Northeast Asia-External Affairs."

<sup>123</sup> Lanteigne, "In Medias Res," 615.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

must continue to focus on clear internal development and strengthen the governments of its core members in order to adequately compete against the Western influence in Central and East Asia and exercise adequate leverage.<sup>126</sup> US policy makers must come to terms with the fact that America is no longer the only body that is offering protection and assurance in regional security in Asia. SCO is similar to ASEAN in that its members prefer their relationships to be “based on cooperation and trust.” With China and Russia as its leaders, SCO is becoming an organization that demands to be recognized. The region is full of historical baggage and maintaining regional stability and security in spite of this is SCO’s goal. On June 17, 2009, the president of China, Hu Jintao, and Russia’s Dmitry Medvedev came together to celebrate 60 years of multilateral relations.<sup>127</sup>

### **U.S. Foreign Policy Recommendations**

In the wake of the current financial crisis, Washington has had a rude awakening and is coming to realize the strategic significance of the Asia region. China has had the perfect opportunity to step in and act as a financial savior, keeping the Asian economy from collapsing through various measures such as refusing to change the value of its currency.<sup>128</sup> China has exerted and expanded its influence in the region through providing financial assistance to its neighbors, while Washington continues to drain its money and energy in the Middle East, and spreading itself thin throughout the world.<sup>129</sup> This has reinforced the feeling that the US is an “outsider” with only selfish interests in the area.<sup>130</sup> US foreign policy has been preoccupied with

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<sup>126</sup> Lanteigne, “In Medias Res,” 614.

<sup>127</sup> “China, Russia Mark 60 Years of Ties,” *China Daily*, June 18, 2009, <http://www.Chinadaily.com.cn> (accessed 25 July 2009).

<sup>128</sup> Narine, “From Conflict to Collaboration,” 14.

<sup>129</sup> Jeffrey Reeves, “US Cooperation with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Challenges and Opportunities,” 3.

<sup>130</sup> Jeffrey Reeves, “US Cooperation with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization,” 3.

the Middle East over the past few years, and with the insecure dollar, the Asia region has started to look towards China for assistance and assurance of economic security.

### **Need for Re-commitment**

As she embarked on her tour of the Asia-Pacific region, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton emphasized US commitment to the region and declared Washington's primary goal was "to sustain and strengthen America's leadership in the Asia-Pacific region and to improve security, heighten prosperity, and promote our values."<sup>131</sup> In February of this year, following his trip to Southeast Asia, Kurt Campbell, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, stated "that the year 2011 is a 'consequential year for American policy in the Asia-Pacific region.'"<sup>132</sup> The current administration has made several positive steps toward reengaging in the region through participating in more regional and multinational dialogues. For example the US participated in the East Asian Summit last year and has plans to attend this year, and Washington is more actively involved in the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting that was recently established in 2006. The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation is also scheduled to be hosted by the US this year, demonstrating that Washington recognizes the importance of US economic involvement in the region.

In order for the US to develop a strategic plan that is realistic and achievable and ultimately "strengthen[s] America's leadership in the region," current policies and public perception must be constantly cross referenced with facts. Although the US is, and will continue to be, the world's economic leader, China is rapidly rising to the forefront of global influence.

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<sup>131</sup> Hillary Rodham Clinton, "America's Engagement in the Asia-Pacific," Oct 28, 2010, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/10/150141.htm>. (accessed Mar 21, 2011).

<sup>132</sup> "Southeast Asia from the Corner of 18th and K," Center for Strategic and International Studies 2, no. 3 (23 Feb 2011): 5 <http://csis.informz.net/CSIS/data/images/southeastasia230211.pdf>.

The US must quickly adapt to the changes, recognize the trends, and respond in a way that will guide China in the direction that will help Washington achieve its foreign policy objectives while protecting the American people and maintaining stability in the Asia region. For the US to build a thriving relationship with the Asia-Pacific region, it must study and understand the economic needs and political desires of millions of people. This is no easy task. The Asia-Pacific region is growing economically dependent on China, and China's rapid growth and political leverage should be seen as a threat to the US. The US' recommitment to the Asia-Pacific region is strategically important, and America must realize that the perfect balance between diplomacy and military reinforcement is the best policy when dealing with the Asia-Pacific region. A good example of a balanced relationship between the US and an Asian country is between South Korea and the US. After the Korean War, the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and the US signed the 1953 Mutual Defense Treaty, where both nations pledged to actively pursue "a more comprehensive and effective system of regional security" in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>133</sup> The US also heavily engages with South Korea economically and diplomatically, demonstrated by the active negotiations over the Republic of Korea- United States Free Trade Agreement (KORUS). Although this agreement is still un-ratified, it has been constantly negotiated over for the past several years, indicating a desire by both parties to strengthen their economic relationship.<sup>134</sup> The KORUS is also important because it could provide a possible venue for pressuring corrupt and

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<sup>133</sup> United States Forces Korea, "1953 Mutual Defense Treaty," *SOFA Documents*, [http://www.usfk.mil/usfk/\(A\(D2LORmv0ywEkAAAAOGI0ZTRIZjktYTYwNy00MDAyLTgxMTItOGIwZDc2ZGYyNTNIVI5tm0oOVcy0AJ8wyV0MbZxeUd01\)S\(0ztucfqcpotxeo3dprqgdpas\)\)/sofa.1953.mutual.defense.treaty.76](http://www.usfk.mil/usfk/(A(D2LORmv0ywEkAAAAOGI0ZTRIZjktYTYwNy00MDAyLTgxMTItOGIwZDc2ZGYyNTNIVI5tm0oOVcy0AJ8wyV0MbZxeUd01)S(0ztucfqcpotxeo3dprqgdpas))/sofa.1953.mutual.defense.treaty.76), (accessed April 26, 2011).

<sup>134</sup> Office of the United States Trade Representative, "Korea- U.S. Free Trade Agreement," <http://www.ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements/korus-fta>, (accessed April 26, 2011).

unstable regimes in the region, such as North Korea, to pursue more regionally beneficial policies.<sup>135</sup>

The US should view China's rise in the Asia region as an opportunity to participate in more economic and political dialogue with Beijing. For America to successfully engage itself in the Asia-Pacific region, it needs to do two things: First, look at Asia as a whole, and second, simultaneously treat each nation as a unique entity that is contributing to the whole. China's presence and activities are very significant to the Asia-Pacific region and understanding the desires and role of every member of ASEAN is an important step to understanding China. A strong relationship with more Asian countries, and US participation in numerous Asian economic and political forums is important, because in the future, any nation in the area may become a strategic access point to a crisis in the region. For example, current US military presence and diplomatic relationship with both Japan and South Korea has led to increased multilateral cooperation between the countries, demonstrated by recent US-Japan and US-South Korea joint military exercises.<sup>136</sup> These bilateral relationships have become increasingly important, especially with the current tense relationship between China and Taiwan, and the instability of the North Korean government.<sup>137</sup>

The People's Republic of China is becoming the most powerful country in Asia, and has become an indispensable political and economic force in the region. The US must become more politically and economically involved in the Asia region, change its foreign policy in a way that reflects a comprehensive understanding of China and its role in the region, while proactively

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<sup>135</sup> Anthony B. Kim, "KORUS Trade Pact Keeps Pressure on North Korea," *The Foundry*, April 21, 2011, <http://blog.heritage.org/?p=57709>, (accessed April 26, 2011).

<sup>136</sup> Justin McCurry, "US and Japan begin joint military exercise," *Guardia.co.uk*, 3 December 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/dec/03/us-japan-joint-military-exercise>.

<sup>137</sup> McCurry, "US and Japan begin joint military exercise."

pursuing strategic relationships and dialogue among Asian countries. Kurt Campbell, in his most recent trip to Southeast Asia, reconfirmed the region's economic importance to the US, and the US responsibility to encourage economic growth and "help with [its] economic recovery."<sup>138</sup> The current Obama administration should continue to encourage transparency in China's economic policies.<sup>139</sup> Significant progress in economic relations has been made between the US and China since the normalization of relations between the two countries in 1969.<sup>140</sup> However, the US still holds several sanctions over China due to their human rights violations and their "threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction."<sup>141</sup> Currently, the majority of economic restrictions focus on restricting Chinese exports and imports of defense and military materials. Although the current economic sanctions are warranted, any additions to the sanctions should be thoroughly reviewed before being put into effect in order to optimize Chinese-US relations. The US should avoid isolationist or protectionist trends, or promotion of sanctions toward China that will ultimately weaken the US economic and political reputation in the region.<sup>142</sup> If the US continues its current policy toward Asia and China, the rise of China and its proactive engagement with its Asian neighbors will soon overshadow US influence in Asia. While the US must increase its involvement in the region, it must also be very careful that Beijing does not interpret re-engagement as "an effort to pit the countries in Asia against China."<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Center for Strategic and International Studies, "Southeast Asia from the Corner of 18th and K." Vol 2, no.3. 23 Feb, 2011, <http://csis.informz.net/CSIS/data/images/southeastasia230211.pdf>.

<sup>139</sup> US-China Business Council, "US-China Trade Policy," 8.

<sup>140</sup> Dianne E. Rennack, "China: Economic Sanctions," *Congressional Research Service*, May 18, 2005 <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/crs/r131910.pdf>, 2.

<sup>141</sup> Rennack, "China: Economic Sanctions," 4.

<sup>142</sup> US-China Business Council, "US-China Trade Policy," 8.

<sup>143</sup> Kenneth Lieberthal, "U.S., China Mending Fences," *Waterloo Region Record*, Jan 20, 2011, <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=3&did=2243386291&SrchMode=1&sid=1&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1297122549&clientId=20655>, (accessed Feb 7, 2011).

During her first official overseas trip after being appointed as U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton declared in Thailand that “The US is back,” reflecting the Obama administration’s pledge to re-engage itself in Asia.<sup>144</sup> By traveling first to the Asia-Pacific region, her trip was a direct message to the world that America was going to re-invest in the region. Secretary Clinton has been very faithful in attending almost every important diplomatic and strategic meeting in Asia. President Barack Obama visited China in 2009 and discussed increasing cooperation, and building trust. Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates just recently traveled to China and had an in high-level conversation about military cooperation with President Hu Jintao. However, paying lip service to the media and public officials about greater cooperation and seeking mutual interests will not result in achieving anything significant on the other side of the world. It is crucial that Washington learns to strategically communicate with China and its neighbors. It was, and still is, in the US’ national security interest to encourage and promote an Asian security environment that will not be a threat to the US, both domestically and internationally.

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<sup>144</sup> Fox News.com, “Clinton Declares the U.S. ‘Is Back’ in Asia,” July 12, 2009, <http://www.foxnews.com/politics>, (accessed 24 July 2009).

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