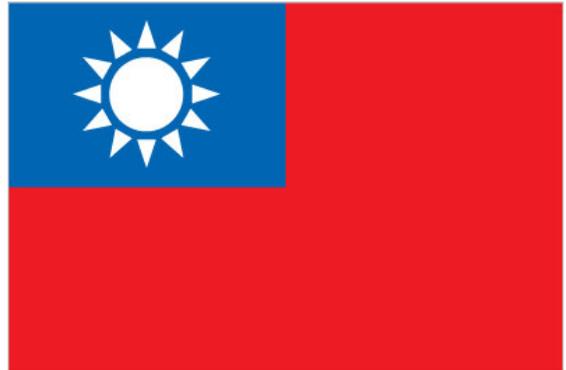


The Chinese Maritime Threat: A Taiwan Case Study



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Abstract

Taiwan has been under threat of invasion from China for over sixty years. China has expanded and advanced its naval capacity over the last thirty years. China's growth into a hegemony directly threatens Taiwan as well as the area surrounding. As the region only increases in value with more trade and energy flow, the security of the small island "state" is uncertain and raises concerns in regards to China's strategy for the area. The Chinese maritime threat will only continue to expand until it culminates in the invasion of Taiwan. The expansion of Chinese power in the region supports the claim that China seeks to expand its maritime assets throughout the region. The commitment from China to reunify Taiwan into its territory is a clear sign that aggression will occur within the next two decades.

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The island of Taiwan has been part of a delicate power struggle in the Asia Pacific Region for over sixty years. China has expressed contempt for the small island resulting in regional struggles and international debate. China has expanded and advanced its naval capacity over the last thirty years. The immense growth of military strength has allowed China project its influence into the region and raised concerns with the surrounding nations. This includes exerting pressure on the island of Taiwan which is minuscule in comparison. Taiwan, in contrast, has not grown militarily but economically through shipping and expanded technological trade deals. The Taiwanese Navy has become overwhelmingly outclassed and outmanned by the Chinese Navy, placing Taiwan in a very vulnerable position; essentially making the island susceptible to a military/political take over by China. Alongside this military tension, China and Taiwan have had several maritime disputes and even overlapping maritime claims; one example being the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. China's largest project, the Maritime Silk Road, is one of the most critical examples of China's growing maritime influence; placing Taiwan at risk of facing economic aggression or territorial disputes. The area surrounding the southern border of Taiwan is also of the most critical trade/energy routes in the world; making the small island prime real estate for maritime region control. The importance of this issue lies in the geopolitical security at risk if China were to subjugate Taiwan back into its territory. While the surrounding states have reservations in regards to Taiwan, the U.S is one of the most critical informal allies for the small island. While the U.S does not formally recognize Taiwan as a state, it does have military assistance programs and trade agreements with it. However, as China increases its presence in the region, U.S security officials question the need for maintaining forces in the region used for keeping China in check. As the importance of the region only increases with

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more trade and energy flow, the security of the small island "state" is uncertain and raises concerns in regards to China's strategy for the area.

Brief History

The history of the Taiwan-China tension dates to August 1927 when the civil war between the Communist party and the Nationalist party broke out. Prior to the civil war, the government in power was authoritarian and full of corruption; it promoted nationalism all while unevenly distributing the country's land and wealth. This gave rise to the Communist party in China, which would resist the Nationalist government heavily. Following the Japanese invasion in 1937, resulting in the second Sino-Japanese War, the two parties placed their differences aside to fight back against the invaders. The Nationalist government was not strong enough to maintain control, resulting in the loss of large parts of the coast to the invaders. As the government fled for safety, several local groups would rise in China. The largest of these resistance groups was the Communist Party led by Mao Zedong. Alongside American forces, the Chinese would take back control of their country, only to be plunged back into chaos following the end of the Second World War.

At the end of World War 2, China was in complete disarray with no formal government in place. The Nationalist government was attempting to regain the control it had prior to Japan's invasion, but the Communist party had gained momentum and sought to place a new government. The conflict between the Nationalists and the Communist would go on for another four years until 1949 when the Nationalists were forced into exile. After the Nationalist government fled to the island of Taiwan, both the Communists and the Nationalists experienced their own history and challenges.

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While the Communists had gained control of the mainland, they faced adversity from within. By the end of 1949, Mao Zedong established the People's Republic of China which was meant to prevent the corruption that was seen in the previous Nationalist government. The first challenge that the new mainland government faced was remnants of the Nationalists that did not escape to Taiwan. While there were not many insurgents left, it brought into question the new government's ability to protect its people. However, the government consolidated its power and raised its popularity with the people through land reformation, "resulting in between 1 and 2 million executions of former landlords" (Busky, 2002). This radical move by the Communist government was the first of several acts part of Mao Zedong's "Great Leap Forward". The purpose of the movement was to bring China into the modern industrial era and inspire a more efficient work ethic. The Great Leap Forward saw the "doubling of the Chinese population from 550 million to over 900 million" (44Holmes 2008, p.185). While PRC promoted a healthy share of work and wealth distribution, the Great Leap Forward actually had several fallbacks. The worst of all was the focus on propaganda distribution; mainly Mao Zedong's Little Red Book, which outlined the goals of Chinese communism. This dedication to propaganda and becoming a part of the community pushed people to produce more goods and food. However, competing one another, towns often lied about their harvests to meet quotas and often gave more than they could. This push towards a more industrialized China at a quick rate led to starvation and the deaths of over 45 million Chinese people. Mao Zedong eventually halted the Great Leap Forward and instead pushed for a cultural revolution in 1966, which continued until his death in 1976. Then in 1978 Deng Xiaoping took power of the PRC. He was the father of Chinese economic prosperity; by enacting new economic reforms and allowing looser markets, China

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saw a huge spike in its GDP and economic strength. Under Deng Xiaoping, China would grow into the massive economic power it is today.

Across the Taiwan Strait were the exiled Nationalists on the small island of Taiwan. The exiled party was led by Chiang Kai-shek who had brought with him two million people from the mainland. These exiled people were the remainder of the Republic of China, but they did have some resources to survive on the island. Prior to their escape from the mainland, the Nationalist party stole much of the national treasures and gold reserves to fund their endeavors on the island. As they established a new government, the indigenous people who lived on the island were subjugated under the ROC. After settling in to their new island, the government enacted martial law which remained in effect until 1987. This was to prevent any dissent or protest from within and focus on the outside threat of China. This era of strict authoritarianism became known as the White terror: “In the 1950s and 1960s, officials targeted people suspected of advocating democracy, communism or Taiwan independence from China.” (Taiwan president apologizes 2008). This is both described as a terror era as well as an era of progress; since there was little internal conflict there was a larger focus on industrialization and technological advancements. This rapid economic growth would be known as the Taiwan Miracle since at the time, the small island was the second fastest growing economy behind Japan in the post war era. Despite the domestic control and rapid growth Taiwan had, it was still technically in a civil war with the People’s Republic of China as no formal ceasefire was ever signed. Since 1949 there have been three small conflicts between China and Taiwan; in 1955, 1958, and 1996. The first conflict was the acquisition of the Yijiangshan islands by the PRC which prompted U.S interference and an unofficial commitment to interfere in the event of a Chinese invasion. The second conflict in 1958 was concerning the artillery shelling of an island by the Chinese which prompted a

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response from both the U.S and Taiwan. The third conflict involved the firing of missiles near several ports in the North Western and South Western waters of Taiwan by China. There is a long history of conflict between China and Taiwan, the question of legitimacy is what separates the two. While there have not been any full-on conflicts between China and Taiwan, it is only a matter of time before China makes a move to reclaim its “run-away province”.

One-China Policy vs One-China Principle

When dealing with the issue of China and Taiwan, a nation faces certain challenges on how to approach either entity. Since neither China nor Taiwan recognize each other as legitimate governments, they seek international support to solidify their claim as the true China. Both China and Taiwan support the One China Policy which is the standard for diplomatic relations with either of the two entities. The One-China Policy states that to have relations with either China or Taiwan, a nation must cut all formal diplomatic relations with the other, and vice-versa. “It is the diplomatic acknowledgement of China's position that there is only one Chinese government. Under the policy, the US recognizes and has formal ties with China rather than the island of Taiwan, which China sees as a breakaway province to be reunified with the mainland one day.” (BBC 2017). The need to limit other states ability to recognize both China and Taiwan comes from the hatred of both entities. The PRC claims the legitimate title of China for several reasons. These include: the support of one of the largest populations in the world, the defeat of the previous government, and control of the territory. Even though the ROC left with 2 million people towards a small island, there were still 500 million left behind. The large population was almost 100% supportive of the Communist government which was one of the main arguments behind the PRC’s bid for the United Nations Security Council seat. As for the defeat of the Nationalists, the PRC argued that a defeated government had no legitimacy or right to maintain

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the slightest of sovereignty. As for the territorial aspect, after the escape of the Nationalists, the PRC had control over almost all of China's territory; the ROC only had a small collection of islands. The PRC was undoubtedly in charge of China, but the ROC would not accept the PRC as China's new government. However, instead of simply conquering the island of Taiwan, China is strategic in dealing with the "run-away province".

To better understand the foreign policy of the People's Republic of China, the domestic government must be explained. Since the Chinese government has been kept in power due to the military support it has, it decides how security issues are dealt with. The chain of command in the Chinese military is also affected by strength of party affiliation. While the military is ready to overtake Taiwan, the People's Liberation Army does not only see Taiwan as a military issue, but a social, political, and international issue. "Rather than a national army that is a professional and non-partisan institution subordinated under civilian leadership, as seen in Western democracies, the PLA is a party-army; it sees itself as the guardian of the interests of the CCP. Per this view, because the PLA is a party-army, strictly speaking it does not have a purely military view on the Taiwan issue" (Wang 2007 p.98). Since the PRC classifies Taiwan as an internal issue, the Communist Party deems the ROC an internal uprising. This is only made a harsher classification due to the duties of the military to the PRC: to uphold and protect the Chinese Communist Party from any threats foreign or internal, to obey and adhere to the CCP always, and to support and enforce all claims of the party. Pressure from the PRC's government have made other nations adopt the one china policy and essentially isolated the island of Taiwan from the international community. While a large majority of the international community recognizes the PRC as the legitimate government of China, several states still have dealings with the small island thus, leading into the issue of legitimacy. The One-China policy focuses on the international relations

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revolving around recognition of statehood, and the One China Principle regards legitimacy of the governments themselves. Under the One China principle, both the PRC and ROC agree that “Taiwan and mainland China are inalienable parts of a single "China"” (House of Representatives 2004). Essentially, it means that all territory (including mainland China and Taiwan) are parts of a single China. The conflict is that which government is the true legitimate power. This principle has been the PRC’s main policy since 1992, and at times the same in Taiwan, depending on the political party in charge. This policy brings into question the legitimacy of both governments. The arguments of the PRC have already been mentioned in regards to Taiwan; however, the ROC has its own arguments against the PRC. Taiwan’s main argument is that it was unlawfully removed from its seat of power by an internal force; and that it maintains its authority regardless of the PRC’s secured position of government. Other arguments include history of the ROC’s government dating prior to the rise of the Communist party. When Chiang Kai Shek took control of the ROC in 1925, he already had a negative view on Communism. He had seen the Russian government’s Communism at work and did not believe it was suitable for China. He then led a campaign to reunite all of China under one ideology; he succeeded but made enemies in the progress. This position of power allowed the ROC to maintain control until the Communist party arose in rebellion in 1927. After the defeat of the Japanese in 1945, the ROC sought to reclaim its seat of power and faced several critics. The ROC was accused of mishandling money and the entire economy itself; allowing for hyperinflation to occur. While these actions all were deemed to be against the people’s wishes by the Communists, the ROC argues that it maintained the government in a post war era which solidified its claims to being the legitimate government of all of China. While the ROC’s

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arguments do not seem to have any real legitimacy, Taiwan still accepts the One-China Principle if it promotes Taiwanese claims over China.

Assessing China's Maritime Capabilities

China can be considered one of the world's few hegemonies. There are several markers that place the large state on the forefront of global supremacy. These include: maritime economy, sea route investment, naval build up, international influence, and technological advancements. The abilities of China are not the only indicators of its status of hegemony, the goals and claims it makes reflect the ambitions of a growing maritime threat. Instead of listing all the goals China, only the highlights relating to Taiwan will be mentioned within this paper. In relation to Taiwan, China's maritime interests in the region surrounding Taiwan include: Maritime zone claims, shipping lane security, and the island of Taiwan itself. As China's power continues to grow, the interests it seeks to secure will only become more attainable. While China has made serious moves towards claiming new waters and patrolling their maritime zone; reunification through military force is still not within reach for China, at least for the next 15 years.

China's maritime economy is one of the largest in the globe. Since it has the ocean on one side of the country, China's cities and production centers are on the coast. Since the 1980's, China has only expanded its economic power by becoming an export focused economy. Per Professor Denny Roy of the National University of Singapore, China's economic growth would become a pivotal factor in the region's economic well-being, as well as regional security threat (Roy 1994). Like most scholars during the 1990's, Roy hypothesized the rise of a new economic hegemony in place of the declining USSR. At the same time, the East Asia region was dominated by the technologically advanced Japan. The growth of China symbolized a shift in power for the region which raised concerns for not only the surrounding nations, but for the U.S as well.

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China's expanding maritime economy would press the PRC to shift their focus from the interior land to the maritime domain. The massive coastal border that China has, alongside the ability to project influence into the temperate and tropical islands in the Pacific, allowed the PRC to promote the fishing industry as well as bloom the shipbuilding industry (Kaplan 2010). These developments along the coast led to greater urban developments in the cities near ports. Which in turn led to the expansion of the manufacturing industry which would see one of the largest booms. "In 1980, several coastal special economic zones were created offering foreign investors attractive incentives to invest or set up production facilities in these areas" (Cheung 1990, p.5). This would not only promote investment into the coast but would also flock interior land population to the area resulting in a larger work force for the manufacturing and labor industry. The manufacturing industries within these coastal cities would prove to be a critical component to China's expansion to the sea. As China focused on developing exports and growing the economy, it grew its shipbuilding industry into one of the largest in the globe. The two largest shipbuilding companies were and still are state owned allowing for strict regulation and adherence to Chinese standards. The modern focus for China's maritime economy is shifting its production and manufacturing to a higher standard rather than the low quality-high quantity standard in place. To fulfill this changeover, China has reinvested into training and better management of the industry: "The Chinese shipbuilding industry is also increasingly focused on human capital. Chinese universities and maritime academies now produce nearly 1,500 marine engineers and naval architects per year, roughly seven times the number of such graduates from U.S. institutions. The large Chinese yards are also gradually emphasizing sound HSE (health, safety, and environment) practices, an important priority for many foreign ship buyers" (U.S Naval War College, 2008 pg.2). In comparison, Europe and the Americas have struggled with

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maintaining and upgrading the maritime industry in their respective regions. China's ability to shift focus from land to sea is one of the reasons it can be considered the hegemony of the region. The maritime economy of China has become an integral component for trade, shipbuilding, and manufacturing for the region; not only does it benefit China, but it has led to Chinese investment in neighboring states and even further out into the globe.

Alongside its economic growth, China has expanded its sea routes through investments abroad. By investing into ports abroad, China has been able to more efficiently move its vessels throughout the South-East Asia region to the Indian Ocean region and beyond. This process of investments in port building and restructuring in other nations is the Chinese creation of a Maritime Silk Road. The original Silk Road was designed to reach Europe through the land, this project by the PRC seeks to establish a series of ports and sea routes to create a more efficient network for reaching energy-providing states and Europe. "The Maritime Silk Road already represents China's most vital sea lines of communication, both because it gives China access to three major economic zones (Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East) and because it is the route for many of China's strategic materials, including oil, iron ore, and copper ore imports." (Clemens 2015, pg. 3). While the Maritime Silk Road is a tremendous economic opportunity for China, it also serves the crucial role of supplying China with the materials it requires to stay economically and military afloat. This is one of the reasons that China carefully selected which states to invest into, not only to secure their vessels, but also the cooperation of the port state to ensure the vessels reaches its destination as quickly and efficiently as possible. The Maritime Silk Road does not only provide an economic incentive, but also an international network of increased influence.

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China's influence over states included within the Maritime Silk Road is unparalleled. With the economic incentives that China can provide, any coastal state along the sea route is anxious to be included in the deal. For smaller states like Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Laos the Maritime Silk Road is crucial for their economic development. China also actively seeks out these smaller poorer countries to promote their investment plan, with the subtle pressure to support China in the international system (i.e. U. N & WTO). Due to these exchanges, political and military figures such as former assistant secretary of the Department of State James A. Kelly and Peter W. Rodman, Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs, U.S. Department of Defense have both expressed concerns and supported the term "string of pearls". This negative term implies that China is only investing in the poorer states to promote themselves and perhaps press the small nation into allowing China to build a military base near the ports in question. The PRC refutes these claims by stating that they are only interested in preserving the safety of their interests and seeking further economic growth. To protect their interests, the PRC's navy has grown in both size and technology. However, it also seeks to project China's power into the region to solidify its claims and maintain security.

The People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has effectively grown its arsenal into one of the world's largest militaries. Due to China's economic climb in the last thirty years, their navy has been able to advance and expand to contend for the hegemony spot in the Asia Pacific Region. The unprecedented growth of the Chinese Navy has been a concern for the entire region, resulting, however, China disputes that its military expansion is strictly for securing their interests. Three main interests for China's military have been: the securing of maritime claims, the expansion of global maritime presence, and internal military reforms. By achieving these goals, China's navy becomes both a regional and global maritime threat.

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The increase in Chinese power has come largely from its procurement of more military vessels and their advancement. While China has had a large shipbuilding industry which has been able to produce large quantities of trade vessels, its military production was not as effective at creating naval vessels. Until 2004, China procured its naval vessels from the Russian government. The Russians sold old military vessels at a fraction of the cost and the Chinese upgraded and modernized these vessels with their latest technology. One example of this is the only aircraft carrier in the PLAN; the Liaoning was a product of Russian origin, purchased through Ukraine. The old aircraft carrier was modified to accommodate Chinese naval forces and serve as the capital ship of the PLAN. Other examples of Russian presence in the Chinese navy include: submarines, destroyers, small cruisers and even anti-ship weaponry. Even though a large quantity of China's military contains Russian decommissioned vessels, the shift to modernizing the domestic military shipbuilding industry has increased since 2004.

Following a heavy buildup of foreign purchased vessels, the PLAN began its shift into domestic production in 2004. After realizing that a sustainable production was required to fill the PLAN's needs should any arise, the Chinese government looked to develop new vessels that would be able to counter any of their foreign counterparts. "the PLAN has gone from importing frontline warships to fielding six new classes of indigenously built destroyers, frigates, and corvettes. Notably, the Type 052D Luyang III destroyer, the Type 054A Jiangkai II frigate, and the Type 056 Jiangdao corvette have all entered serial production, adding mass and balance to the fleet. Just over a decade has elapsed since China began to commission these modern fighting ships. Coming so far so quickly constitutes an impressive feat by any standard" (Holmes & Yoshihara 2017, p.1). The rapid development of the domestic naval shipbuilding from China raises the threat from the coastal state due to the inability to cut off its foreign vessel acquisition.

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Prior to the Chinese shift into domestic shipbuilding, if a conflict were to break out, it would no longer be able to procure new vessels as its needs were filled by foreign militaries. However, with a domestic supplier, China increases its deployment capabilities by being able to create vessels indefinitely. As China continues to pursue its goals both domestic and abroad, the increased capacity and technology of their Navy will serve a critical component and maintaining their influence and securing their maritime interests.

Of the three goals for China's Navy, their maritime claims are considered the most likely to result in small conflict. As the naval capabilities expand, the Chinese will be able to openly secure their maritime claims in disputed waters regardless of what the international system says. The U.S deputy assistant secretary of defense for East Asia, Abraham M. Denmark, stated in 2016: "China's leadership demonstrated a willingness to tolerate higher levels of tension in pursuit of its maritime sovereignty claims, China's strategy is to secure its objectives without jeopardizing the regional peace that has enabled its military and economic development, which in turn has maintained the Chinese Communist Party's grip on power" (Cronk 2016, p.1). The growing need for resources has led to the Chinese government's extensive claims through the region (mainly the South China Sea). Their growing naval capabilities demonstrate the security risk the region is facing if left without a response. This movement by Chinese naval forces into disputed waters sets a dangerous precedent which the PLAN will only use to expand their operation area into other regions of the world.

The more pressing of China's naval goals is the push towards global presence. As their navy continues to make bolder presses in disputed waters, China worries that their maritime routes will become unstable. Therefore, the maritime power seeks to have naval vessels accompany a certain amount of its trade vessels. While there is no current of figures for these

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merchant protection fleets by the PLAN, their focus on establishing global presence can be seen in the Indian Ocean Region. While the Chinese government officially states that the Maritime Silk Road is strictly for economic progress, China's announcement in 2016 of a military base in Djibouti is a clear sign of the PLAN's intentions to support global operations (Cronk 2016). This also brings new challenges for the Chinese Navy as it would serve as the first of many proposed bases. The biggest issue with this military installation is that it is being built near a U.S military base. While there may not be any legal issue with these actions, it is likely to cause several communication incidents or patrol conflicts. China's "far sea defense" initiative has raised several concerns, especially regarding the changes speculated to be occurring within the Chinese military (Wong 2010). This leads into the third goal of the PLAN, internal military reform. As China's navy shifts into global presence rather than regional, it looks to change the structure of its military to accommodate these goals. One way this is being done is by shifting from a regional command structure to a geographic one, which means changing the focus from coastal and internal operations to a global one. The changes the PLAN seeks to make internally are likely to take place over the next five years, and will likely see several other bases established in coastal states along the Maritime Silk Road.

As China's presence in the region only increases, their military capabilities will be a concern for the international community. China's growth as an economy has allowed the coastal state to become a hegemony in not only the region but the globe as well. The security abilities China has accumulated over the last two decades has allowed a wider range of operations, from coastal and border protection to maritime claim enforcement and trade route protection. Whether China expands into a global presence remains in question, but it is certain to set its sights on the island of Taiwan before reaching out into insecure waters.

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Taiwan as an entity in the Asia-Pacific Region

Taiwan is one of the locations most susceptible to Chinese aggression. Even though China and Taiwan have not had large conflicts in the last seventy years, they have had incidents that placed the peace of the region at stake. These incidents have ranged in severity, but have resulted in strained relations. Given Taiwan's history, the island's ability to develop into one of the region's most peaceful democracies counters most claims from the post-world war 2 era that said the authoritarian island would fall within a few years of its governments creation. Taiwan's growth as a nation has been a key factor in its sustained "autonomous" government. While Taiwan does not have independence from China, its cultural, economic, and political systems have developed equal to that of a fully sovereign nation.

As the Republic of China's(ROC) government escaped to the island of Taiwan, they sought out to maintain their government in hopes of one day returning to the mainland. The first few years of Taiwan's government faced the challenges of dissent and the threat of a Chinese invasion. To avoid losing power, the governments leader Chiang Kai-shek enacted martial law and sought to keep his people in check while still preparing for the impending Chinese attack. The authoritarian ruling led to protests from the international system including the U.S. President Truman had vocally expressed his concerns regarding the repression of the Taiwanese people by the ROC, but still demonstrated resolve with his Truman Doctrine. As a non-communist government, the ROC fell under the protection umbrella of the U.S. Regardless of international protest, Taiwan still received military aid from the U.S in the form of supplies and weapons. This period of martial law would come to be known as the White Terror, and is considered to be Taiwan's darkest era. During this time, 140,000 people were imprisoned or executed for being either anti-government or pro-Communist (Taiwan president apologizes 2008). This continued

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until 1978, making it the world's second longest martial law enactment. Despite being in a constant state of readiness and expecting a Chinese invasion, Taiwan never saw anything as dramatic. It did face some incidents on four separate occasions that would strain the relations with China, but not severe enough to stop cross strait communication. Thanks to its state of emergency, Taiwan's government could target its focus on the economy and developing relations abroad in both political and trade sense.

Following the escape to Taiwan, the ROC had a large amount of gold that it took from the treasury of mainland China. The government used this as an initial investment into the islands industry and infrastructure. By investing into these sectors right away, Taiwan could begin its industrial bloom quickly. Within a decade, Taiwan's manufacturing capabilities would become comparable to that of post war Japan. By developing an economic system that focused on free market development, opposite of the communist mainland, Taiwan's technological prowess gained momentum and would become a large exporter of tech components. The largest demand of Taiwanese products came from the United States, which only served as a unifier for the two. Taiwan's incredible economic growth is known as the Taiwan Miracle. Like Japan and South Korea, Taiwan focused its economy on technology and the service industry to develop higher quality materials for the international market. Companies like DEC and IBM would see their start in Taiwan, especially with the governments support through subsidies and financial credits. Even though Taiwan was under martial law for the first three decades of its new government, it would become a regional economic power.

The economic growth of Taiwan would be under constant threat of a Chinese invasion for several decades. While the U.S acted as a protector for the island, China still sought to interfere with Taiwan on several occasions. Even though Taiwan seemed to be the island in need of

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protection, for the first few years following Taiwan's government establishment, Taiwan would have bombing raids on coastal cities in China, including the city of Shanghai. Though the U.S did not support these actions from Taiwan, the ROC sought to maintain control over key islands it believed to be critical for reclaiming the mainland. At this point in time, the ROC still believed it could recover the mainland Chinese territory and reestablish its legitimacy as the true government. The ROC's ambition would not ever come to fruition; instead, the island the found itself under harassment by the mainland for decades to come.

The People's Republic of China would cause four separate conflicts with Taiwan that resulted in interference from the international community. These incidents occurred in 1955, 1958, 1996, and 2017. The first two were called crises, the last two had less conflict and were more of a show of force. These crises caused by the Chinese were signs of China's commitment to reunifying Taiwan to the mainland and removing the "tyrannical" ROC from power. The first two incidents occurred within the same decade, and then there was no real conflict in the strait between Taiwan and China for thirty years until 1996. Despite not having any large-scale conflicts, the tension between Taiwan and China could result in the destabilization of peace within the region.

The first Taiwan Crisis was an example that demonstrated the amphibious capabilities of China. The incident began in September 1954 and continued until March 1955. The conflict consisted of island bombardment and the subsequent capturing of those islands. The PLA had captured a series of islands claimed & defended by the Taiwanese. On one of these islands, a ROC garrison of 720 were killed or wounded by PLA forces (Tsang 2006). Before the situation got out of hand, the U.S passed the Formosa Resolution to defend Taiwan's offshore islands.

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This attack by the Chinese served as the first sign to the ROC that it would not return to the mainland through a conflict victory; as well as a reminder that China could strike at any moment.

The second Taiwan Crisis was the escalated battle between the PRC and ROC in both air and naval forces. This conflict began in August 1958 and continued for three months until American intervention. The initial conflict was bombardment of two small islands belonging to Taiwan with the eventual deployment of forces. The PLAN had dispatched patrol boats to prevent any supplies from Taiwan reaching these islands. The ROC reached out to the U.S for assistance in the conflict but all the U.S could do was provide the materials for conflict and not participate (Tsang 2006). Eventually a ceasefire was agreed upon by both sides, though it was never formalized so the incident technically never ended.

The last two notable conflicts occurred in 1996 and in 2017. The 1996 incident was a result of the foreign policy inclinations that Taiwan's president at the time had been promoting. These policies included going against the One-China policy that the PRC had enacted only four years earlier. Thus, the PRC announced "missile tests" would be conducted near the waters of Taiwan. On two separate occasions during the year China fired missiles near Taiwan's North and South western coasts. In March of 1996, the U.S responded to these threats by deploying two carrier groups into the strait to deter any further aggression (Ross 2000). Instead of causing intimidation like the PRC wanted, the incident only led to U.S intervention, further complicating the Taiwan strait tension. The movement for independence from the mainland only gained momentum. While China has repeatedly stated that if Taiwan attempts to declare independence it will take military action, the incidents caused by the mainland only serve to push the island towards secession. The most recent of incidents was in January 2017 when China sailed its carrier group through the Taiwan Strait as a projection of power. This was in response to

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President Trump's acceptance of a congratulatory phone call from the current Taiwanese president (Taiwan scrambles jets 2017). The tension in the Taiwan strait has only increased over the last seventy years, and will likely result in conflict within the next two decades. The history of cross strait conflict along with the lack of communication between the PRC and ROC fuel the movement in Taiwan for independence. By using history as a reference, independence movements in Taiwan promote a growing sense of nationalism and yearn for sovereignty.

The Taiwanese government is in a delicate situation regarding foreign pressure and internal movements for independence. The ROC faces a large threat from China, as the mainland has made several claims that if the island declared independence, China would move swiftly to reclaim its 23rd province. Coupled along with this threat of China, Taiwan has several political figures and movements that demand independence to establish a Taiwanese sense of nation rather than reunifying with the mainland. Although, there is also a split within these internal movements, as some groups do concede that they would support reunification with China if the state became modernized and more democratic (Niou 2005). However, this ties into the fear associated with reunification. Under Chinese President Xi Jinping, the PRC has made some claims that if reunified, Taiwan would be able to keep its autonomy. This would be similar to the status of Hong Kong. The problem is that under the PRC's current administration, the government has focused on cracking down on not only the Hong Kong activists, but mainland reformers as well (Vien and Rees 2016). As the debate continues within Taiwan on whether to attempt independence from China, the security threat remains regardless of a decision. If the island declares independence, it does not have many states that recognize its legitimacy. Even though the U.S has been a protector of the island, in the event of Chinese aggression, Taiwan

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would have to do it alone given the international communities stance on the issue and the consequences that would follow if the international system interfered.

While Taiwan's position has largely depended on the government in power, the current administration for the island is in favor of maintaining the autonomy of Taiwan, or even declaring independence. The current president, Tsai Ing Wen, is the first female president in the island's history; however, she can maintain the position of her political party regarding Taiwan's sovereignty. While she may not directly announce the independence of Taiwan, she largely supports the Taiwanese nationalist movement which helped her claim the office (Solomon 2016). The ROC's population supports independence from mainland China; but if Taiwan does move forward with the break-away, their security will be put at serious risk.

Taiwan is one of the few governments that has a military designed strictly for defense purposes. The island's military has been slow to modernize due to its small budget, as the government has focused on the support of the economy and its domestic programs. However, with U.S support, the Taiwanese have been able to shift a small portion of their economy into acquisition of supplies for their military. These acquisitions serve as a deterrent for Chinese forces, giving the idea that Taiwan's forces would be able to fight off the mainland indefinitely. While Taiwan's military is largely composed of supplies given by the U.S, it is still able to perform some coastal operations to secure its maritime claims. In the event of a Chinese invasion of the island, the Taiwanese military would only be able to hold off the mainlanders for a few weeks at best (Tsang 2010). The reason this does not alarm the ROC is because it knows that the U.S would interfere in that situation, to both uphold peace in the region and maintain a Chinese suppression. Although Taiwan is aware that the U.S would likely interfere, it still continuously accepts more vessels from the U.S to bolster its naval capabilities. The island nation is dependent

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upon the steady flow of old U.S Coast Guard vessels at a fraction of the price in order to uphold its coastal security. If the U.S ever cut off support of the island, it would only be a matter of months before China attempted reunification.

The importance of Taiwan's territory is one of the most critical reasons behind China's aim at reunification. As China seeks to expand its natural resource network, the island of Taiwan stands in the way of clear and unopposed maritime dominance in the region. Taiwan's critical importance to the regions security is a result of its location in regards to trade routes, energy flow, and resource abundant sectors. Whether China will move forward with its maritime claims despite an autonomous Taiwan, will be the deciding factor in the South China Sea's geopolitical security.

Importance of Taiwan to the region

Taiwan is one of the most important islands in the Asia-Pacific region for its economic, military, and geopolitical importance. The location of Taiwan allows it to be a deployment area that provides oversight of the South China Sea. The control of Taiwan can essentially mean the control of the South China Sea trade routes. On this basis, China seeks control over Taiwan so that it may project influence over the South China Sea. From a security standpoint, Taiwan can serve one of two purposes: a component of the 1st belt containing China, or as an unsinkable aircraft carrier for China. The importance of Taiwan as a strategic point in the region is absolute, therefore the island is under constant threat and political pressure. To maintain peace in the region, Taiwan must remain autonomous to avoid Chinese control, but not sovereign so it can remain a contested region rather than an invaded one.

The economic importance of Taiwan is directly related to that of the South China Sea. To the international system, Taiwan maintaining its autonomy gives a slight sense of security

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regarding trade and energy flow for the region. In terms of trade the area sees about 5.3 trillion dollars in cargo sailing through the South China sea and on to the Pacific (Glaser 2015). The economic consequences associated with a Chinese invasion of Taiwan would result in deviation of routes to avoid conflict as well as increase in maritime insurance coverage. This would result in the damage of regional economies as well as increase transit times for goods and resources. The South China sea routes also provide a large amount of oil to the Pacific Hemisphere. According to the EIA (2013), the South China sea route accounted for one third of all seaborne oil transportation. The flow of this energy does not only affect the surrounding states but the globe as well. These trade and energy routes supply North America and South America with critical goods and resources. China is aware of the importance of these routes as it is also very dependent on these routes and seeks to secure them. China's dependence on the South China Sea for resources is outstandingly high. As the state shifted from an internal economy to a coastal one, most of its energy and resource needs are filled by foreign entities. The PRC seeks to change this through their Maritime Silk Road to ensure its needs are met regardless of any regional issues. The economic importance of Taiwan can be quantified using the South China Sea's assets. The influence and control that could be potentially had through Taiwan over the South China Sea Region not only concerns the economic assets of the region, but the security as well.

The impact that Taiwan has on the region's security is very high. Taiwan is the closest entity to the regional hegemony and is likely to be the first target for Chinese aggression. By securing Taiwan, China would have complete oversight of the South China sea trade routes. Taiwan also serves as a critical part of the 1st belt designed to contain China. There are three island chains described by both the U.S and China. The 1st island chain consists of Taiwan, the

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Philippines, Vietnam, Japan, and South Korea. The first chain is important because China seeks to secure the area it defines within the 1st island chain to counter U.S presence in the region and protect its coast (The dragon's new teeth 2012). The difference between chain definition between the U.S and China is the consideration of Taiwan. Under the U.S, Taiwan is considered the closest part of the chain to China and serves as a pivotal point for containment of the coastal power. However, under the Chinese definition of the 1st chain, Taiwan is not considered within the chain, as the PRC does not recognize Taiwan as a state. This lack of recognition of Taiwan as part of the containment chain serves as a basis for the idea that China seeks to secure Taiwan as it expands into the region. China has stated several times that it seeks to secure all of the territory within the 1st island chain to both secure its coast and to curve any U.S presence within the area. Taiwan's importance as a security asset for the region will be one of the factors that define how China will deal with maritime conflicts over the next few years. If China decides to move forward and secure Taiwan, the rest of the region will be on alert as it will realize that China is willing to use force to secure its claims, legitimate or not.

Taiwan's importance to the region can be quantified for its security and economic value. The PLAN seeks to recover its "runaway" province to ensure its coastal security. On the other side, the U.S and its regional allies seek to maintain Taiwan as an autonomous area to prevent the uncontrolled expansion of China. As for the economic component of Taiwan, its value comes from the proximity to the South China sea and for its potential maritime claims. If China were to secure Taiwan, the PLAN would be able to further expand and perhaps legitimize their claims and presence in contested areas.

Maritime claims

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Maritime claims in the Pacific are abundant, and three major claims include both China and Taiwan. Chinese maritime claims in the region surrounding Taiwan extend outwards to the Philippine sea and to the South China Sea. As for Taiwan, all its claims are simultaneously supported and contested by mainland China. The most notable claim by both China and Taiwan is that of the South China sea, which would include all disputed islands within the area. Other disputes include the Senkaku islands and the okinotorishima islands. While both Taiwan and China claim to have historical control over these claims, there is not enough evidence to support all their claims. However, with the expansion of military presence from China, the security of these disputed areas is uncertain.

China's commitment to secure their maritime interests in the region does not go without conflict from other states or entities. The PLAN's expansion into the disputed areas only serve to increase the tension between states. As the disputed areas are still not formally recognized in favor of any nation in the region, the claims for them continuously change. While these claims come from China, Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam and other Southeast Asian states, the focus for the regions security lies on China's and Taiwan's excessive claims. Their claims are all based on the nine-dashed line, which extends beyond 200 nautical miles. The claims are said to be part of their historical territory, however there is no real evidence to support them and are believed to be only claimed for their natural resources.

The smallest of the claims is Taiwan's over the okinotorishima island in the Philippine Sea. This claim is mainly over fishing rights surrounding the territory, which is also claimed by Japan. The island is disputed because of its unclear status as an island as most the land is submerged at high tide. Under UNCLOS, the claims from Japan are not completely legitimate but since the only other claimants are Taiwan and the Philippines, Japan is the only state that can

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afford to claim these waters. This is due to Taiwan's status as only an observer in the UN rather than being a state; and the Philippines inability to enforce any of its claims in the disputed area. Both Taiwan and the Philippines seek to fish these waters as well as explore the seabed for resources. However, Japan is the only real state that can afford to fund the seabed exploration. The importance behind Taiwan's claim is that it demonstrates the islands position on international presence. Though Taiwan's status as an observer in the U.N is clear that it does not have statehood, Taiwan still participates in international agreements and deals. In this case, Taiwan looks to establish its legitimacy as a state by claiming territory through the legal process of international rulings. If Taiwan's claims are recognized by the surrounding states, it would raise the international presence and even legitimacy of Taiwan. Despite Taiwan's claims over the dispute island, it describes Okinotorishima as a mere collection of rocks that cannot be described as an island under international law, and that the area should be treated as an international zone for exploration and fishing. However, Japan claims that the Okinotorishima island is not "merely rocks" but a legitimate island under Japanese ruling; which would mean that Japan would gain not only the island but the 200-nautical mile EEZ from it (Mie 2016). This island issue does not receive much attention due to the peaceful manner by which tensions are solved between these states. As compared to other disputed waters like the South China Sea or the Senkaku islands, Okinotorishima disputes as settled in court and result in fines and minor arrests that do not normally go out of hand. As for China's position on the island, it is quite hypocritical. About the Okinotorishima island, China's foreign ministry stated: "Japan has violated the UNCLOS by categorizing Okinotori as "island" for the purpose of claiming for EEZ and continental shelf based on that. China does not recognize the illegal assertion by Japan." (Panda 2016 p.1). This statement from mainland China is quite hypocritical due to China's movements and claims in the

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South China Sea. Regardless of China's opposition to the Japanese claims, Japan has already made several changes to the island to make it safer for use by fishing and seabed exploration companies. Okinotorishima island is the smallest of the three claims mentioned in this paper, but nonetheless it provides ample opportunity for Taiwan to branch out as an entity in the region.

The second set of claims that include Taiwan and China are the Senkaku islands off the coast of Taiwan. These islands carry more tension than the Okinotorishima island due to their economic and strategic value. The islands are claimed by the Japanese government, the People's Republic of China, and the Republic of China(Taiwan). Each claimant has their own title for the islands: Senkaku (Japan), Diaoyu (PRC), and Tiaoyutai (ROC). The Senkaku islands have been under Japanese control since 1895, which should place them as part of Japan's territory as per international law. However, both China and Taiwan claim the islands were originally Chinese territory. The economic qualities of the islands include: fish resources and non-living resources such as minerals, oil, and natural gas. The strategic value of the islands is its proximity to both the Chinese coast and the South China Sea. While most evidence points to the islands falling under Japanese ownership, protests in both Taiwan and China raise questions regarding the security and legal status of the Senkaku islands.

Japan, China, and Taiwan all argue the history of the islands and whom has true ownership. China and Taiwan both claim that the islands were part of the territory conquered by the Japanese during World War 2 that were supposed to be returned following the end of the war. Japan claims that it had ownership of the islands since 1895 after identifying the islands to be land belonging to no one. Japan has maintained control of the islands since then, including them in all territorial agreements with other states. One example of this is the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan, where these islands are listed

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amongst Japan's territorial holdings and would thus require U.S aid in the event that Japan defends them from a foreign entity. As compared to China and Taiwan who both have little to no evidence to support their claims. According to Professor Lee Seokwoo from the University of Incheon in South Korea, the Chinese claims are strictly in the interest of economics and territorial gain (Lee Seokwoo 2002). Both Taiwan and China did not begin to argue for the islands until after 1970 when it was discovered that the islands contained oil and gas reserves. In addition to the economic gains that China and Taiwan seek, the islands would also serve as strategic points for security control of the region. In regards to Taiwan and China, this maritime claim dispute is both a negative and positive event for their relations. What this means is that China does support Taiwan's claims over the Senkaku islands because the PRC considers the claims to benefit the Chinese; but also, does not approve of the Taiwanese claims as it does not recognize Taiwan as a state. The importance of this claim for Taiwan is that the islands lie closest to them at a short 170 kilometers, as compared to 330 kilometers from China and 410 kilometers from Japan. The islands are not only a regional strategic point but also pose a significant security threat to Taiwan if they were to fall under Chinese control. While these islands are critical to Taiwan's security as well as the region, the claims in the South China Sea possess a larger threat to Taiwan, the Asia-Pacific region, and even the globe.

The maritime claims from China and Taiwan in the South China Sea are the largest from any other entity in the region. China bases its claims in the area from the nine-dashed line. The nine-dashed line is a series of historical maps from China that claim almost all the South China Sea island clusters including the Paracel, Spratly islands, and Scarborough Shoal. This U-shaped line was originally created by the Republic of China in 1935 and adopted by the PRC following the change of government in mainland China in 1949. Though every state in the region claims

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part of the South China Sea, Taiwan and China are the only two governments that claim the entirety of the area. The claims from both the ROC and PRC are problems for the region for similar reasons. The economic value of the area is on par with its geopolitical value, the five trillion dollar trade route that passes through the middle of the South China sea provides both a service and a threat to the region.

The maritime claims from China over the South China Sea are the base for the prediction of several security threats from China. The Chinese mainland's dependence on the South China Sea route for domestic energy supply is a key factor in determining China's threat to the area. As China increases its naval capacity and presses the international community to recognize its claims in the South China sea, it is clear that their claims the area not for historical reasons; but in order to create influence in the region as well as control the vital supply route to both ensure its domestic supply and be able to cut off other dependents. The interest China has in the area is made evident through the PRC's deployment of submarines and commitment to establishing a secure presence in the South China Sea. The Chinese creation of artificial islands in the disputed waters is a clear sign that China seeks to secure the entire area whether through any means necessary. Through aerial images over the span of two years, the development of certain islands in the disputed area can be seen to have expanded not only into "peaceful" projects as the PRC government stated when asked about intentions in the area (Johnson 2015). These developed islands have not only ports, but airfields as well which has raises security concerns over China's presence in the South China Sea.

Compared to China, Taiwan's claims to the South China sea are almost insignificant. However, the small island entity makes the same claims as mainland China. The difference is that Taiwan does not have the ability to enforce any of its claims outside of developing islands in

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the area or occasionally deploying a coast guard vessel out into the disputed waters. Despite not having a large deployable fleet like China, Taiwan has been able to successfully claim a pair of islands in the Subi reef within the Spratly islands collection. The importance of the South China Sea maritime claims for Taiwan is both the proximity to its coast as well as preventing China from expanding its claims in the region. While Taiwan does not actively seek to deter Chinese growth in the region, it seeks to ensure its survival by making claims for waters it knows it cannot properly secure. This is to attempt to both authenticate itself as a state and prevent being surrounded by Chinese-controlled waters on all sides.

The nations surrounding the South China Sea including: Vietnam, Philippines, and Indonesia all reject China's claims over the South China Sea. While all of these states make smaller claims of their own, they are within the margins of international law. The area's states all dispute China's excessive claims by outlining the writing in UNCLOS that describes a maritime boundary as a stable and defined one (Gupta 2014). China has continuously changed its nine-dashed line claim to ten and eleven dashed lines, therefore the surrounding states dispute the changing border and refute any other claims from China that exceed the normal EEZ claims. While China disregards any challenges to its claims from either states or international courts, its increased pressure into the region has raised concerns from not only the states nearby, but from the United States as well.

U.S Foreign Policy regarding Taiwan

The U.S and Taiwan have had a long relationship dating back to the evacuation of the Republic of China to Taiwan. While the U.S currently maintains an unofficial relationship with Taiwan, the U.S classifies the island as part of the containment strategy for China. While the U.S does not support Taiwanese independence, it is committed to upholding the peaceful discussions

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between China and Taiwan. As for security in the region, Taiwan's autonomy has allowed the U.S to actively deploy in the area to implement its "freedom of navigation" maneuvers. Without Taiwan, the U.S would have to deal with a much more maneuverable Chinese force.

The history of relations between Taiwan and the U.S has focused mainly on countering a growing China. When the Communists drove out the Nationalist party from mainland China in 1949, the U.S was present to prevent an invasion on Taiwan. The U.S would deploy an aircraft carrier group to the Taiwan strait to deter China from attacking the small island. Per the U.S Department of State, the U.S assisted Taiwan with economic relief for two decades until Taiwan could develop a booming economy. At this time the U.S was committed to containing communism wherever it went, and Taiwan was one of the most at-risk locations. Regardless of the small size of Taiwan, the U.S realized that even a small location like Taiwan could serve as the first component of a belt of nations designed to contain China. Grouped together with South Korea, Japan, and the Philippines, Taiwan was part of the first level of the belt strategy the U.S had developed to prevent China's influence from spreading.

The United States official position on Taiwanese independence is that it does not support it. The shift in 1979 from recognizing Taiwan as the real China to recognizing the mainland as the new China was strategic to recover some of the shattered pieces left by the Cold War. As Chinese-Soviet relations grew tense in the mid-seventies, the U.S wanted to separate the two allies and thus recognized Beijing as the true seat of power for China. This in turn isolated Taiwan and raised concerns over how long it would remain autonomous without U.S backing. Prior to the 1979 U.S recognition of Beijing, the U.S had a mutual defense treaty with Taiwan; the next year it would be terminated. Despite the loss of formal protection from the U.S, Taiwan was still able to secure economic and arms deals with the U.S. As the small island grew in

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technology, it would export immense amount of computer technology and industrial components to the U.S. In return, the U.S provided weapons at a wholesale price. The most recent sale of weaponry from the U.S was in the large amount of 1.83 billion dollars for defensive equipment (China warns against first major US-Taiwan arms 2015). While China disagrees with this arms trade, it cannot do anything about it. This is due to the six assurances made by the U.S. The six assurances include: There is no date for ending arms sale to Taiwan. The U.S will not agree to meetings with China regarding the arms sales to Taiwan. The U.S will not mediate between the PRC & ROC. The U.S does not agree to change the Taiwan relations act. The U.S will not alter its position on the status of Taiwan as a state. The U.S will not pressure Taiwan into negotiations with the mainland (Holdridge 1982). These assurances made by the U.S government would all but make Taiwan a prime target for a Chinese invasion. However, the U.S did not leave Taiwan completely isolated, because in 2001 President Bush stated that the U.S would be obligated to come to Taiwan's aid if it was attacked. While this statement from a commander-in-chief did bring a glimmer of hope for defense of Taiwan, a shift in American foreign policy has all but extinguished it. For decades, the norm for presidents has been to all but ignore the island of Taiwan in an official capacity; all in favor of improving relations with China. Though the new U.S president has accepted a congratulatory phone call from the president of Taiwan, the U.S is not likely to defend Taiwan if attacked. While the U.S maintains a strong presence in the Asia Pacific region, if China invades Taiwan, the U.S will not risk a full-scale conflict.

International status of Taiwan

Taiwan's status in the international system is clear without any change within the foreseeable future. The negative consequences associated with Taiwanese statehood would affect the Asia Pacific region as well as the globe. Despite a heavy push from the internal population

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for independence from China, the Taiwanese government is hesitant to pursue full sovereignty. This is mainly due to the pressure it faces from the Chinese mainland and the international community. Despite vibrant trade deals with states around the globe, full support for Taiwanese independence only comes from small state with no real global influence. No large power or western state will ever support an outright Taiwanese independence for fear of what China would do in such an event.

The Republic of China (Taiwan) argues that it was never replaced or taken over by another government since it maintains its existence. Taiwan's government continually states that it is the real government of all of China even though no major power recognizes that claim. Although this position changes with every election of a president, as popularity continually shifts between support or contest of China. The current president, Tsai Ing-wen, ran her campaign on the base of Taiwanese independence. As she took office she pulled back on completely calling for independence and shifted to pursuing a democratic process for Taiwan's independence (Solomon 2016). The democratic party in Taiwan is highly supportive of independence from China or at least maintaining its current autonomy without interference from China. Taiwanese sovereignty is only supported by small states and the internal population, though there is still division.

The Taiwanese population continually shifts its stance on independence from China. While the majority is for the separation from China, there is a still many Taiwanese who wish to reunite with the mainland. The supporters of independence say that the island is independent as it was never a part of the Chinese territory until claimed in the 1930's and so the current government in Taiwan is the sole entity controlling the island. Those who wish to reunify with China have the economic and security benefit of doing so. If Taiwan were to reunify with China,

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it would no longer face the threat of invasion from the mainland, as well as be under the protection of the expanding PLA navy. As for the economic benefits, Taiwan would see a boost in its exports and imports as production would increase within the island from expanded labor force, and orders from the mainland. The only real issue that Taiwan would face if reunified with the mainland would be the new government as there would likely be an ousting of the current Taiwanese government in favor of a Communist Party one. As the Taiwanese are not supportive of the restrictive practices of China's government it is unlikely that Taiwan would agree to reunification so easily.

While Taiwan's internal division pushes mainly towards independence, the international community does not support these actions. Only small island states such as the Solomon Islands, the Marshall Islands, Palau, and 19 other small states. These supporters are not nearly enough to legitimize a Taiwanese state, no large state supports their independence and for good reason. As highlighted earlier, Taiwan's critical importance to the region is served by remaining a disputed zone and essentially a buffer region between China and the South China Sea. All the surrounding countries in the region support the autonomy of the state, but are hesitant to accept its sovereignty because it will contest China's claims and perhaps provoke aggression from the coastal hegemony.

Predictions and analysis

The maritime expansion and aggression from China embody the threat and commitment from the nation to expand into the Pacific region. The first step into doing so would be the conquest of Taiwan. Chinese influence of international politics is key to the impending reunification battle to come. While China's full commitment to the invasion of Taiwan is not yet

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clear; through the development in their foreign policy objectives and clear expansion into the South China Sea, the invasion of Taiwan will occur within the next twenty years.

There are several events that will occur prior to a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. This includes the blockade of Taiwan, international pressure on other states legitimize action, a public relations campaign to garner more domestic support, cyber warfare against Taiwan, small military raids, and eventually full scale invasion. Some of these events have already occurred in the past and are likely to be reimplemented in preparation for invasion, and the international community will not likely interfere when this occurs. A blockade of Taiwan would result in a drastic change for the regions security. Despite warnings from the U.S, China has deployed its navy out into the South China sea on several occasions to expand its maritime claims. Since Taiwan is located near China's coast, China looks to secure the island prior to expanding further into the South China Sea. The Chinese Navy has drafted several plans for the capture of Taiwan, including a preliminary blockade of the island to reduce imports into the area (Rosen 2014). Although a blockade is consistent with having a large quantity of vessels off the coast of an area, China looks to position naval vessels near key routes in order deter Taiwan-bound vessels. The vessels would be then diverted to the mainland, to be inspected then sent back to their port of origin. China has also considered the use of military exercises as another form of blockade. By deploying military assets to an area, vessels would be deterred from sailing into an area in fear of accidentally getting caught up in a weapons test or practice maneuver from Chinese forces. The possibility of pursuing a blockade option is high due to China's commitment to reclaiming the island region.

Other options that China is looking to pursue include the use of cyber-attacks and media sources. While China currently focuses on expanding its military strength and tightening its grip

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on the region, it has internally discussed possible uses of media related attacks whether it be through public relations campaigns or internet-based attacks on government websites. China will likely commit to this strategy long before considering a physical attack on Taiwan. Taiwan will be under cyber-attack for a long period of time from China, which will likely result in morale decline and hesitation to declare independence on Taiwan's part (Easton 2014). By using disinformation tactics as well as focusing on influencing Taiwan's ideology through its population, China may possibly shift public support on the island in its favor. However, it is very unlikely due to the popularity of the democratic party in Taiwan. Regardless of that, China will continuously commit cyber-attacks on government websites to both undermine the Taiwanese government and frustrate the population into questioning the ability of their government to provide security. These cyber-attacks would focus on military, political, and economic targets that would undermine the strength of Taiwan before committing to small strikes.

After committing several small media attacks on Taiwan, China would begin its small-scale efforts against Taiwan. Attacks from the mainland would begin in apprehensions of sailors and individuals on the coastal waters of Taiwan. This would then result in protests from Taiwan, with attempts to petition other states for legal assistance. In this event, Taiwan would claim that China had illegally detained its citizens; however, with Chinese influence being so high, the international system would likely be in China's favor. China's argument that it was only dealing with an internal issue would suffice to deter any international claims. The resulting lack of international support would leave Taiwan isolated and open the door for China to commit bolder actions such as capture and seize vessels from Taiwan or even a small strike on the island. This would be a powerful statement on China's part since it would mean that the region would see China's commitment to aggression. While none of the surrounding states have a defense treaty

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with Taiwan, they would likely look to bolster their own defenses. This would not assist Taiwan, but it would make more challenges for China's future. By committing small acts as these, China would simply increase their tenacity with each act eventually resulting in more radical incidents. After a few months of arresting Taiwanese citizens, seizing vessels, and blatantly pressuring Taiwan, China would seek to find any excuse to move forces onto the island. The most likely of events would be a group of frustrated Taiwanese acting against China which would yield China their excuse to move into the area. Any form of protest or aggression from Taiwan's part would only serve the Chinese's military's goals; which would then be to retaliate against Taiwan. While the response would be small at first, China would eventually commit to raids on the islands to ease an impending invasion. Due to Taiwan's miniscule military, China would likely focus on air raids on military installations throughout the island (Rosen 2014). This would be done through all of China's forces that are located on the South-eastern coast that would double as the invasion force for a full-scale attack. After continuous Chinese raids, military installations and the domestic population's will would be decimated.

China would then eventually begin its invasion through amphibious forces to a decimated Taiwan. After having all its military installations attacked, Taiwan would be broken down to a small resistance force that would not be able to hold off the Chinese. In a report by Chinese military analysts, several plans were made if a Chinese invasion would become a reality. The report laid out the time, international response and Taiwanese response to such an event. The reports all had similar findings in that if China could secure a beachhead on Taiwan, the island would be lost within a few days: "if China establishes a beach head, it would enjoy a substantial manpower advantage over the Taiwanese military: China has 400,000 troops positioned around the Strait, compared to 130,000 total combat soldiers in Taiwan's standing army." (Rosen 2014).

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However, China would be able to hold off Chinese forces at least for a few days due to its impressive arsenal. While Taiwan's offensive capabilities are nearly non-existent, its defensive assets are a result of constant purchases of American armament. The most recent sale consisted of 1.83 billion dollars' worth of weapons (Cohen 2015). The sale consisted of anti-ship, anti-air, and anti-personnel weaponry based on Taiwan's defensive needs. The Chinese military would face some sense of resistance but eventually succeed in capturing the island. While this scenario is still several years away, the mere fact that China has prepared for over a decade for its occurrence does present a warning of the impending attack.

By using a Probability-Impact matrix, a value can be placed on the likelihood of China invading Taiwan over the next two decades. This matrix considers the likelihood of an event occurring and weighs that value against the effect of the event to determine the threat value. In this case the threat is a Chinese invasion of Taiwan within the next two decades. The scale for each value is one through five, and are then multiplied for a value between 1-25; the higher the value, the more likely an event is as well impactful. For the probability of this event, it would be valued at a five. This is due to China's clear commitment to reunifying the island to its territory. Chinese officials have even released statements outlining that even though it will pursue democratic options at the moment it will not wait indefinitely (O' Hanton 2000). The Chinese government has even approved military plans for invading Taiwan if the need arises, even resulting in attempting to interfere with Taiwanese elections in the year 2000. The build-up of the Chinese military also contributes to the probability as the PLAN seeks to expand its capabilities to both expand influence in the region and protect its maritime interests. The probability is listed this high because the invasion of Taiwan is inevitable. The impact of this event would also be placed at a five. This is due to the loss of life that would occur and the

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regional effect of Chinese physical aggression. The loss of life would be immense due to China's advanced weapons that could wipe out any Taiwanese resistance and likely cause collateral damage. Normally the loss of life would value at about a three, but due to the regional effects, it must be higher. If Taiwan is conquered by China, the surrounding states would likely increase their military capacities, increasing the probability of another conflict further in the future. As for the economic impact of the event, the loss of Taiwan would result in a decline of technology to the U.S and loss of revenue in weapons sales to the island. Then the loss of Taiwan would also remove the first barrier containing China from further claiming the South China Sea and controlling the sea routes that run through the vicinity of Taiwan. As China expands its power as a maritime hegemony, the inevitable threat to Taiwan looms closer, with a final rating of 25 out of 25 on the Probability -Impact Matrix.

Policy and security recommendations

There are four recommendations that can be made in regards to a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. The first would be to have a U.S intervention to stop China from completing its conquest of Taiwan. This would be the most extreme of solutions as it would likely result in a global conflict and a break in U.S-China relations. There is also the lack of formal U.S commitment to Taiwan. While Taiwan and the U.S share a lucrative partnership, there is no formal declaration of protection. Despite no formal commitment to Taiwan, the U.S would see some pressure into intervention due to the allies in the region. If Taiwan was invaded and the U.S did nothing, real U.S allies in the region will question the U.S over its ability to defend its partners. Another concern with this solution would be the immense challenge that China would be as a military force. While a current Chinese military would not defeat the U.S, the invasion would not take place until China believes it is ready to indefinitely capture Taiwan. By that time,

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it is theorized that China will have a military comparable to the U.S. That concern is most evident in the creation of more modernized military forces in China. The current president of China, Xi Jinping, has consolidated power and increased the government acquisition and modernization abilities in regards to the military (Lockie 2016). The creation of a Chinese JS-19 fighter jet has rivaled the American F-22 and even the F-35, which is considered to be the most advanced fighter in the world. The U.S would also lack military capacity for the region due to its focus on global deployment. Even though the U.S has a large modern force, the military is spread throughout the globe focusing on other threats; and consolidating forces in time to counter China would allow Taiwan to be lost. China's ability to deploy near its coast would give it the advantage in the scenario. Therefore, a U.S intervention would not be the best recommendation but it could possibly prevent China from invading Taiwan if threatened.

The second option would be to petition the United Nations into intervening or passing a resolution recognizing Taiwan as a state. This recommendation would not likely deter China from completing its invasion and disregarding all U.N claims, but it would give Taiwan a legitimate basis for asking for help abroad. However, the issue with this recommendation is that China's influence in the international community is very large and any kind of legislation or initiative would be halted by Chinese-affiliated countries. Thus, China would be able to successfully complete its conquest before the U.N can act. While the possibility exists that the U.N may convince China from invading Taiwan, it would only be temporary.

The third recommendation would be to internationally mediate talks between Taiwan and China to result in making the island an autonomous zone. This would be similar to the autonomous zone that Hong Kong was, and a time limit would be placed to give Taiwan a chance to shift into Chinese rule. This recommendation would concede China its claim over

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Taiwan and likely only repeat itself in the South China Sea; but it would prevent large conflict in the region and save Taiwan from attack.

The fourth recommendation which would likely be the best, would be assembling and legalizing a regional defense initiative with U.S allies in the region and Taiwan. Since such an international group as this would not need sovereignty to assemble, Taiwan could be included and therefore result in China's plans being halted. If Taiwan had formal support in the region, it would be able to remain an autonomous area until a more suitable plan arose for countering Chinese aggression. The problems with this recommendation would be if China continued its conquest regardless of the implications and resulted in only bringing in more states to the conflict. This would not likely occur due to the massive conflict it would cause and because China would be able to determine that it would eventually lose a conflict against the whole region. Aside from that, the only other issue would be following arms-race that would begin between China and the regional coalition. As far as geopolitical security would go, the region would remain stable if neither entity became aggressive.

The Chinese maritime threat will only continue to expand until it culminates in the invasion of Taiwan. The expansion of Chinese power in the region supports the claim that China seeks to expand its maritime assets throughout the region. The commitment from China to reunify Taiwan into its territory is a clear sign that aggression will occur within the next two decades. As the focus of the PRC's government shifts from outward expansion to securing its coastal area, Taiwan will inevitably face the aggression that has been seen in the South China Sea. While Taiwan remains a disputed region, the international community will continuously remain neutral and likely allow China to have its way. Regardless of the U.S presence in the region, China's growing capacity as a military power brings into question the ability of the U.S

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to protect its allies. As the Probability- Impact matrix values the Chinese invasion at its max value, the only question that remains to be answered is when during the next two decades will Taiwan be 'reunified' with China.

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