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Is Obama's 'Pivot to Asia' Enough to Maintain US Influence in East Asia? A look at Security Issues and the Senkaku Islands Dispute.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree
in International Relations (Honours) at the University of Malta

April 2015

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Abstract

The 20th century has been defined as the American Century, however, the history of the 21st century will be written in Asia.

Today East Asia is home to a third of the world's population and includes some of the world's largest economies. Hence the US has placed more emphasis on the region, to strengthen its economic ties and to show its long term allies that it has not forgotten about them. Disengagement from the Middle East and the rise of China has meant that the US has again turned its focus to the Asia-Pacific and East Asia, a region rife with old, long seated distrust and territorial disputes.

The dissertation will focus on how the US is executing its 'Pivot to Asia' focusing on the many security issues which it must deal with, both those involving its allies and those involving its strategic rivals. All while trying to maintain its influence over East Asia in the face of a rising China.

Whilst the US is welcomed by some and unwelcomed by others, the dissertation will try and determine whether the US's renewed interest will contribute to the prosperity of East Asia or whether the US will again be bogged down in a region where it is not welcomed.

Declaration of Authenticity

I hereby declare that I am the legitimate author of this Dissertation and that it is my original work.

No portion of this work has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or institution of learning.

Signature of Student

Name of Student (in Caps)

Date

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my tutor, Ms. Valentina Cassar B.A. (Hons.), M. Litt. (Aberd.) for her instrumental assistance. Her continuous guidance and support were vital for me to develop my research and eventually finish this study. Her help has been invaluable and greatly appreciated.

A very special thank you goes to my family, most notably my parents. I owe them an immense amount of gratitude for their loyalty, support and optimism throughout the years. This dissertation is dedicated to them, in the hope that I managed to make them proud.

Steve Micallef

April 2015

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List of Acronyms and Terms

A2/AD – Anti- Access/Area Denial

ADIZ – Air Defence and Identification Zone

APEC – Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation

ASEAN – Association of Southeast Asian Nations

ASM – Anti-Ship Missile

ASW – Anti-Submarine Warfare

BMD – Ballistic Missile Defence

East Asia – The US Department of State considers East Asia to include all countries East of Burma and West of Samoa (fig. 2) and are managed under the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs. The dissertation adopts this meaning when referring to the region.

East Asia – Geographically East Asia includes the countries of China, Japan, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea and Taiwan.

Southeast Asia – Geographically Southeast Asia includes the countries of Brunei, Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

FDI – Foreign Direct Investment

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

GWoT – Global War on Terror

ICJ – International Court Of Justice

IFV – Infantry Fighting Vehicles

JASDF – Japan Air Self-Defence Force

JMSDF – Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force

JSDF – Japan Self-Defence Force

MEU – Marine Expeditionary Unit

PLA – People’s Liberation Army

PLAN – People’s Liberation Army Navy

PRC/PROC – People’s Republic of China, colloquially known as China

R&D – Research and Development

RIMPAC – Rim of the Pacific Exercise

ROC – Republic of China, better known as Taiwan

SLBM – Submarine-launched Ballistic Missiles

SSBN – Ballistic Missile Submarine, Nuclear

TPP – Trans-Pacific Partnership

UNCLOS – United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

US/USA – United States of America

USAF – United States Air Force

USMC – United States Marine Corps

USN – United States Navy

USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics or Soviet Union

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Aims, Objectives and Background

East Asia is home to two billion people or 30% of the world's population (World Population Data Sheet, 2014), and boasts the world's largest and most successful modern economies. For this reason the United States has always been interested in this part of the world; it has a long history of involvement here, and today plays a major role in the region. This dissertation will focus on US influence in East Asia, specifically how Barrack Obama's so called 'Pivot to Asia' aims at keeping the US at the heart of the region.

After ten years of focus on the Middle East with wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the Global War on Terror, Barrack Obama came to the Presidency with the idea of shifting US attention to East Asia, a region which offers many opportunities. Economically East Asia has vast markets and potential; offering immense opportunities for trade, investment and technology which President Obama is determined to exploit to further expand the American economy. Militarily East Asia is a region where the US has invested significant energy and resources in the last 70 years and is home to both long term allies: Japan and South Korea, and rivals: North Korea and China.

To this end this dissertation looks at the historic role the US has played vis-à-vis the other nations in the region and how the rise of China is threatening to upset the 'balance' which exists with an emphasis on security issues in an area that is full of flash points which can potentially lead to war. Indeed many have argued that one of the underlining causes for the shift in focus is the fact that the last thirty years have seen the rise of the economic giant that is China. Today we are living in a world where China is the world's second largest economy (BBC, Dec 2014) and where it is increasingly

flexing its muscles in both regional and global affairs that are threatening US hegemony and the unipolar world order.

At the heart of the dissertation is the discourse surrounding the 'Pivot to Asia', with emphasis on security issues. The dissertation looks at the intentions of President Obama's shift, the scale of the rebalance, the advantages gained from this shift and the criticism surrounding the 'Pivot to Asia'. The US pivot 'on the ground' has meant the deployment of troops and assets to the region, together with the reinforcing of security commitments and a renewed push to pursue friendly ties. These actions are discussed at length, with the hope of providing an accurate picture of US action in Asia and try to determine whether these are enough to guarantee US influence.

Despite the obvious emphasis on the US and China this dissertation also looks at a number of players in the East Asia region. This was done to show that; US and Chinese actions do not exist in a vacuum and, more importantly, that the US cannot maintain influence here if it is not welcomed. This means that the dissertation will focus on both long term US allies like Japan, Taiwan and the Philippines but also on countries like Vietnam, which traditionally are not considered as US allies. What all these countries have in common however is outstanding issues with China which has meant that the US rebalance to Asia was welcomed by these countries as an initiative that will counter China's growing power and guarantee the rule of law and the protection of shipping lanes in the East and South China Seas.

1.2. Dissertation Outline

The dissertation is divided into eight chapters, each chapter discusses a different aspect of the 'Pivot to Asia'. The following chapter will treat US history in the context of East Asia and the Asia Pacific, this is done by giving some background on the US

position in East Asia. The Historical Context Chapter will look at the involvement of the US since the opening of Japan by Commodore Perry in 1854 until the end of the Cold War. Each period brought with it renewed challenges for the US which it was able to overcome. Similarly today the US is facing new challenges in East Asia.

This is followed by a literature review which analyses the literature surrounding the US 'Pivot to Asia', specifically the writings of analysts and authors, together with critique and policy documents. The idea is to give an insight into the challenges and problems facing the US in Asia and how the US aims to overcome these challenges. Specifically, the literature review looks at the discourse surrounding Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) strategies and the viewpoints of the different players regarding the 'Pivot to Asia'. Criticism is discussed both in regard to the validity of the Pivot itself and the means taken to achieve it.

The fourth chapter will treat theory and methodology. In this chapter two theories, the Security Dilemma and the Theory of Hegemonic Stability are examined and applied to the situation in East Asia. This is done to try and determine the possible future of East Asia in the context of renewed US interests in the region. This is followed by a Methodology where the tools and techniques used to write the dissertation are mentioned so that the research can be better understood together with an overview of the case studies and the techniques used. This section also mentions the difficulties encountered when researching the dissertation and how they were overcome.

The fifth chapter analyses the 'Pivot to Asia' in more detail; it looks at the actions of the US 'on the ground', rather than focusing on policy or strategy documents. Of importance in this chapter is the role that the various countries play and how the US is engaging China, not solely on its own initiatives, but also through the use of third

parties and multilateral talks. Emphasis is placed on security issues, territorial disputes and the protection of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in the China Seas. A brief mention of the economic importance of East Asia is also undertaken, most notably the importance of the TPP and willingness of the Obama administration to undertake such an agreement. Together with this, the 'Pivot to Asia' is looked at as not solely a new concept that President Obama created but rather a continuation of the work of previous administrations; since 1989 US administrations have always had an East Asia aspect which some Presidents pursued to a great extent, but others chose to ignore.

The sixth and seventh chapters are the case studies where two specific issues are looked at and analysed. These were specifically chosen to demonstrate the involvement of the US in the region and complements the work done in the theory chapter.

The first case study will focus on the effects of China's military rise, specifically focusing on the impact of the increased capabilities of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and how the region is in the grips of an arms race. Countries are increasingly re-arming and modernising their armed forces in an attempt to counter China's massive military build-up. Emphasis is placed on the countries which have outstanding issues with China and the case study aims to establish a general trend in the re-arming of East Asia. Most importantly the role of the US in re-arming said region is scrutinised.

The second case study will focus on the Senkaku Islands and the role that the US is playing in the dispute, and how it differs from the territorial disputes in the South China Sea. The Senkaku Islands saga is of particular interest since they are one of the few instances where China was unable to occupy a territory claimed by another country. A

point of interest is also the fact that the US, Japan and, to a certain extent, Taiwan are presenting a common front against Chinese aggression. The case study can in itself be used as an example by the countries in the South China Sea of how to deter further Chinese aggression.

In the eighth, and final chapter, the findings of the dissertation are summed up and a conclusion is derived to answer the research question, followed by the opinions of the author. Possible gaps in the research which could not be addressed for various reasons are hereby mentioned. The importance of East Asia, both to US foreign policy and to the world in general, is established.

Chapter 2

Historical Context

The US has a long history of involvement in East Asia going back more than 150 years. In this context a rebalance towards Asia is nothing new, indeed the US undertook similar rebalances at different intervals during its existence. This chapter aims to provide some historical context to the presence of the US in East Asia today and show that the US has maintained a strong presence in the region for the last century and a half.

Historically, US expansion has always been westwards not only in terms of territorial annexation and acquisitions but also in colonial terms. This was due to a number of reasons, chief amongst which is the fact that as a country formed in 1783 (when the Treaty of Paris was signed and officially recognised the US) it is a rather modern nation when compared with the European nations which had colonised it. In this sense the US, flanked by the European nations to the East had to look westward for expansion. This resulted in the US expanded first to the shores of the Pacific and then in the later part of the 19th century beyond them to Asia.

Economically the US became involved in East Asia in the 19th Century. Alongside other European nations it benefited from treaty ports which were open to foreign trade after the defeat of China in the First Opium War. In 1842 the Americans gained access to Shanghai in Central China and in 1876 to the port of Beihai in Southern China. However US involvement was limited to these ports. The US did not seek to acquire leased territory unlike the other powers. Instead it focused its effort on opening trade with Japan, which at the time had effectively isolated itself and its trade was limited to its neighbours and, occasionally, the Dutch. The US government realised the potential of establishing a relationship with Japan and in 1853 commissioned Commodore

Matthew Calbraith Perry to take a fleet to Japan and establish diplomatic relations with the Japanese Government whatever the cost. Against the threat of naval bombardment and over two trips Perry negotiated the opening of Japan and in 1854 signed the Japan-US Treaty of Peace and Amity that opened a number of ports to US trade and established a permanent US consul. This can be considered as the start of US involvement in East Asia, in a move that for the first time was not a catching up to the actions of the other European powers, but rather a unique initiative aimed at offsetting the late arrival of the US in Asia.

It was also during this period that the US first got involved in Taiwan. Commodore Perry on his way to Japan saw the advantages of the island and proposed setting up a base there. In the late 1850s there was talk of either conquering or outrightly purchasing the island, however US policy at the time did not involve the acquisition of land in East Asia (Long, 1991: 18).

The 1890s were an important period for the US in the Asia-Pacific. In 1893 the US overthrew the native government of Hawaii, resulting in the annexation of the territory in 1896 and in 1898, during the Spanish-American War, the US also acquired the Philippines from Spain. Other territorial possessions in the Pacific included various smaller islands like the Midway Islands, Johnston Atoll, American Samoa, Jarvis Island, Howland Island and Wake Island, all located in the Mid Pacific. Today these possessions are still territories of the US but are mostly uninhabited or maintained as military outposts. Control over the Philippines was especially useful due to the geographic location of the islands; near the Asian mainland but still at a considerable distance, meaning that its ports were well protected. Later these possessions proved to be indispensable, with the construction of the Panama Canal 1881 - 1914, increasing US accessibility to the Asia-Pacific. The Spanish-American War served to establish

the US as a major maritime power capable of operating anywhere in the world (US Pacific Fleet Website).

The start of the 20th century saw further expansion of US interests in Asia. In 1907 the Asiatic and Pacific Squadrons merged and in 1922 a restructuring of the US Pacific and Atlantic Fleets was undertaken in the Pacific where the main body of fighting ships was stationed, a first for the US navy (*Ibid.*) representing what was in fact a rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific. Due to its late entry into WWI the US did not see action in the Pacific, the only substantial campaign undertaken here during the first part of the 20th century was the Philippine–American War (1899–1902) where the Navy played an important role. Apart from this the US role in the region was purely an economic one during this period.

This however changed with the onset of WWII. For the first time the US faced a number of unique challenges, as it had to divide its forces between the Atlantic and the Pacific, whilst conducting a campaign alone against the Empire of Japan, which involved assaulting small Japanese held islands across the Pacific as a preparation of an assault on the main islands of Japan which was labelled as the 'Island-hopping campaign'. The campaign involved the retaking of the Philippines, Guam and the Mariana islands amongst others, which would become important strategic US bases after the war. The defeat of Japan resulted in the US gaining bases in Japan and the start of a close alliance between the two which is still in force today.

After the war the US became increasingly involved in East Asia in the ongoing ideological struggle against the USSR. Indeed WWII highlighted the difficulties of waging war across two oceans, something which the US would have to again undertake if the cold war turned hot. This was further aggravated by the advent of

SLBM, resulting in the need to adopt a new naval strategy. This new strategy would encompass the lessons of WWII operations and would involve controlling strategic choke points; prohibiting the transition of Soviet vessels from the Barents Sea into the Atlantic, control of the Strait of Malacca in the Pacific and limiting Chinese Naval activity to the China Seas. Together with this was the use of airpower, based at the many US possessions in the Pacific and Asia, as vital in finding and destroying Soviet vessels especially Soviet nuclear submarines which could launch directly on the US (Polmar and Moore, 2005). In the early stages of the Cold War the relationship with China was soured by the fact that a communist revolution took place resulting in the US and its allies being outnumbered in the Asia-Pacific region, having to fight both the USSR and the Republic of China (PRC), however this did not last long as tensions between the USSR and the PRC resulted in the Sino-Soviet Split during the 1960s.

The importance of bases and naval assets to project power in East Asia was demonstrated during the US involvement in the Korean and Vietnam War. In both cases US bases in Japan and the US Navy (USN) were vital in supporting and supplying troops on the ground. This was followed by huge expenditure by the US to expand and upgrade its bases in Japan, Korea, the Philippines and elsewhere. Together with this was the US position of not recognising the PRC, which had a communist regime in place, and instead recognising the Taiwan (RoC) as the legitimate China.

In the 1960s and 70s the situation still did not look entirely favourable as the US lost more of the region to communism; South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. However in the 1970s this was offset by the opening of relations with China, thanks to the work of the Nixon Administration and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. It was this event that laid the foundation for the Sino-US economic and diplomatic ties we see today. In effect

the recognition of Communist China by the US opened China to the world and transformed it into the factory of the world. In the context of the Cold War the relation between China and the US meant that China was denied to the USSR and it would not get involved in a Soviet-US struggle. In 1979 there was official recognition by the US of the PRC, much to the condemnation of Taiwan. In many ways the situation in the region today is a legacy of the Cold War, East Asia was a region where the Cold War was actively being waged.

The end of the Cold War and the economic growth of the region as a whole, has meant that the US has become more intertwined with the region. Today it maintains diplomatic relations with most states even those still under Communist rule. US policy today does not exist in a vacuum but is influenced by past actions. The irony being that the US which opened relations with China to further isolate and contain the USSR, is today very much engaging with Communist China. In a region where the US, China and its neighbours have a lot of outstanding issues, ranging from human rights abuse to territorial dispute to currency manipulation, the US is welcomed at the discussion table as a mediator and a counter to the strong position that China enjoys in the region.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

3.1. Introduction

This literature review is intended to analyse the presence of the US in East Asia, looking at the challenges which the US faces in the region, including the commitments to its allies and containing the rise of China which is looking to become the hegemon in the region while also taking into account the other main players. After being embroiled for more than a decade in wars in the Middle East, with arguable results, the US is looking to shift its emphasis to other regions of the globe, representing a shift in policy from a focus on the Middle East and Europe to a focus on Asia.

The phrase 'Pivot to Asia' became popular after then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton used it in an article called 'America's Pacific Century' (2011). Subsequently the terms 'pivot' and 'rebalance' became buzzwords signifying this shift in American foreign policy. Clinton outlined the importance of the Asia-Pacific region for the US and why such a shift was justifiable. Amongst these she mentions the fact that the region is home to almost half of the world's population representing an economic interest and a growing consumer base for American firms, reassuring its allies in the region, including Japan and South Korea against a nuclear North Korea and balancing the rise of China. According to Clinton this has to be achieved by strengthening the already existing bilateral security alliances that the US maintains in the region and consolidating the already broad US military presence to reassure allies and meet future challenges. These points were further elaborated upon by a speech that President Obama gave to the Australian parliament in 2011 (Obama, 2011) where he stated "Our enduring interests in the region demand our enduring presence in the region. The United States

is a Pacific power, and we are here to stay”, showing the importance and the effort that his administration is taking to widen US presence in the region.

This shift has been met with mixed success. Renewed turmoil in the Middle East and unexpected events in North Africa and Eastern Europe meant that the US could not completely focus on Asia. Many have welcomed this shift and applauded its aims whilst others question the methods undertaken despite agreeing in principle that a rebalance was needed, ultimately questioning whether the efforts of the Obama administration are enough to guarantee success. Others still question if this rebalance comes at the expense of US commitments elsewhere, notably in Europe, or if a rebalance towards Asia was ever needed at all. This literature review aims to evaluate these concerns.

3.2. The US and Asia

Michael Cox (2012) states that although the US has been a major power in the Pacific region since 1941, its place has never been really secure; its loss of China to communism, the loss of North Korea and finally the loss of Vietnam during the Cold War undermined its position. Cox argues that it was only with the end of the Cold War that the US firmly established itself in the region. Still more than twenty years after the end of the Cold War, debate rages on regarding the role of the US in the region. This in the context of the Global War on Terror (GWOt) and the 2008 financial crisis. Despite all this he still firmly believes that the US will remain a major player, for the time being for three reasons. Firstly it is a welcomed player in the region – it is welcomed by China as a force that brings stability to the region, vital for its ‘peaceful rise’, while Japan and South Korea continually look at the US for guidance and protection with the US presence ensuring South Korea’s continued existence. Secondly the current stability in the region does not mean that the region can do without US interference, the US will

remain to safeguard its growing economic interest while at the same time ensuring that states in the region remain in its sphere of influence. The third reason, according to Cox, is the fact that players in the region have fewer doubts regarding the US's intention than they do about their neighbours. Despite the setting up of a new (current) Asian order, the legacy of the region's bloody past still lives on.

Ashley J. Tellis (2013) examines the irony of the rise of China. He mentions that there could not have been a powerful China without a powerful US sustaining the international economic order which allowed China's peaceful rise. In return China has become completely integrated in the international economic system. According to Tellis the idea should be of balancing and not containing China. The reference being that the US cannot take up the same policy of containment that it did with the USSR, where a trade relationship between the US and the USSR was non-existent and this is where the importance of balancing comes in according to Tellis. He believes that although Beijing's intentions are peaceful today it does not mean that they will remain so and according to him the US must balance this by integrating China's neighbours into a unified alliance system, developing collective defence strategies and support the rise of other Asian powers in what he labels as "Not pushing China down, raise others up". This sees the US helping states like Japan, India, Vietnam, Singapore, Indonesia and Australia realize their strategic potential and increasing their mutual cooperation with each other and the US. This, according to Tellis, would have the result of balancing and inducing good behaviour from China. However, Tellis admits that this strategy will only work if the US can maintain its military superiority in the region, an area in which the US faces various challenges.

3.3. The View from China and US Challenges

The problem with the 'Pivot to Asia' is the fact that it comes at the expense of the biggest country in the region: China. Many, including the Chinese, see the rebalance as being aimed at containing their rising power. The Chinese ambition is to once again be a central power within the region, something which they hope to achieve through economic performance and military prowess (Saunders et al. 2011).

Indeed military factors weigh heavy on the minds of planners and observers. Many see China's military modernization as a way for China to further augment its presence in the region; many specifically point to the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) modernisation as a way for China to extend its influence beyond its shores, into its immediate seas and, in the future, beyond the region as it develops blue water capability. In the last 20 years the Chinese Navy has seen extensive modernisation which has transformed it from a coast guard type force into a green water navy (Nan Li, 2009). According to Li (2009) this was the result of various factors: the fact that China has integrated into the world economy and depends on imports via sea, the fact that it has a huge coast and the fact that the US 7th Fleet, the largest US fleet, is forward deployed to the region. Li estimates that around 2020 the Chinese navy will have achieved blue water capability with access to various advanced technologies despite the fact that acquiring these capabilities, which include aircraft carriers, is contradictory to the image that China wants to convey of a 'peaceful rise'. The transition from a green water force to a blue water force is also outlined in the PLAN strategy (fig. 10) where it first wants to extend its influence to Taiwan (the 1st Island Chain) and then to Guam (the 2nd Island Chain) (The Economist, 7 Apr. 2012)

The idea that China will achieve a 'peaceful rise' seems to have been premature, as Arthur Waldron (2014) points out. According to Waldron these last few years have seen China put diplomatic and military pressure on her neighbours. He cites a chain of events starting in 1974 with the seizure of the Paracel Islands from South Vietnam and of the Spratly Islands in 1988 (fig. 3). There was also the occupation of Mischief Reef, taken from the Philippines in 1994 and the 2012 attempt to take over Scarborough Shoal from the Philippines which was not successful. The uneasy relationship with Japan over the Senkaku Islands and the establishment of an Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) over the Islands in 2013 (fig. 4) show China's intent to use military might to increase its influence. Waldron also mentions various confrontations between USN and PLAN vessels at sea (specifically the USS Cowpens incident [Harper, 2013]) and sees this as a sign that China is willing to engage in potentially reckless behaviour.

However, Waldron, does see it as being rather difficult for China to achieve hegemony in the region – describing the strategy that China is taking as being unrealistic. He cites the example of the ADIZ where China cannot even make its neighbours adhere to it. The reality is that China's neighbours simply ignored it, indeed the US, South Korea and Japan all sent military aircraft to test China's intent and China failed to take action (Waldron, 2014). Similarly China has only once, in recent years, successfully taken over territory previously administered by other nations – the Mischief Reef where China built military fortifications and installed a garrison on the islands, mostly due to Philippine indifference to the matter as it did not want to antagonise China. Despite this a recent action by China to occupy the Scarborough Shoal did not succeed instead this produced an unintentional effect where China's neighbours are undertaking naval modernisation programs and increasing military spending to deny China an easy take-over of territory. The idea behind this tactic is to deny China local superiority near

contested islands. Waldron points out that the Chinese have a particular method of taking over contested islands; first they drop temporary buoys, then they send their fishing fleet, they then erect temporary military fortifications and after a while they become permanent reinforced concrete constructions and a garrison is established (fig. 7/8/9). This according to Waldron shows how China cannot prevail decisively against an opponent with a weak navy let alone a regional or worldwide power.

Denying access to certain areas is a strategy not only limited to China's neighbours but is also used by China when confronted with much stronger opponents like the USN. Due to the fact that China's own navy is not up to the task of challenging the USN's superiority and the fact that a US battle group stationed off China's coast can exert command and control over wide areas, even inland, China has adopted an A2/AD strategy where it hopes to deny any opponent the use of the South and East China Seas (fig. 1). This strategy involves the use of submarines, mines and land based launchers to sink approaching enemy flotillas. According to James R. Holmes (2014), this presents various challenges to the USN, amongst these is the fact that the USN has not engaged in this type of warfare since the days of the Cold War. This according to Holmes has resulted in a generational gap in Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) and A2/AD tactics have become an afterthought in post-Cold War navies (this is not limited to the USN) who are instead trained to engage enemies inland and in peace-keeping/disaster relief missions. This is further proven by the instance when a Chinese submarine surfaced within range of a US Carrier Group (Hickley, 2007).

The A2/AD challenge is further elaborated upon by David W. Karn (2014). He takes it a step further by introducing the concept of Air-Sea Battle to counter the A2/AD strategy which entails close cooperation between the USN and USAF. This strategy entails increased diversification of bases (fig. 13/14) which would be able to withstand

an initial strike by weaponry associated with A2/AD and after having withstood these attacks the USAF and USN would then attack and destroy these weapons. Keeping this momentum the Air Force and Navy would keep identifying targets and attacking in depth until the area is secure. This strategy would allow the US the ability to take up a defensive posture and seize the initiative in any potential conflict in Asia.

Again A2/AD is not limited to China, indeed according to Holmes (2014) and Michael J. Cole (2013) it can also be used against China. The US and its allies must look into plans to deny the Western Pacific to China by deploying a net of Anti-Ship Missile (ASM) launchers on strategic islands to bottle the PLAN within the South and East China Seas. This means that smaller powers can counter China's bigger navy as Waldron states. The flaw in this system is the fact that ASM emplacements cannot be pre-positioned in this stance without create uneasiness in Beijing but instead they are to be pre-positioned for rapid deployment with assets available for their immediate transportation and deployment.

According to William Kyle (2014) the challenge facing the USN is the uncertainty it faces when it comes to funding after the GWoT and the 2008 financial crisis. Kyle mentions how the US is focusing more on economic integration through diplomatic efforts rather than security issues. This might be due to an "unfavourable budgetary environment" (Kyle, 2009: 2) which might mean that the vision of a strong Naval presence in Asia might remain on paper. This has led, according to Kyle, to the Obama administration adopting a more balanced posture. Kyle believes that the USN must in effect carry out a 'pivot' of its own in military terms and not ignore the military component in the context of China's growing military strength. On the other hand the challenge for China is to counter this and it is not only limited to military means

(Kazianis, 2012). Kazianis believes that China's large foreign exchange reserve can be used to counter the US 'Pivot' and also challenge it worldwide.

3.4. Tokyo's Uneasiness and South East Asia

The US is not alone in wanting to counter China. China's neighbour Japan is looking apprehensively at China's expansion. This is discussed by Kenneth B. Pyle (2008) who talks about Japan's position and how, due to the fact that it was the antagonist during WWII, it is not trusted by its neighbours. Despite this Japan sees itself as the dominant economic power in Asia and is threatened by the rise of China, this is further enforced by the anti-Japanese sentiment of young Chinese (Pyle, 2008: 312). Despite the close cooperation with the US, Japanese and US aims when it comes to China are not always aligned. This is due to the fact that, according to the Japanese Foreign Ministry, "[Our] position is much more vulnerable than that of the United States, so what we can do or say is very limited" (Pyle, 2008: 332), thus Tokyo relies heavily on economic tools to shape its relation with China. How much of this will remain possible is up for debate; the recent dispute over the Senkaku Islands, Chinese nationalism and demands for national repentance have strained the Sino-Japanese relationship. The fact that the US is a long term ally of Tokyo has created, according to Pyle, a strategic triangle where the US and Japan are trying to maintain the status-quo while China is trying to alter it. There is increased debate within Japan on how to counter China and whether Tokyo should embark on a remilitarization program (Hughes, 2009).

The last fifteen years have seen Tokyo stepping up its efforts to guarantee security in the region according to Hughes (2009). He believes that Japan faces an immediate military threat from North Korea and a medium to long term challenge from China. It is in this context that successive administrations have tried to involve Japan more in

international missions: the sending of Japan Self-Defence Force (JSDF) units to Iraq to help in reconstruction (Watts, 2003) (the first such deployment since WWII) and the use of the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force (JMSDF) to aid in the fight against piracy off the coast of Somalia (BBC News, 19 June 2009). This is not to mean that Japan is looking to hold North Korea and China alone but rather show its allies that it is a capable and reliable ally. Tokyo has strengthened its ties with the US while also getting closer to Australia in a 'quasi-alliance' in what J. Berkshire Miller (2013) describes as 'a trilateral with purpose' aimed at presenting a unified front against China, however he believes that this should not be the only purpose for this newly found cooperation.

The threat of Chinese naval encroachment and territorial claims have cast doubt whether Japan's current forces are enough to counter China. People suggest a modification of the constitution or the scrapping of Article 9 to allow Tokyo to set up a full-fledged army. Either way, currently, Tokyo is undertaking plans to create an Amphibious Force (Hayashi, 2014) modelled on the United States Marine Corps (USMC) (Schogo, 2014) aimed at responding quickly to any Chinese landings on disputed islands. This according to Koh Swee Lean Collin (2014) is a task that many other Southeast Asian nations are undertaking. In the space of 20 years, six Southeast Asian Nations; Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, have set up some kind of amphibious force equivalent to the USMC or Russian Naval Infantry. While their role is still unclear according to Collin they are a response to China's island 'creep'.

According to Dr. Munir Majid (2012) the contest between the US and China is also drawing in the states of Southeast Asia and their maritime disputes. This is partially due to China being at the economic heart of the region; being the biggest trading partner of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Majid, 2012: 23) and

despite the 2008 financial crisis it continued to invest in the ASEAN countries at a time when US investment slowed down (*Ibid.*). Despite this, China has still not surpassed the US in total Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in ASEAN countries (*Ibid.*). Majid advises caution as while China is on the rise, the US is still the world's largest single economy, the player with most FDI in ASEAN countries and still has the biggest defence budget. The fact that China is pursuing an aggressive strategy in the South China Sea when it comes to territorial claims has pushed the ASEAN countries into closer cooperation with the US, whose chief aim remains the protection of international trade routes. Abhijit Singh (2013) mentions that the pentagon has proposed a potential fifty percent increase in funding to support foreign militaries and training in Southeast Asia (Chin Hon, 2013), to force China to sign a code-of-conduct in the South China Sea.

3.5. Criticism

Robert S. Ross (2012) disagrees with the stance that the Obama administration has taken regarding Asia. Ross sees China's takeover of small islands and its rhetoric as aimed at keeping nationalistic elements at bay. On the other hand he feels that the US is greatly overestimating the capabilities of the Chinese military, especially when it comes to naval strength. According to him China was also not immune to the 2008 financial crisis, resulting in a rise in unemployment and inequality which in turn led the government to believe that unemployed students would destabilise the cities. In response Beijing invested six billion dollars to employ them. Ross believes that the idea that China is catching up to the US as being the result of the 2008 financial crisis. While the US fell in recession, China's economy grew by a staggering ten percent. This together with successful antipiracy missions, space program, and tests of advanced

military aircraft led China to adopt a more assertive foreign policy only to alienate its neighbours.

A further criticism by Ross is the fact that the 'Pivot to Asia' is not an idea unique to Obama's presidency but rather builds on the work of the Clinton and Bush administrations. Indeed according to Harry Kazianis (2012) the Bush administration was already looking at China as a strategic competitor. Ross highlights 1997 as the crucial year when Washington decided to devote more resources to the region; it based a submarine at Guam, it deployed every major weapon system to Japan, the building of an aircraft carrier facility at Changai Naval Base, Singapore and the deployment of sixty percent of USN submarines to Asia in 2005. If anything to him the Obama Administration is continuing the work of previous administrations and in a negative way. He is critical on the stance that Secretary of State Clinton took on the island disputes in the South China Sea, as needless involvement in complex legal disputes. Together with this he also views the deployment of more troops to South Korea (something which the Bush Administration tried to reduce) and large scale military exercises in the region as only serving to challenge Beijing unnecessarily. He believes that in the long run this will have the undesired effect of further antagonising China making it unwilling to collaborate with US policy.

On the other hand Justin Logan (2013) believes that it is the US that is to blame for China's acts in the China Seas. The US has encircled China and created alliances and bilateral relations which are more or less anti-China. He mentions that dealing with humanitarian assistance, stifling nuclear proliferation, suppressing narco-traffickers, and dispatching pirates does not require sixty percent of the USN's assets, quoting former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage "When the administration says it's not about China, it's all about China. China knows this." Similar to Tellis (2013) he sees

the irony in the US-China relationship, where on one hand the US is working to contain China and on the other hand trading with China is making China wealthier, stating: “If Washington isn’t comfortable with a more powerful China...making China wealthier by trading with it doesn’t make much sense.”

These views expressed by Ross (2012) are not shared by Shawn Brimley and Ely Ratner (2013) who disagree with Ross’s viewpoints. They argue that the way to deal with China’s anxieties is not withdrawal from Asia but rather sustainable and deepening engagement. According to Brimley and Ratner, Ross fails to account for the “changing geopolitical realities of the twenty-first century” (Brimley and Ratner, 2013: 1) where the disengagement from the Middle East has allowed the US to invest more heavily in Asia, a region central for US economic and strategic interests. This is not only an issue of countering China and accuse Ross of solely focusing on military issues when they are only a part of the overall strategy. Brimley and Ratner believe that the US’s involvement in disputes is not to challenge China but to construct a “regional order undergirded by rules and institutions” (*Ibid*: 2). They also mention the cooperation which exists with China where the number of meetings between the Chinese and American presidents were never so numerous and the cooperation which exists in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. The only problem with the strategy according to Brimley and Ratner is that the administration must make sure that the resources are available, both in terms of finance and personnel, to maintain and expand the commitment to East Asia further into the future.

Criticism is not only directed to the US but also to China. Munir Majid (2012) criticises China’s aggressive stance, especially in the South China Sea (since the Scarborough stand-off in 2012), where the threat of the use of force has only serving to frighten regional powers. Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines have been actively

modernising and upgrading their naval capabilities while increasing cooperation with the US. According to him the US could not have wished for a better response from the Chinese as this is driving China's neighbours closer to the US, ultimately guaranteeing the success of the 'Pivot to Asia'.

3.6. Conclusion

As has been shown there is a variety of opinions on what the future of the Asia- Pacific region holds and how it will affect the players in the region. What is certain is that the US's future is very much intertwined with the future of East Asia. Even if China's influence manages to grow to a point where it will eclipse the US, which at present is still doubtful, the US will still remain heavily involved in the region, so long as it can manage to present itself as both a counter to China's influence and as an alternative to China.

Chapter 4

Theory and Methodology

In this chapter two theories of international relations will be examined, discussed and analysed. The Hegemonic Stability Theory and Security Dilemma are used to explain the situation in East Asia and to speculate where it is heading. This includes the situation which the US, China and Japan find themselves in together with that of the smaller players in the region. Both these theories offer different interpretation on what the future holds for East Asia.

4.1. Hegemonic Stability Theory

Hegemony is defined as a situation where a state or group shows leadership or dominance over others (Oxford Dictionary). In international relations terms it refers to a state's power relative to that of other states where the dominant states, referred to as the hegemon, can influence the affairs and foreign policies of other states (Jackson and Sørensen, 2010: 301). The concept of hegemony has existed for thousands of years, the word is derived from the Greek term *hēgemonía* and is used to show the military, political and economic dominance of a state over another state or other states. The concept is not bound to military or politics but is also used in a variety of circumstances; like cultural hegemony.

The term itself came from Ancient Greece and was used to show the dominance of a city-state over the other city-states, most notably in the cases of Sparta and Athens who were hegemons at different times during antiquity (Wickersham, 1993). Indeed the concept has evolved during the years and the term has been used to describe various powers during different periods to show that they were the premier power of the time able to dominate regional and world affairs. The term has been used to describe the Roman Empire, France and its Empire, the British Empire and, the US

and the Soviet Union (USSR) as they struggled to become the world hegemon (Jackson and Sørensen: 199-205).

It was out of this idea that the hegemonic stability theory was born. The idea is that during a period when there is one clear hegemon that has the ability to show leadership through the use of military, diplomatic or other pressure, a period of stability will exist and the international system is more likely to function and remain stable. However instability will reign if there is more than one power vying for hegemony, increasing the risk of conflict and the presence of proxy wars (*ibid.*). This theory can also be applied on a regional level (as opposed to an international level as stated here), where a state has the ability to dominate the affairs of its neighbours and the region it is in. Examples of this include Brazil/Argentina in Latin America, Israel in the Middle East, etc. For the purposes of this chapter the hegemonic stability theory is applied to East Asia to show how the different powers in the region are competing to assert themselves as the hegemon in the region, as China must first attain regional hegemony if it wants to challenge the US's worldwide hegemony.

During the latter half of the 20th century the world was ideologically divided between the US and the USSR both championing their own ideologies – Capitalism and Communism respectively, but the end of the Cold War has left the US as the only remaining hegemon in the world. As a result the world and the US have enjoyed a period of relative stability since 1991, with conflict limited to small areas of the globe and the almost complete absence of interstate conflict. Today the discourse is different; instead of talking about the US as the solo hegemon there is increased talk of another power taking its place. The most difficult challenge that the US is currently facing is from China, at least if not on an international level this certainly holds true on a regional level. In the context of the long GWoT and the US's overextension China is eyeing an

opportunity where it can challenge the US's hegemony over East Asia (Ikenberry, 2004).

With a huge population and a growing economy many have speculated that China is poised to challenge the position of the US as the hegemon. This is further strengthened by the fact that China has re-modernised and expanded both its army and navy (Saunders et al. 2011). It is also possible to speculate that China, which has prospered under the capitalist system which the US and its allies have maintained (Tellis, 2013), is looking to twist the system to suit its own needs by taking over the system.

Historically, China was a hegemon (Wang, 2013), indeed until the arrival of the European powers China was considered as one of the most powerful states in the region and if one goes further back one is able to compare the power of China to that of the Roman Empire and other empires from antiquity. However it is important to note that power is not only derived from territorial gain and military prowess but also from technological advances and the ability to intervene in the affairs of neighbouring states together with economic and ideological dominance (Wang: 7). In this regard China, historically, held all these advantages and this was only offset with the arrival of the Europeans and their dismantlement of China. It is from this historic context that China claims a right to be the hegemon. When viewed from this perspective the Chinese are only trying to restore the importance of China within the region. China believes that it is in a better position to assert hegemony than the US, this can also be attributed to geographical considerations: the US is a player from outside the region while China is from it.

However claiming hegemony, maintaining and legitimizing it are different matters. For one thing the states in the region are reluctant to see China establish itself as the

hegemon; this has been due to the aggressive actions that China has undertaken in the East and South China Seas. The forceful occupation of islands and the many territorial disputes have served to turn Beijing's neighbours against it. According to Robert E. Kelly (2014) this is not the way China should act if it ever hopes to achieve the position of hegemon. Maintaining hegemony is not always down to military power; the USSR although military powerful was brought to its knees economically. What China is doing is creating enemies rather than allies, this in contrast to the US, which despite its power still values the say of its allies and all have a say at the table. This could be seen in the Philippines in 1992 when the US bases were closed after a referendum. What China is creating now is reluctant allies, similar to the USSR.

It is precisely the bullying from China that is serving to push its neighbours into the arms of the US and in the long run strengthen the US position in the region; as countries like Vietnam, Japan, Taiwan and the Philippines will all help maintain the US hegemony in the region due to their distrust of China (Cox, 2012). Despite this the possibility of Chinese hegemony, at least on a regional level, still remains. Speculations abound on what the effects of Chinese hegemony will have on the region. This would mostly follow in the footsteps of the Monroe Doctrine (Kelly, 2014), to limit outside influence in East Asia. One can expect China to exert pressure on the US to withdraw its forces from Japan and Korea, together with the closing of its military bases in the region. China will also advocate for the isolation of Taiwan and pressure its neighbours to align with its goals.

The current situation in East Asia offers an interesting perspective when it comes to hegemony and its validity as the region is undergoing a shake-up where China is trying to create a new hegemonic order, while the US, and the other players, are trying to maintain the status quo. If the hegemonic stability theory is to be applied to the region

it will translate into instability where the current power will be challenged by the new rising power. What is certain however is that both the US and China will remain key players in the region for the foreseeable future.

4.2. Security Dilemma

The term 'security dilemma' refers to a paradox present in the state system. One of the fundamental reasons for the existence of a state is the protection of its citizens from both internal and external threats however, the presence of armed states threatens the very security that they are trying to maintain (Jackson and Sørensen: 306). The term was first coined by historian Herbert Butterfield in 1951. In its most basic form a security dilemma refers to a situation where a state undertakes a military build-up of some kind (the purchase of new weaponry, the forming of an alliance or the presence of nuclear weapons) which serves to unsettle its neighbours which then undertake a military build-up of their own which in turn creates tensions and increases the likelihood of conflict (hence the dilemma of undermining security through more security). The theory has been used to explain various conflicts since its inception; WWI, the Cold War and, the Crimean Crisis of 2014. Similar to hegemony the security dilemma can be applied on an international level; the US and USSR, or on a regional level; India and Pakistan, the Middle East and North and South Korea.

The security dilemma can also be applied fully to the situation in East Asia. The rise of China and the presence of the US in East Asia is, according to many, creating a security dilemma that is not only strictly restricted to the US and China but rather one that encompasses the whole region. Whilst there are common interests between the two there are also points of confrontation like the Taiwanese Strait and the island disputes, similar to Europe during the Cold War (Williams et al. 2013). Together with

the deployment of Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) systems to East Asia which the US maintains to protect its allies against a North Korean strike. China sees this as giving the US an advantage that it might not be able to counter. The inherent problem of the security dilemma is the mutual distrust which follows it; even if Beijing is convinced that Washington does not wish to escalate the situation now, what guarantees does China have that it will not in the future? This brings about a situation where both players are in essence always assuming the worst of each other (*Ibid.* 148).

The concept of a security dilemma in East Asia is not new. Back in 1999 Thomas J. Christensen speculated that the chances of a security dilemma in East Asia is great, especially if there was no US presence. Indeed the presence of the US was thought of as that of an outside arbiter which created stability. However China is not only concerned with the presence of the US but also of a stronger Japan. The recent re-militarization of Japan (Hughes, 2009) has worried China. The source of this worry is the history that exists between China and Japan with WWII still fresh in the minds of the Chinese population, Japan's access sophisticated and advanced weaponry does not sit well with the Chinese population. In this context the situation is a text book case of security dilemma. The US presence in Asia has resulted in increased military spending in China. This brought about an increased presence by the US in the region, which in turn brought increased military spending by China and a re-militarization of Japan. It is thus that the US approach to the region has been labelled as one that has fostered the creation of security dilemmas in East Asia (Christen, 2006).

Other possible security dilemmas in the region have also been named. The possibility of Sino-Vietnamese/Philippine dilemma and the tensions between Taiwan and mainland China. In the case of Vietnam and the Philippines, Chinese aggression and occupation of islands has resulted in their willingness to seek the help of the US and

other partners in the region. Despite the fact that both the Philippines and Vietnam have island disputes amongst them, China is perceived as the greater threat.

The tensions between Taiwan and China can also be described as a security dilemma, in this case it takes another clear dimension; the offence-defence theory, a part of the security dilemma put forward by Robert Jervis. Offence-defence theory refers to the division of offensive weapons and defensive weapons and describes different scenarios of what would happen if either offensive or defensive weapons have the advantage or if they are both equally advanced and how it influences the security dilemma. In this sense both China and Taiwan are constantly trying to outdo each other's technological advantages. Offensive advantages by China (the fact that China has a much bigger military and population and the fact that Taiwan is close to China) are negated by the defensive advantages of Taiwan (the fact that Taiwan is an island separated from mainland China and Taiwan's access to American weaponry). This has worked to bring about a stalemate between the two where neither is willing to shoulder the cost of attacking the other creating a semblance of stability (Jervis, 1978), despite this, the ability of Taiwan to sustain this is questionable, as China is much bigger and has a military budget much greater than Taiwan's.

Under the scenario of a security dilemma the future of the region remains uncertain; there are two possible outcomes. One is that the arming of the states in the region will only result in a situation where, attack is so costly, that no state will attack the other resulting in a sense of stability, similar to the Cold War. On the other hand the presence of weapons in the region might result in the eruption of conflict as either side sees its chances of winning as acceptable to the cost.

4.3. Methodology

The primary motive of the dissertation was to analyse the different schools of thought on the current situation in East Asia and try to draw a conclusion on what the future might hold for the US in a region, which is globally very important.

Research was carried out through the use of qualitative methods. No interviews or exercises of data collection were undertaken. Both primary and secondary sources were used. Primary sources used have included political documentation such as speeches, treaty texts, etc. However the bulk of the sources were secondary sources. These included books, journal articles, blogs by experts in the field, and news outlets. Due to the nature of the subject journal articles and commentaries were used extensively, as due to their continued publication they tend to provide more updated information; the publication of academic journals is more frequent than that of books and thus they can take into account the latest developments. However books were given importance to provide the basis for theories, historical and cultural context. Newspapers, in most cases, were used to show the latest developments on the ground, to provide context to theories and to highlight the actions of the different players in the region.

Qualitative sources on the subject of the dissertation were plentiful, there was no shortage of information or challenge in finding information or in following the latest developments. A wide variety of authors were consulted during the dissertation, this was done to highlight the different opinions on the subject. Both authors from the US and the Asian region were considered. Similarly the opinions of authors for and against the 'Pivot to Asia' were taken into considered. However due to a language barrier, original texts in Chinese or Japanese could not be consulted. One might argue that

this does not provide a strong enough argument against the 'Pivot to Asia' however there is no shortage of English writing authors against the 'pivot'.

Two case studies were written to illustrate the validity of the arguments brought forward. In the first case study the military capabilities of China's neighbours are analysed whilst the second case study is about the Senkaku Islands. Emphasis is placed on neighbours which have outstanding territorial disputes with China. The case studies were chosen to provide a comparison between disputes in the South and East China Seas but also to show the involvement of the US in East Asia. One of the most challenging aspects of the case studies, and indeed the dissertation, was the fact that information on China is not always forthcoming due to the nature of its political system. Figures on naval build up and military expenditure might not be accurate.

In the first case study a comparative study was undertaken of China's neighbours, specifically the countries that China has territorial disputes with, to show the effects of China's military build-up on the region and how this has created tensions; whilst not all countries are mentioned the trends observed are region-wide. In effect this has created an arms race in East Asia where countries neighbouring China are investing more money in their armed forces. The case study looks at how much these countries are spending and on what. Certain trends were identified, together with the measures that countries are taking to deny China its overwhelming economic and numerical advantage. Together with this, the role of the US as a weapons supplier and a major military player in the region is also examined.

In the second case study the current dispute over the Senkaku Islands is examined, together with the ramifications this has had on tensions in the East China Sea. The history of the islands is examined to give context to the claims of each of the three

claimant countries. Together with the historic evidence, which includes historic maps, records and tradition, geographical evidence is also provided. The acts of the claimant countries since 2012 are also described together with the effect the US has on the dispute and how this effects the relations between the US, Japan and China.

4.4. Conclusion

The importance of these two theories in the context of tensions in East Asia cannot be understated. Both theories explain why actors in the region are acting the way they are. The Hegemonic Stability Theory sees the region as being at the centre of a struggle between two great powers fostering instability as competition between the two intensifies. The Security Dilemma on the other hand sees the region as being stuck in a risky cycle where each player is trying to negate the advantage of the other. The presence of high amounts of weaponry in the region will mean that the likelihood of war will increase. The future of East Asia looks bleak unless compromises are found whatever theory is used.

Chapter 5

Engaging China

5.1. How much is the Pivot a Pivot? Past Administrations and China, 1989-Present.

Despite the fact that Barack Obama's recent 'Pivot to Asia' has brought renewed interest in East Asia this is not to mean that previous administrations ignored the region or that the US left the region. Indeed previous administrations, most notably the Clinton and the Bush administrations, undertook various measures to strengthen the presence of the US in Asia and many argue that Obama's 'Pivot' is building on the achievements of these administrations.

The dissolution of the USSR and the end of the Cold War resulted in a change on how China was viewed by the world. Some would argue that this had started since the rapprochement policies of the Nixon administration. During the Cold War China was seen as a Communist country that, while opposed to the US in ideology was also opposed to the Soviet Union (after the Sino-Soviet Split). Today it is the largest Communist country with an abysmal human rights record. This has meant that since the Cold War stances and positions have varied when it came to dealing with China.

President George H. W. Bush came to office in 1989 at a very interesting period; his foreign policy was driven by events, including the fall of the Berlin Wall, the dissolution of the USSR, the invasion of Panama, the First Gulf War and in the case of China the Tiananmen Square protests, a lot of events for an administration that lasted only one term. Bush had past experiences in dealing with China as between 1974 and 1976 he served as Chief of the US Liaison Office in Beijing which perhaps resulted in his unique stance when it came to dealing with China. Early on in his presidency he was

confronted by the Chinese military crackdown of Tiananmen Square and although against the violent crackdown he did not wish to abandon the good ties that existed between the US and China and adopted what many saw as an inadequate response to the situation, something which was criticised by his opponents. Clinton saw Bush as appeasing the “Butchers of Beijing”, a stance that was also adopted by Hilary Clinton in her presidential campaign (*Baker, 2008*). The administration did condemn the crackdown together with other western powers (McFadden, 1989) and sanctioned China, though these were not particularly harsh or long lasting as it was believed that China was still vital to US interests. China’s violations of human rights were similarly ignored (Brick, 1989).

The Clinton Administration between 1993 and 2001 did have an Asia focus. The Administration recognised the importance of China in the post-Cold War years and embarked on a series of initiatives. It did not further push for a UN resolution to condemn China’s human rights record (Los Angeles Times, 1998) whilst President Clinton also embarked on a series of visits which culminated in the signing of the US-China trade agreement in November 1999 (The New York Times, 1999). This allowed China entry into the World Trade Organisation, and removed tariffs and trade barriers between the US and China (Global Policy Forum, 1999). Together with this the Clinton Administration also embarked on a program to strengthen the relationship between the US and Vietnam and helped Vietnam integrate into the international economy (US State Department Archives, 1993-2001). This strengthened the relationship between the Philippines and the other ASEAN countries (*Ibid.*). There was also a renewed effort regarding North Korea’s nuclear program which although initially successful in the end failed (The New York Times, 2014).

The George W. Bush administration on the other hand came into office believing that China would be the next rival/competitor, unlike the Clinton Administration which saw Beijing as a strategic partner. The demise of the USSR left China as the only communist country large enough to challenge the US. The Bush administration worked to bolster ties with its allies in the region (Ching, 2011). This was shown in the first Asian trip undertaken by the then Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, where he visited Japan, South Korea and India to promote US plans for the deploying of BMD systems in the region but skipped China. Instead a lower-ranking official was sent to China instead (*Ibid.*). The situation was aggravated further in 2001 when on April 1st a USN plane and PLAN jet collided resulting in the loss of the Chinese pilot and the emergency landing of the USN plane on Hainan Island causing the aircrew to be captured and detained. The Hainan Island Incident was a low point in Sino-US relations. Indeed ten days after the release of the aircrew the Bush administration concluded an arms deal worth several billions with Taiwan which included the transfer of four destroyers and twelve anti-submarine planes to Taiwan (BBC News, 25 April 2001). Bush also pledged to help Taiwan in whatever it needed to defend itself against China, going beyond the provisions of the Taiwan Relations act (Ching, 2011). It is in this context that the 9/11 terrorist acts were a godsend for China as the attacks served to change the Bush administration's view, resulting in Bush completely changing his opinion. The attacks shifted US attention to the Middle East and allowed China and the US to establish friendlier ties. The Bush administration's stance was that whilst it might disagree with China, it also wanted to work with China (Fallows, 2008). What followed was a decade of relative stability in the Sino-US relationship and one of the few areas in President Bush's foreign policy where stability was reassured (Stephens, 2008). During this administration the US benefited from a two trillion subsidy to its government

debt given by the Chinese Government which benefited US jobs and companies whilst China's economy became more integrated with that of the US. The existing ties between the two countries could be seen during the Beijing Olympics in 2008 where the US President never threatened to boycott the Olympics over China's human rights record. Bush was welcomed in Beijing (Fallows), surprising for a man who by the end of his presidency alienated many US allies in the pursuit of the GWoT. Today he and his father remain popular figures in China (Denick, 2009).

Despite the fact that the US never left the region, there was no mass withdrawal of troops or the abandonment of capabilities, there was a greater focus on the Middle East which relegated the Asia-Pacific region into a backwater which might today work in China's favour; while the US was otherwise engaged China sought to engage its neighbours and expand its economy which today might work against the US as it tries to again focus its abilities on the region.

5.2. East Asia: A land of Economic Opportunity

The 'Pivot to Asia' is not solely focused on engaging China but also on cultivating and strengthening the economic ties with the region as a whole. Whilst one cannot deny a military and strategic component there is also an economic and demographic one. East Asia has both developing and developed nations and a huge population; there are more people living in East Asia than anywhere else in the world accounting for a third of the human population (Hayes and Zhao, 2012), presenting an economic opportunity that is not present elsewhere.

In a speech in February 2015 the Deputy Secretary of State, Anthony J. Blinken remarked on the progress that the region has achieved and the US's commitment to the region mentioning that both President Obama and Secretary of State Kerry

specifically told him to focus on Asia (U.S. Department of State, 2015). Part and parcel of this is the security aspect and the protection of the economics in the region with trade between the US and the region remaining high with one trillion dollars of trade each year and the US remains the largest source of FDI in the region at \$622 million in 2012 (*Ibid.*).

The linchpin of the Obama administration's policy towards East Asia remains the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a proposed regional regulatory and investment scheme. Negotiations for this agreement started in 2005 and the administration is committed to conclude negotiations before President Obama leaves office. Despite the long process and the many difficulties facing it, it is still believed that this may be possible. The TPP in itself encompasses the entire Asia Pacific with all the countries of East Asia having expressed interest in joining. Some like Japan, Vietnam, Singapore and Malaysia (Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, 2013) are actively involved in negotiations. The advantages of such a partnership are immense not only for the US but also for the other signatories, for example, whilst bringing more jobs to the US it is estimated that it will increase Japanese GDP by 2.4 trillion yen or an increase of 1.5% in GDP per capita and these numbers could get even bigger if South Korea becomes a member (Yasuyuki, 2013). Each signatory country would experience similar growth (Petri and Plummer, 2012: 6).

There have however also been rumours that the partnership is aimed at containing the economic growth of China while promoting US interest in the region (*Ibid.* 2-3). Deputy Secretary of State Blinken categorically stated that this is not the case and that China was welcomed to the partnership as long as it can maintain the high standard that the TPP countries are setting (U.S. Department of State, 2015). In a sense the TPP might

be a way for the US to achieve its goals of increasing US economic growth and becoming more integrated with the region.

5.3. Engaging China

It is undeniable that a chief component of the 'Pivot to Asia' is engaging China in various areas, but what does this 'engagement' actually entail? The US is trying to involve China in various policy areas by confronting and integrating China further into the world system. However the US must be careful as its actions might be seen as containing rather than engaging China.

Politically this has meant the integration of China into the region and confronting China in various issues. On a regional level China has become more integrated with ASEAN, the idea being to focus on areas where there is potential for cooperation, and deflect attention from areas of conflict like the territorial disputes which China has with many of the ASEAN nations (Tiezzi, 2014). This has meant that the Chinese have made huge sums of money available for the ASEAN countries: \$20 billion have been pledged for regional infrastructure, \$3 billion for energy investments and \$480 million to fight poverty in South East Asia (*Ibid.*). Beijing hopes that the offer of cheap loans and investments, will offset its actions in the China Seas; a kind of 'carrot and stick approach' where those who respect and agree with China's view reap the economic benefits.

Together with this, progress is also being made on a South China Sea code of conduct; a point of conflict between both China and its neighbours, something which the US is also pushing for. Indeed a code of conduct has been in the works since 2002 when the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea was first signed. It was hoped that this would precede the signing of an actual code of conduct and bring some

stability to the region and end territorial disputes, but more than ten years later this has still not materialised. Partially responsible for this is the fact that major claimants of territory will have to renounce claims; China might have to renounce claims and abandon disputed islands, for example, its claims on the Spratly Islands and on parts of Vietnam's Exclusive Economic Zone (Pal, 2013). This is not only limited to China but also to other members of ASEAN, for example the Spratly Islands are further contested by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Taiwan resulting in a multilateral negotiation which is very difficult to conclude with all parties getting a satisfactory outcome. The Code of Conduct negotiations are however used as leverage by all sides involved; China uses them as a tool to get more concessions from ASEAN members whilst the ASEAN countries use it as a way of showing that they are standing up to China. It's undeniable, however, that if an agreement can be reached on territorial disputes in the South China Sea and a code of conduct signed it will go a long way in easing tension in the region.

The US's benefits if such an agreement is reached, if at all possible, are mixed. Whilst on one hand the signing of a code of conduct would mean there would be increased stability in the region, the aggressive action of China and territorial disputes have meant that ASEAN countries have increasingly worked for closer ties between them and the US as a way to protect their interests. The US has certainly benefited by the tensions; in the Philippines there is a strong possibility that the US will return and maintain a military presence (Robson, 2014), whilst Vietnam has also looked to establish relations with the US, after the hiatus following the Vietnam War. The US has eased its weapons sale restrictions on Vietnam (Pennington, 2014). Other countries have also followed suit; Singapore has allowed the US to upgrade and expand its naval installations (Garamone, 2012). Australia has allowed the deployment of assets on its

soil, including Air and Naval assets and a substantial Marine contingent (Taylor, 2014), this together with the permanent US presence in South Korea and the Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) in Japan. Asia-Pacific countries seem willing to trade their strategic assets to the US, in the hope that they might serve as some form of protection against China. In this regard Cox is right in stating that ASEAN countries trust America's motives more than China's and until this remains, Washington will still have a presence and a role to play in the region (Cox, 2012: 274).

This is not to mean that China is unwilling to conclude negotiations on its territorial disputes, both those in the South China Sea and beyond. During the APEC Summit in November 2014 Chinese premier Xi Jinping pushed for better relations with his neighbours and has gone as far as proposing a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (The Economist, 15 Nov. 2014) and other concessions, including the resumption of high level talks with Japan over the Senkaku Islands and an agreement with the US on reducing Greenhouse gases by 2025. Whether this was rhetoric or an attempt to divert attention only time will tell, however one cannot deny the benefits that China will gain if it settles the disputes with its neighbours. The multilateral efforts involved in reaching such an agreement will build trust and stability whilst showing support to ASEAN. All these are issues that Beijing has repeatedly said it wanted to resolve, however the actual actions undertaken by China differ (Pham, 2014).

Another aspect where China and the US butt heads is international law specifically regarding territorial claims where both accuse one another of breaking international law. One of the reasons given for the 'Pivot to Asia' is the protection and upholding of maritime rights, together with protecting valuable shipping lanes. The situation here is quite delicate; while China is a signatory to the UNCLOS, the US is not. This brings about the fact that the US is trying to enforce a treaty which it is not a signatory to. In

contrast some actions which China has undertaken are illegal under UNCLOS. Chief amongst which is the nine-dotted line policy (fig. 6), an area covering a major part of the South China Sea which China claims as its own. The US has stated that whilst the idea of the nine-dotted line is not a modern one, it does go against established conventions (Report no. 143, 2014). Together with this it is not clear what the line represents. Is it a claim of sovereignty over the territory within the line? A national boundary line? Or a claim based on what China considers to be its historic waters? In all cases the actions that China is undertaking are illegal; in the first case the UNCLOS states that an agreement must be reached between neighbouring states, in the second case it has no legal bases under the UNCLOS whilst in the third case the area is too large to be considered a historical claim under Articles 10 and 15 of the same UNCLOS (*Ibid.* 23). The US has thus refuted China's claims to the area within the nine-dotted line partially due to the reasons stated above. The line is also strongly opposed by the ASEAN countries most notably the Philippines and Vietnam which stand to lose the most if this is recognised. On the other hand China also has disputes with Japan, which has taken a different stance altogether than that of the ASEAN countries. Japan has denied that there is even a dispute over the islands (Drifte, 2014) and China's efforts are focused on making the Japanese government acknowledge that there is a dispute rather than actually taking control of the islands which the Japanese government regards as a hostile act and a declaration of war.

Together with this the US is also looking to setup a military code of conduct, this code of conduct, unlike the one being pushed for the South China Sea, is exclusively between the US and China and regulates the behaviour for air and naval assets at sea with the hopes of increasing safety and avoiding incidents such as the Hainan Island incident, the USS Cowpens incident and close interceptions by Chinese jets (Keck,

2014). Such incidents carry a risk of collision and loss of life that would damage an already fragile relationship. The idea is that both the US and Chinese militaries establish a working relation with one another (Tiezzi, 2014) and a line of communication that is both functional and has a standard which both militaries adhere to. Something along these lines was present during the Cold War which resulted in increased trust and understanding (Cosmas et al. 2014).

It is important to engage China on these issues for a number of reasons; ignoring these issues or taking an aggressive stance towards China might result in isolating China. In this context despite the fact that negotiations with China take a long time for anything tangible to be agreed upon, it is better than risking destabilising the region which no party wishes. As a result it is important that clear lines of communication are always open.

5.4. The US as a Provider of Security

It is an undeniable fact that one of the main areas where the US is most active in engaging China is security. This is due to a number of reasons; the military rise of China, together with the fact that China has taken aggressive action against its neighbours in the past. In security terms this engagement can take many forms and is undertaken both by the US, its allies and ASEAN.

Together with the previously mentioned ways of engaging China, the US also has a number of other initiatives. These include defence programs with its allies and the ASEAN countries and direct aid; be it by direct arms delivery or by financial aid to be used for military matters.

Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia have all benefited from growing military ties with the US. Indonesia has benefited through joint exercises in the areas

of counterterrorism, together with advanced weapons sales, naval modernisation programs (Siboro, 2013) and military training in the US (Mcbeth, 2014). Vietnam has profited from weapons sales and the Philippines has profited from increased ties with the US. Beyond the possible return of US bases to the Philippines the US has also made available funds as maritime security assistance to the country (Bradsher, 2013). Together with this the Philippines has also profited from increased ties with Japan, with Japan promising to provide 10 maritime patrol vessels as a way of countering Chinese aggression (Trajano, 2013). One also finds the setting up of various amphibious forces in East Asia, at many times taking part in military exercises together with the USMC (Collin, 2014). Indeed participation in military exercises is one of the advantages that association with the US brings; the US sponsors and participates in a wide range of exercises which serve to pass on training and experience to smaller and less active militaries (Military Balance, 2014:472-475).

One such exercise is the Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC), a biannual multinational maritime warfare exercise held between June and July in Hawaii by the US Pacific Fleet. This is the largest exercise of its type where military forces from around the Pacific Rim and beyond are invited to partake. The aim of the exercise is to provide *“a unique training opportunity that helps participants foster and sustain the cooperative relationships that are critical to ensuring the safety of sea lanes and security on the world’s oceans.”* (RIMPAC website, 2014). The 2014 version of the event was one of the largest ever and for the first time China was also invited (fig. 20). The presence of China was welcomed by the US, despite the fact that together with its contingent China also sent an uninvited spy ship (Keck, 2014). The exercise served not only to create military to military relationships between US, Chinese and ASEAN forces but also to show that the US is willing to include powers that it considers as strategic competitors

(Panda, 2014). Chinese participation in RIMPAC also increased hope that there will be other areas where the US and China can work together, for example, in combating piracy in the Gulf of Aden, something which China and its neighbours are actively engaged in (Sambhi and Yeo, 2014). This will show that rather than containing, the US, is engaging China.

5.5. Conclusion

The above examples highlight the difficulty that the US has in dealing with China in what can be summarised as a dilemma between engagement and containment. The US is not outright employing any of these policies in full but rather a mixture of both. Whilst it engages China on difficult issues it still wants to preserve the status quo in the region. In island disputes, for example, whilst calling for peaceful dialogue it has categorically stated that the Senkaku Islands are covered under the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security (the White House, 2014). Whilst there is merit to both engagement and containment it is certain that containment only provides a temporary solution and that sooner or later the US would have to deal with China, leaving engagement as the only viable option (Kai, 2014).

Chapter 6

Case Study 1: Military Comparisons in East Asia

6.1. Introduction

Despite the fact that the US and China are the main focus of any potential dispute in East Asia, there are also a host of smaller regional players, ranging from countries as small as Singapore with a population of about 5.4 million to Japan with a population of 126.4 million. It is undeniable that these play an important role despite their comparatively smaller population, at the very least they will provide some form of support to a side in a future potential conflict. Hence it is in the interest of the US and China to maintain friendly ties with these nations and bring them into their 'sphere of influence'.

Both China and the US have different reasons for wanting friendly ties with countries in East Asia. The US as an outside player in the region wants to remain welcomed; from a military stand point, operating in the region is easier when one is welcomed. This holds true for the US which maintains a large network of military bases here which might be closed if public opinion turns against it (the case of US bases in the Philippines). China on the other hand wishes to be again considered a regional and international player, having its neighbours on its side would mean that US influence would decrease in the region, allowing China to pursue its interests more easily. The easiest way for the US to gain favours and friends in the region is to support China's neighbours through diplomatic and military means, increasing the region dependence on it.

An important aspect of the situation in the region is the population gap that exists between the US, China and its neighbours. The challenge is a demographic one, with a population of over a billion China can afford to field a much larger army; it is only

natural then that its neighbours will look at the US and each other to make up for this deficit. In light of this great demographic gap what many nations have done is instead focus on professional, well trained and technologically superior military forces as a way of closing the gap with China. This chapter will highlight some of the capabilities that these countries have or are developing as a way of dealing with potential situations in East Asia.

6.2. The Importance of Naval and Aerial Assets

Due to the geographical nature of East and South East Asia and the nature of tensions great importance is placed on naval and aerial assets. The tensions are over small uninhabited islands in the South and East China Seas rather than outright invasion/aggression against a country, the only exception to this is Taiwan which still regards a Chinese invasion as a reality. To this end the nature of military acquisitions and purchases are different; instead of focusing on land based systems and traditional army upgrades (like tanks and Infantry Fighting Vehicles) the focus has shifted to increasing naval and aerial capabilities resulting in the purchasing of ships and aircraft together with the setting up of amphibious capabilities (fig. 19).

Aerial assets allow for the reconnaissance of disputed territories, protect against encroachment and give the ability to quickly deploy supplies and assets. With this in mind China has started building airfields on disputed islands (fig.7,8&9) (Smith, 2014). Naval assets allow for countries to maintain a presence in disputed territories, larger ships allow for more sea worthiness and a prolonged stay near these territories. They serve to deter encroachment; the countless incidents of standoffs near disputed territory and fisherman incursions (The Guardian, April 2012). Amphibious forces allow

nations the ability to quickly deploy troops to disputed territories, or to reclaim islands which have been taken over by an aggressor.

Thus the nations in East Asia have made similar purchases, destroyers and frigates, together with submarines. Destroyers and frigates are large surface combatants which allow navies to influence operations beyond coastal regions. They have the capability to engage in ASW and carry a range of anti-ship and anti-air weaponry thus being useful in a huge range of scenarios; they can influence affairs both at sea and in coastal regions (Hootan, 2014). Many of them carry some form of aircraft giving them increased capabilities in ASW and reconnaissance, which is why many navies in East and South East Asia have focused on upgrading and acquiring more of these vessels.

The submarine has experienced a 'revival' in the region as the majority of countries are seeking to augment their underwater capabilities. The nature of submarines; silent, able to hide and pack quite a bunch have made them a popular investment (Mizokami, 2014). They can lurk in and around disputed areas and carry out reconnaissance, shadow enemy ships and if needed sink them. They embody the ideas of the A2/AD concept. For example, Taiwan hopes that in case of a full-scale Chinese invasion its submarine force will be able to inflict substantial casualties on Chinese forces in the straits (Cheng, 2015). Together with this one must consider the ability of submarines to mount a blockade; in a region where a lot of countries depend on imports and trade to sustain themselves, submarines can mount a very effective blockade (China Times, 2014). Modern submarines also have land attack capabilities giving them the ability to influence affairs in coastal regions.

6.3. Economics

As the economies of East Asia grow, so do their military budgets. In the last three years military budgets in Asia grew across the map (fig. 18) with few exceptions (The Military Balance, 2014. 487-488), these developments can be observed since 2010 (The Military Balance, 2013. 549-550). This is possible undoubtedly due to the growth of these economies leaving more money available to finance the military. This has allowed for the purchases of more advanced equipment, submarines being one example. However the size of China means that smaller nations cannot go head to head with it alone. An example of this is the fact that countries like Vietnam and Taiwan cannot afford the huge R&D budget of the US and China, hence it is more worthwhile to buy foreign weaponry and designs, not to mention the time indigenous products take to develop. Others, like the Philippines, do not have the budget or resources to deploy new ships instead they rely on hand me downs; second hand ships usually donated by other navies. It is important to note that military acquisitions are not an issue of just purchasing equipment but also of maintaining, upgrading and training personnel to use it. All of these require substantial investment of both time, money and personnel.

6.4. China and the US

The US and China are considered as the two main players in East Asia, both have substantial military budgets and are trying to exert their influence on the region. In terms of military budget size the US is ranked as having the largest military budget worldwide with 600 billion dollars spent in 2013 (The Military Balance, 2014. 486) and China ranks as second with 112 billion dollars spent in 2013(The Military Balance, 2014. 488). Whilst the US budget has remained almost unchanged for the last three years, drifting around at 4% of GDP, China has seen subsequent increases in military

budgets during the last five years with the budget for 2014 estimated at 131.57 billion dollars, a 12.2% increase on the previous year (Martina and Torode, 2014) and with reports indicating that in 2015 the budget will enjoy a further 10% increase (BBC World News, 4 Mar. 2015).

Despite the massiveness of military budgets what matters is how they are spent, especially in the context of hard economic times. In the case of China it is even more important due to the fact that its military budget is significantly less than that of the US creating a big gap between the two. Together with this China is also looking to expand its military capabilities to press its claims in the China Seas.

To this end China has in recent years focused on modernising its forces, specifically its naval forces. This has meant that China has set up large shipbuilding programs and is currently reaping the rewards. The PLAN has abandoned its past approach of constructing different classes of ships with one or two ships of each class and has instead focused its effort on two ship classes; the type-052C and the type-052D destroyers (The Military Balance, 2014. 207-208) representing a huge leap in capability for the PLAN. These destroyers enjoy a more powerful radar array and more advanced anti-ship and anti-air weaponry, together with the ability to fire land-attack cruise missiles. The PLAN has also taken similar steps to upgrade and streamline its patrol ship fleet by focusing on the building of type-056 corvettes (*Ibid.*).

On the other hand the PLAN has enjoyed mixed success with its submarine fleet. Notwithstanding the fact that it has a substantial force of conventional submarines, progress in its nuclear submarine program is very slow; despite rumours of new designs coming into service the PLAN is still evaluating new designs and relying on an increasingly aging fleet. This is further aggravated by the fact that China does not have

a reliable submarine launched ballistic missile in service capable of reaching the US. The JL-2 SLBM program has experienced difficulties (Hootan, 2014) and this leaves any potential new Chinese SSBNs without an operational long range missile (The Military Balance, 2014. 208).

In 2012 the PLAN undertook delivery of its first aircraft carrier (The Military Balance, 2013. 252) the Liaoning, which was an uncompleted Soviet carrier. Despite this the carrier was not expected to be available immediately for service, but rather to provide training and experience to the PLAN and its sailors in the operating of carriers. Throughout 2012 and 2013 carrier landings were carried out as training, together with hanger and flight-deck organisation (*Ibid.*). It is hoped that this vessel will lead to the development of full-fledged carrier battlegroups similar to what the US operates. Indeed in 2014 there has been the start of construction on a second aircraft carrier or a large amphibious assault vessel in Shanghai (The Military Balance, 2014. 208). This is a significant step forward for the PLAN and its intention of transitioning into a full-fledged Blue Water Navy.

Due to the reasons stated above the problem the US faces is that although its navy is larger than China's, it must maintain a worldwide presence meaning that the full force of the US military cannot be brought fully to bear on China as this risks destabilising other regions around the globe. As much as 60% of the navy is already deployed to the Pacific and with China free from world commitments it is not impossible to imagine that in the future China will be able to gain regional numerical superiority. Together with this there are further factors to take into account like how good is the PLA at fighting jointly? How good are its recruits? (given the fact China operates a conscript system), and does China possess the ability to innovate military technologies? (Kazianis, 2015) An army is not solely the machines that it operates but also the people

and their experience, here the US still maintains an advantage – the last major war that China engaged in was in 1979 against Vietnam (*Ibid.*).

6.5. Japan

Militarily these last few years have been quite interesting for Japan, not necessarily due to its acquiring of new capabilities but rather due to the discourse currently taking place in the country. Despite the low defence-spending to GDP ratio, indeed in 2013 Japan was one of the few countries in East Asia which saw a decrease in defence spending (The Military Balance, 2013. 248), the JSDF is considered one of the most modern armed forces in Asia (The Military Balance, 2014. 250). The rise of China is creating concerns in Japan, questioning the limits that the Constitution of Japan imposes on the use of force. The tensions over the Senkaku Islands with China further aggravate this. Missile launches from North Korea showed that Japan is dependent on the US help to track potentially dangerous missiles, (The Military Balance, 2013. 266) something which a proportion of the Japanese population see as utterly unacceptable. However any move towards re-writing the constitution or purchasing of offensive weaponry is highly controversial.

On the capabilities side Japan recently launched a new helicopter carrier, *Izumo*, which is the largest vessel that Japan has operated since World War Two. Another one is currently under construction and these will complement the two *Hyūga*-class helicopter carriers already in service (The Military Balance, 2014. 201). This signifies Japan's intention to take a more active role in the US-Japan alliance. Exercise Keen Sword 2014 was an important development for the JMSDF and provided further proof to this. For the first time since the start of the exercise in the 1980s a Japanese Officer was given the role of Combat Commander and was put in charge of the joint US-Japanese

task force (Salvin, 2014). Japan also has an advanced and indigenous submarine industry which supplies boats to the JMSDF. Currently there is also debate on whether to supply Australia with new advanced submarines, as many as ten new boats (Clark, 2015), which would be a first since World War II for Japan as due to its constitution it does not engage in arms trade.

6.6. Vietnam and the Philippines

Vietnam and the Philippines have both come into conflict with China in the South China Sea and both face a number of challenges when it comes to dealing with China. Whilst the countries mentioned until now have vast economies and can, to a certain extent, afford to maintain large military forces both Vietnam and the Philippines are much smaller economies and have smaller military budgets. Vietnam has a military budget of 3.8 billion dollars and the Philippines a military budget of 2.2 billion (2013 estimates) (The Military Balance, 2014. 448). Neither country can afford to match China alone but both are trying to make funds available for much needed modernisation programs to counter Chinese encroachment on the Paracel and Spratly Islands.

Due to the political situation in Vietnam, being a Communist country and its history with the US, traditional Vietnam has relied on Russia to supply it with weaponry (The Military Balance 2013, 277). However this is set to change; the Chinese threat has pushed both the US and Vietnam closer to each other. Vietnam has allowed the US limited access to some of its ports (*Ibid.* 276) and the US has taken steps to lift some of the weapons embargos it put on Vietnam in 1984 (BBC News, 2 Oct. 2014).

Vietnam has since 2011 started to develop the capabilities needed to conduct operations in its maritime domain, included the transfer of personnel and air assets to coastal regions (The Military Balance, 2013. 275). In 2012 the country started to fly

reconnaissance missions over the disputed areas, together with this Vietnam has also invested in maritime patrol aircraft and offshore patrol vessels (some are of indigenous construction, whilst others have been purchased from abroad) (*Ibid.* 276). Vietnam is also in the process of acquiring six Russian *Kilo*-class submarines, the first of which was delivered in 2012 (*Ibid.* 277), together with purchases of anti-ship weaponry from India and Russia (*Ibid.*). Despite this Vietnam has maintained bilateral relations with China but has placed more importance on ties with the US.

The Philippines on the other hand is facing a much more serious problem; the US was largely responsible for Philippine security until 1992 when it was forced to leave after a referendum. This led to a situation where the Philippines Army had to take over the responsibilities of the US, despite their small size and budget (The Military Balance, 2014. 274). This has been aggravated further by natural disasters and the tensions with China. Internal security also remains an issue with a Muslim insurgency within the country resulting in the armed forces having to deal with both internal and external threats (*Ibid.* 202).

On the procurement front the Philippine armed forces face various challenges. Budget shortages have meant that plans to acquire second hand F-16s from the US did not materialise and instead 12 TA-50 light fighters have been acquired from South Korea (The Military Balance, 2013. 246). The navy also acquired a coast guard cutter from the USN and has plans to arm its ships with new anti-ship missiles. Together with this the Philippines and the US also agreed to a modernisation program for the army (Jerusalem, 2014). In 2013 the government also announced the purchase of two new Italian frigates as a deterrent to China (Eshel, 2013). Together with this in 2014 the country signed a new military pact with the US that would see US forces come back (Franciso and Spetalnick, 2014). The treaty does not establish a permanent military

base on the islands but rather provides for the rotation of US forces, including warships and aircraft.

6.7. Taiwan

Taiwan remains a sensitive issue in East Asia, with China putting pressure on any nation that engages in relations with Taiwan. On the other hand Taiwan does have standing treaties with the US and to a certain extent the US remains committed to the defence of Taiwan. Tensions have flared up and down over the years and Taiwan views the modernisation of the PLA with fear and uncertainty. It is due to this that the Taiwanese army has launched a reform and modernisation program of its own in what has been dubbed as “small but superb, small but strong and small but smart” in a defence white paper (The Military Balance, 2013. 273). As part of these reforms conscription has been ended with the aim of developing a dedicated volunteer force. The main strategy of the Taiwanese army is that of denying a foothold to a possible PLA invasion (*Ibid.*).

On the capabilities side due to Taiwan’s small size and budget, about ten billion dollars in 2014 (The Military Balance, 2014. 488), it has no chance of going head to head with China thus it has to prioritise its spending in areas which it feels will deter or cause the most damage to Chinese aggression. Thus Taiwan has invested in maritime patrol and early warning aircraft, together with investment in air defence and a one billion-dollar Long-Range Surveillance Radar (*Ibid.* 273).

Taiwan’s budget in these last years has been focused on acquiring new aircraft for defence, together with expanding its underwater capabilities. Hence Taiwan is in the process of upgrading its fleet of F-16s (BBC News, 21 Sept. 2011) and looking into buying new variants of F-16s to replace its aging fleet of aircraft, however the US is

unwilling to sell new aircraft to Taiwan out of fear of angering China (*Ibid.*). Despite this Taiwan has had some success in procuring AH-64 *Apache* gunships and other helicopters (Defence Industry, 2014). Similar issues have plagued Taiwan's submarine program, with no country willing to supply the Taiwanese Navy with advanced equipment. Taiwan has thus launched its own indigenous submarine program (Defense News, 2014). The problem with this is the fact that developing an indigenous product will be expensive and time consuming with a prototype not expected until 2024 and at a substantially increased price than an imported design (Leaf, 2014).

In other areas Taiwan is also looking at replacing its aging tank fleet (Ross, 2014), again looking at the US to purchase refurbished M1A1 *Abrams*. However the defence minister admitted in 2012 that upgrades to the F-16 fleet have squeezed the military budget to a point where the military cannot afford other weapons citing the offer of the US to sell M109 self-propelled howitzers and M1 *Abrams* to Taiwan as needed but unaffordable (Global Security, 2012).

6.8. Conclusion

Tensions with China have resulted in an uncertain future for itself and its neighbours as shown. All the mentioned countries have outstanding issues with China and a Chinese military build is viewed as suspicious. To this end many have turned to countries outside the region to provide them with weapons and security. The prevalence of American weaponry can be clearly seen; the Philippines, South Korea, Japan and Taiwan have large stocks of American equipment. In this regard it is certain that the US will have a future role in the region at least if not as an active player as a weapons supplier.

What is of particular interest is the fact that Chinese ambition of countering US military power in the region has not only resulted in increased US military assets in the region but also the willingness of its neighbours to modernise their militaries. This has had two notable effects on the situation. Firstly, it has had the effect of justifying military build-ups, particularly in Japan which has realised that it must not solely rely on the US for protection. Secondly, it has provided the US with additional bases in the region, some in countries which are not regarded as traditional US allies. Vietnam and the reopening of Philippine bases are an example of this. In the end these are all circumstances which do not benefit the Chinese and will in the future act against their interests.

Chapter 7

Case Study 2: The Senkaku Islands Dispute

7.1. Introduction

One of the current outstanding issues in East Asia is between Japan and China over the Senkaku Islands or Diaoyu in Chinese, which in turn also created tensions between the US and China. This has propelled all the countries involved to take measures to assert or defend their control over the islands.

Japan, China and Taiwan all have different claims on the islands. Besides the presence of the natural resources in the form of oil and gas, the islands are an important fishing ground for Taiwan and the Okinawans. The Chinese desire the islands due to their strategic value as part of the First Island Defensive Chain and their plans for an A2/AD strategy. Together with this neither Taiwan nor Japan wish to appease China in gaining territory, especially after seeing the Chinese gains in the South China Seas.

7.2. Historical Context and Claims

The Senkaku Islands are a group of eight uninhabited islands having a total area of seven kilometres squared (BBC News, 10 Nov. 2014). Historically, ownership of the islands is difficult to establish due to a number of reasons; whilst the Chinese knew about the presence of the islands, as they were used as navigation waypoints, there was no Chinese claim or presence on the islands.

7.2.1. Japan

The Japanese claim on the islands is somewhat complicated. If the rule of law is to be considered, Japan has a better claim than China: Japan annexed the islands in 1895 (after the Chinese defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War) when they claimed that the islands were *terra nullius* or unclaimed land (The Economist, Dec. 2012). The

Japanese give strength to this claim by claiming that before 1971 neither China nor Taiwan had any objection or disputed their sovereignty (Ikeda, 2013). Together with this, since the annexation of the islands there was a continuous Japanese presence; the islands were given to a certain Tatsushiro Koga to develop, who in turn established a number of operations on the islands. Japanese people were brought over to harvest albatross feathers for down, a factory was built to process bonito, and on one of the islands (Uotsuri) the population topped 200 (*Ibid.*). Together with this there are various other accounts of Japanese settlement of the islands. Of utmost interest is an incident where the islanders of Ishigaki rescued Chinese fisherman in 1920. This prompted the Chinese consul in Nagasaki to send a letter of appreciation to the islanders which addressed each resident by his full name (Ikeda, 2013) and is used as an official recognition of Japan's sovereignty.

7.2.2. China and Taiwan

China's claim is based on the fact that the Chinese were the first to discover the islands. They cite as evidence a 1403 description of the islands, and the fact that people used to collect herbs from the islands (The Economist, Dec. 2013). However unlike the Japanese, China maintained no presence whatsoever on the islands. Together with this China (PROC) also has the Taiwan aspect to fall back on due to the fact that China considers Taiwan to be a renegade province. This means that China considers Taiwan's claim as its own claim; the PROC being the legal successor of the ROC. Taiwan claims the islands on the grounds that they are geographically close to it, and have always been used by Taiwanese fisherman; indeed China claims that the islands were a part of Taiwan until the 1884 Sino-Japanese War when Japan took over Taiwan.

The Chinese claim also has a legal aspect, which involves the US. After the defeat of Japan in the Second World War, Japan was placed under the direct control of the US, together with both the Senkaku Islands and the Ryukyu Islands. During the period the Americans used the Senkaku Islands as a bombing range (The Economist, Dec. 2013) with no complaints from China and after the withdrawal of the US in 1972 the islands were administered by the Japanese government. The San Francisco Peace Treaty signed in 1951 by the allies and Japan officially ending World War II leaves some ambiguity when it comes to the Senkaku Islands, however; the treaty states that the Japanese renounces territorial sovereignty over Taiwan, recognising the fact that Taiwan was taken by the Japanese after the First Sino-Japanese War. When referring to Taiwan the treaty uses the wording “*Japan renounces all right, title and claim to Formosa (Taiwan) and the Pescadores.*” (Treaty of Peace with Japan, 1951) with no specific mention of the Senkaku Islands and neither China nor Taiwan had any objections to the Treaty (BBC News, 10 Nov. 2014). Hence the Japanese government has claimed that the islands are not covered by this treaty, the Senkaku Islands were not a part of Taiwan, whilst China has claimed that the islands are covered by the treaty due to the fact that they were part of Taiwan and that Taiwan was in no position to oppose the US since it depended on US support (*Ibid.*). This according to China has resulted in a situation where the US and Japan are in breach of the treaty (Ikeda, 2013).

7.3. Geographical Evidence

Geographical evidence further clouds the situation. Map data is conflicting, Chinese maps published in China in 1953 and 1960 clearly show the Senkaku Islands as Japanese territory, together with this, the islands are referred to in their Japanese

name (*Ibid.*), on the other hand a Japanese map from 1785 shows the islands with their Chinese names (The Economist, Dec. 2012).

The unique geographical features of the area further complicates the matter; the Okinawa Trough which is formed due to a back-arc basin where the Philippine Sea Plate meets the Eurasia Plate, gave rise to both the Senkaku Islands and the Ryukyu Islands (a chain of islands stretching from Japan to Taiwan which includes the islands of Okinawa), which today are an integral part of Japan. This has presented problems in the interpretation of who should own the islands, at least from a geographical point of view (Guoxing, 1995). Both countries have interpreted this in different ways. The Chinese state that the presence of this geographical feature shows that the plates of China and Japan are not connected and that it acts as a boundary between Japan and China, hence the islands are Chinese territory, whilst the Japanese maintain that the trough is an incidental feature in a continuous continental margin between the two countries and that it should be ignored (*Ibid.* 10).

The situation remained at a standstill until the 1970s when oil and gas reserves were discovered under the seabed surrounding the islands. It was at this period that the controversy over the islands exploded leading to the tensions of today as all sides rushed to lay claim on the islands, till then under definitive Japanese control. The Chinese however were in no real position to pursue their claim and instead Japan and China agreed to shelve the dispute and leave it to be settled in the future (The Economist, Dec. 2013). However in September 2012 the Japanese government bought three of the islands that it did not already own from a private owner, in effect nationalizing them (BBC News, 10 Nov. 2014), in a move which angered China and lead to the tensions of today.

7.4. Reactions and Actions since 2012

The purchase of the islands in 2012 triggered a series of events/actions which saw a spike in tensions between China, Japan and to a lesser extent Taiwan. The Japanese purchases of the Senkaku Islands angered China and the Chinese government protested against the purchase. This was followed by public protests and demonstrations and an increase in incursions into the waters surrounding the islands.

It is important to mention how each country has approached the dispute. Despite the various claims mentioned above, Japan has since the beginning of the tensions taken a position where it does not even recognise that there exists a dispute. This action has limited the way that China and Taiwan can act in the matter. Chinese efforts have been concentrated on making Japan recognise that there is a dispute. All meetings and discussions about the islands are undermined by this fact; a statement released after a high-level meeting in November 2014 stated that *“Both sides recognized that they had different views as to the emergence of tense situations in recent years in the waters of the East China Sea, including those around the Senkaku Islands.”* a very carefully worded statement that while acknowledging that Japan and China have different views, Japan does not acknowledge that there is a territorial dispute (Keck, 2014).

Another problem is the fact that neither side has an interest in taking the case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). One of the reasons for Japan not to take the matter to the ICJ is the fact that it would acknowledge that there is indeed a dispute. On the other hand China has a stance similar to Japan when it comes to territorial disputes in the South China Seas with Vietnam and the Philippines (The China Post, 2014) where China refused to take part or acknowledge the presence of a dispute. Taking Japan to

the ICJ would be a situation of two weights, two measures and the countries in the South China Sea disputes will certainly expect to be treated the same way. Together with this there is the uncertainty that submitting the case to the ICJ brings due to the fact that a ruling is binding. Much has been said on the ramifications of taking the dispute to the ICJ, as mentioned above legally the case seems to favour Japan, as discovery alone does not create a legal title, however the idea that China is willing to take a country to the ICJ is regarded as a step forward in showing that China has matured and is willing to contribute in the resolving disputes (Murase, 2013).

On the other hand, tensions have cooled down between Japan and Taiwan. Despite the popular idea that the conflict over the Senkaku Islands is between China and Japan it is actually not. Taiwan has expressed the wish to remain an important party to any talks associated with the dispute. However, Taiwan faces a number of problems when it comes to taking part in discussions and to affect the outcome. One such issue is the fact that Taiwan is not part of the UN and thus, theoretically, has no right to negotiate over sovereignty issues (Bi-Whei, 2013). China has also called for Taiwan to collaborate with it in solving the dispute, however, Taiwan has refused such offers due to historical grievances and the fact that it has a much better working relationship with Japan (Torres, 2013). Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou has called for what he defines as an East China Sea Peace Initiative (similar to the Code of Conduct for South China Sea) where territorial claims are put aside and instead the countries share the undersea resources around the islands (Holmes, 2012). The idea as a whole goes beyond the Senkaku Islands and aims to foster mutual trust, observance for international law and co-prosperity in the East China Sea (Keck, 2014). Unfortunately these proposals seem to have fallen on deaf ears. However, some agreements have been undertaken by Japan and Taiwan regarding the islands; in April 2013 Japan and

Taiwan signed a fishing agreement despite protests from China (Reynolds and Lin, 2013). This agreement allows Taiwan's fisherman to fish in the disputed waters near the islands together with their Japanese counterparts. The agreement also shows that Taiwan is willing to consider a compromise rather than full ownership over the islands and the surrounding seas.

Since then there have been various developments on the ground. The purchase of the islands by Japan saw a huge influx in incursions into the territory surrounding the island by navy vessels, fishermen and protestors. Some of these incursions included landing on the island and raising national flags on them. In 2012, after Japan announced its plans to purchase the islands, there were two separate incidents where Chinese and Japanese activists visited the islands. A boat of Chinese activists managed to land on the islands and raised the Chinese flag over the island, however, they were quickly arrested and deported by the Japanese Coast Guard (BBC News, Aug. 2012). Later this was followed by a similar landing by Japanese activists, also raising their national flag. Similar attempts have been carried out since then by all sides (BBC News, 23 Aug. 2014). Clashes have also been reported between Coast Guard vessels; in a notable incident Taiwanese Coast Guard vessels escorted fishing boats to the disputed waters where they clashed with Japanese Coast Guard Vessels and both sides engaging each other with water cannons (NBC News, 2012). Other serious incidents have included arrests of fishermen and the detainment of their vessels (Bloomberg, 2014).

In November 2013 tensions escalated when China declared an ADIZ over the East China Sea which incorporated the Senkaku Islands (BBC News, 26 Nov. 2013), much to the dismay of Japan, South Korea and the US. This prompted a number of actions from these countries. South Korea a few days later expanded its own ADIZ (fig. 5) to

include two islands that are also claimed by China (BBC News, 8 Dec. 2013) resulting in overlapping in the Chinese and South Korean ADIZs. The US and Japan on their part ignored the ADIZ completely and in a show of defiance continued to fly sorties into the area. A few days after the announcement the US flew B-52 bombers over the disputed islands and Japan dismissed the zone (BBC News, 28 Nov. 2013). For their part the Chinese also sent their own planes to the disputed territories. This led to a sharp increase in scrambles by the Japanese between 2013 and 2014 to fend off Chinese planes entering the territories (Tajima and Yamaguchi, 2014) (BBC News, 16 April 2015). This was the highest number of scrambles since the end of the Cold War in 1990, more specifically, the number of scrambles against Chinese intrusion increased 13-fold since 2008 (*Ibid.*). This has led to reckless behaviour from both sides; the US formally accused China of reckless mid-air intercepts (BBC News, 23 Aug. 2014) both in the East China Sea and the South China Sea.

Both Japan and China have also constructed bases near the contested territories. China has built a heliport 300km away from the Senkaku Islands as a way to exercise control over the island (Singh, 2015), on the other hand the closest major US and Japanese military base is 400km away. Japan, for its part did construct a military radar installation on Yonaguni Island, about 150km away from the Senkaku Islands (BBC News, 19 Apr. 2014) to increase monitoring activities over the islands. Whatever the outcome, Japan seems determined to deny a foothold to China, a lesson that the countries in the South China Seas learned the hard way.

7.5. US Involvement

Apart from the historic involvement the US today is very much active and interconnected with the dispute. China sees the US as one of the causes for the current

issues whilst Japan sees the US as vital to the issue; the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan covers all the territories of Japan. As early as 2012, after the announcement of nationalisation by the Japanese government, the US announced that the islands were in fact covered by the treaty (Asahi Shimbun, 2012). However the US did call for the peaceful resolution of the dispute, emphasising the fact that the US has no preference on who should have ultimate sovereignty over the islands. China replied to these statements by saying that the treaty is the product of the Cold War and that the actions of a third party will not affect its actions (The Japan Times, 2012).

This has been the position of the US since the spike in tensions, something which President Obama has emphasised at various intervals. In April 2014, during his Asia Tour, President Obama again reiterated his commitment to Japan (Panda, 2014) by specifically mentioning the islands by name (McCurry and Branigan, 2014). This was also emphasised in meeting with Chinese military leaders (Defense News, 24 Apr 2013).

This has meant that the US has committed itself to deploy the most advanced and capable units to the Asia-Pacific, like the deployment of the latest missile interception technologies (Rahmat, 2015) and of various other assets like amphibious transport docks (Gutierrez, 2015). The deployment of amphibious assets is particularly interesting as it can be taken as being a direct response to the Chinese threat against the islands, similarly Japan has invested in amphibious forces (Schogol, 2014) and in a new carrier, which is the largest ship that the JMSDF has operated since World War Two (BBC News, 6 Aug. 2013), amidst speculation that in the future Japan will look into developing a full carrier force (Keck, 2014). Together with this the US has also undertaken initiatives to show China that the US will not be 'bullied'. The ignoring of

the ADIZ in the East China Sea and the passing of US warplanes into the area sends a clear message; both to counter China's bluff and to show that the US is still an important and relevant player.

7.6. Conclusion

The situation over the Senkaku Islands remains a fragile one; no country wishes to antagonise the situation especially considering that the US will inevitably be involved, whether this will be enough to maintain the status quo over the islands in the future is uncertain. This dispute has provided a willingness on the part of Japan, Taiwan and the US to work together to deny the islands to China, even if they themselves possess conflicting claims.

The situation will remain at a standstill so long as the US can convey the image and ability that it will stand with Japan against a possible Chinese move against the islands. This situation has forced Japan to undertake steps to strengthen its military as mentioned above. Japan wants to signal to the US that it is ready to take up a bigger role in its own defence.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

8.1. Overview

The dissertation set out to investigate the role of the US in Asia and whether the actions undertaken by the current US administration will help to maintain its leading role in the region. This chapter will look at the conclusions of the dissertation, together with the limitations of the research conducted.

The importance of East Asia in the international system cannot be understated. In the last 50 years East Asia has undergone a transformation; the region has now become an economic powerhouse. In essence, today East Asia is the factory of the world. Its great population and resources makes it a great opportunity for economic investment. However, the region is also rife with historic mistrust and grievances; especially between those that conquered and those that were conquered. Thus it is only natural that as the region's importance and GDP grow the tensions in East Asia become more prominent. Similarly, as the prosperity of East Asian countries grows they will be more willing to fight for what they believe is theirs, today these countries can afford to buy the most sophisticated military systems to exert their influence in disputed territory.

The dissertation has therefore shown how the US is in the midst of rebalancing itself in a region that is increasingly important. The literature review demonstrated the importance of East Asia to the US and the need for the 'Pivot to Asia'. It looks at the challenges the US faces, more notable the challenge of A2/AD. The literature review also looks at the different countries in East Asia and how some are uneasy at the idea of the US becoming more involved in East Asia whilst others welcome the renewed US involvement. Together with this, the criticism levelled at the 'Pivot to Asia' is discussed;

both the idea that the US is not doing enough and the fact that there are those who believe that there is no need for a 'Pivot to Asia'.

The Theory and Methodology Chapter applied theories of international relations to the situation in East Asia. The Hegemonic Stability Theory was used to show how the presence of two hegemons is detrimental to world order and how China is attempting to establish regional hegemony in East Asia but is faced with an increasing number of challenges. The idea of Chinese hegemony does not sit well with China's neighbours or the US. The fact that the region is being competed for by both China and the US is in itself breeding instability. The chapter also looks at the Security Dilemma in East Asia where all the countries in the region are undertaking some kind of military build-up out of fear of each other. Not only is there a competition between the US and China but also between China and its neighbours. This results in mixed effects, on one hand the presence of well-armed nations in the region might mean that power is much more balanced and that no country will seek war, but on the other hand the presence of large amounts of weaponry mean that the likelihood of war is increased exponentially.

The chapter then looks at methodology: the use of qualitative research and the different sources used in the dissertation. Together with some of the difficulties encountered which included the language barrier and the fact that information is not always forthcoming regarding China.

The fourth chapter focused on the actions of the US in East Asia in more detail. It examined the work of past administrations in East Asia and the concrete action that President Obama has undertaken to strengthen the US presence in the region. This has included a mixture of initiatives covering both military and economic ties; the US's commitment of assets to the region, the sheer amount of military exercises that the US

conducts in East Asia and the idea of the TPP. The chapter also tackles issues like the UNCLOS in the South China Sea and territorial disputes. The influence of ASEAN and its outstanding issues with China is also shown in this chapter.

The two case studies highlighted two specific issues in East Asia. The first case study shows the effects of China's military rise and its territorial disputes on its neighbours. The rise of China and its aggressive stance in the South China Seas has meant that its neighbours have increasingly been arming themselves to counter any future hostile moves from China. The fact that China has advocated policies such as the nine-dash line and the island defence chains doctrine (fig. 10), has meant that these countries are looking at the future with apprehension. The second case study specifically scrutinises the Senkaku Islands dispute. The dispute has been used by both China and Japan as an excuse for increased militarisation, which in turn has attracted the attention of the US. From a South China Sea perspective the dispute is an interesting case of China not gaining what it claims/wants and might prove as an interesting example to all players involved in denying Chinese claims.

8.2. Findings and Results

The research conducted shows that for the foreseeable future the US will maintain an important role in the region, even if it is not able to maintain its role as the most powerful player. This is due to a number of reasons; first, the rise of China and the tensions with its neighbours will mean that the US will always be welcomed in the region; both by its long term allies and by other countries, which were not considered as traditional allies. This will provide the US with 'friends' in the region and, more importantly, with bases from where it can operate. Second, the US is still in a strong military position; partly due to the superiority that US forces have in experience and equipment when

compared to anyone else and partly due to the fact that the US maintains various bases in the region which give it the ability to deploy assets from within the region; ships, aircraft, MEUs, etc. are all present within the region giving a quick response time together with the advantages of operating near US bases (fig. 12).

However, the presence of the US is in itself creating a problem; the 'Pivot to Asia' and the focus to East Asia has been viewed by China as a move to contain it, the amount of bases the US maintains in East Asia (fig. 13) would certainly point to this. This has resulted in a situation where both China and the US are engaged in a race to maintain military superiority. The US being an outside player means that it needs military bases in the region and the support of China's neighbours, who are now increasingly willing to arm themselves. The challenge that the US and President Obama face is one of balancing the 'pivot' itself.

Thus the 'Pivot to Asia' is not solely a military rebalance but also an economic one. The US invests heavily in the ASEAN countries; to this day it remains the largest contributor to FDI in South East Asia. In parallel to this, the Obama Administration has also committed itself to reach a deal with regards to the TPP before the end of this presidency. The US is the largest importer of Chinese goods in the world (Statista, 2014) and China is the third largest importer of US goods (US Census Bureau, February 2015). This is followed by Japan, South Korea and Hong Kong, at fourth, eighth and tenth place respectively as the US largest export partners (*Ibid.*). With four out of ten of its largest export partners in East Asia it is only natural that the US will seek to secure its interests here, whilst at the same time continue to work to increase its economic gains from the region.

On the other hand one must not solely point at the US as a bringer of instability in the region but also at the inherent contradictions in China's policy and actions. China has advocated its policy of a 'peaceful rise' with the aim of assuring its neighbours and the US that its military and economic rise will not threaten the stability and peace of the region. Whilst on the one hand China's rhetoric policy of the 'peaceful rise' advocates peace and reassurance, where it does not depend on land grabs to sustain its rise to power (Bijian, 2005), its actions in the China Seas are contradictory too this.

To this effect perhaps the greatest advocate of the US 'Pivot to Asia' is China itself. Until a substantial push is made to solve the territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas, where all parties come up with an acceptable agreement, which at this stage seems highly unlikely, the US will always be viewed by China's neighbours as a welcomed player in East Asia, a counter to the rise of China in a region rife with historic mistrust and grievances.

8.3. Gaps and Limitations

Due to the vastness of the subject it was impossible to cover all the issues pertaining to US involvement in East Asia. This has resulted in some issues that were skimmed over or not mentioned due to a number of reasons; they were not directly related to the subject of the dissertation or were too complex to explain within the limits of the dissertation.

Chief amongst these were the issues surrounding North and South Korea. The complex relations of South Korea with North Korea, China, Japan and the US would require a dissertation of their own to explain. This however does bring into focus a further element in the security of the region which is that of a nuclear North Korea and

the tense relationship which exists between South Korea and Japan and the fluctuating relations between South Korea, China and Taiwan.

Another issue that was not give much prominence within the dissertation was the role of Australia in East Asian issues. Whilst geographically Australia is not part of East or Southeast Asia, the fact that the US Department of State classifies everything East of Burma down till Samoa as part of East Asia and administers it under the department of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, means that Australia has enjoyed a significant amount of attention when it comes to the 'Pivot to Asia'. This has included (some of which were mentioned throughout the dissertation); the deployment of substantial US assets and soldiers to the country and closer military ties with Japan (Garnaut, 2014).

Together with this the dissertation also understated the effects that US commitments elsewhere have on the rebalance towards Asia. It is a known fact that USN resources are limited despite it being the largest in the world, similarly the resources of the USMC are also limited. Whilst the President did commit to redeploying 60% of the navy to East Asia together with a substantial contingent of USMC assets, this was at a time when there was increased disengagement from the Middle East and Europe. Only time will tell how the renewed fighting in the Middle East and the recent disagreements with Russia will affect US commitment to East Asia. Although in theory US forces have maintained the ability to fight two wars in two different theatres at the same time since the end of the Cold War, it is debated whether it is practically applicable today (Goure, 2013), or if this ability is required today and if it is worth the significant investment to maintain such a force.

8.4. Conclusion

The dissertation set out to establish the merits of Barack Obama's new commitments to Asia. It is my view that President Obama's 'Pivot to Asia' has indeed managed to shift US attention to Asia both in terms of military and economic might. However, what remains uncertain is whether this is enough in the long term to maintain US influence in East Asia. The nature of the issues discussed means that although US influence in East Asia may be guaranteed in the next couple of years the scope of the 'Pivot to Asia' goes beyond a single Presidency. The work done by this administration must be continued by subsequent administrations.

From a military aspect the USN remains a very powerful foe, even if China is ever to achieve numerical parity the PLAN is still lacking in experience and technologies. The very fact that China has no Aircraft Carrier Groups (the only carrier China maintains is for training and evaluation purposes) places the PLAN at a considerable disadvantage, which in my opinion China is unable to negate. Even the fact that China is increasing its spending on the Navy and its carrier projects does not alter the fact that the USN has been operating aircraft carriers since 1920 and thus has considerable experience in their effective use. This makes any potential aggressive military move on the part of China unfeasible and senseless. In my opinion the US military superiority will remain for the foreseeable future.

Indeed analysts and strategists agree that US influence and involvement is at least guaranteed for the next ten years, beyond that US involvement will depend on various factors; like whether China continues its military rise and adhering to its territorial policies, whether US involvement in the region is justifiable by economic gain and whether or not Japan will still depend on the US for its protection. If the US's long

history in the region is any indication of what the future may hold, it is indicative that the US is in East Asia to stay.

Appendices

Appendix A: Maps and Infographics



Figure 1: The East and South China Seas and surrounding countries

(Geography.howstuffworks)

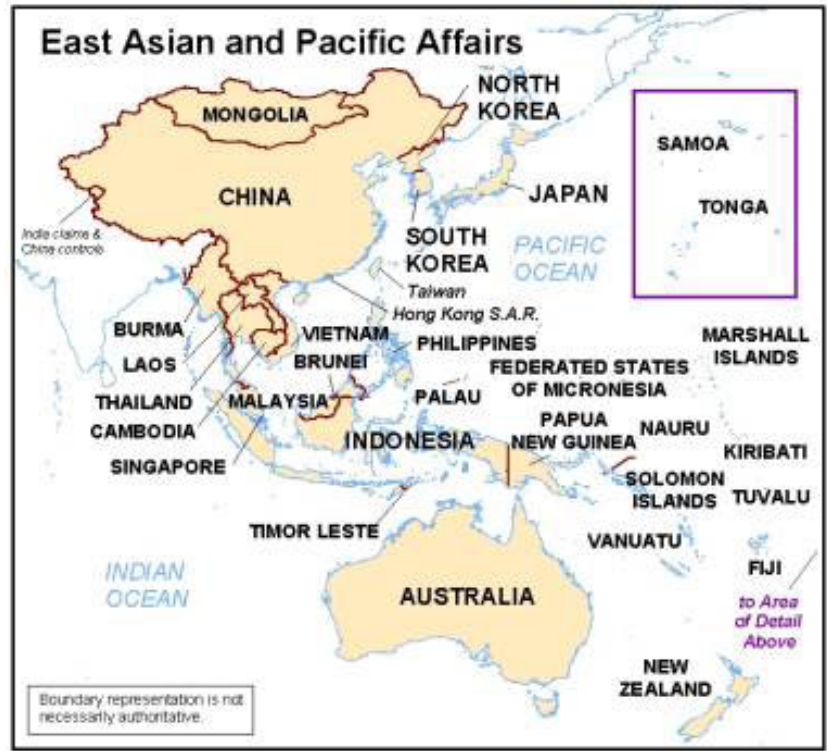


Figure 2: East Asia as defined by the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs within the US Department of State (Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs)



Figure 3: Island Disputes in East Asia (Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2014)

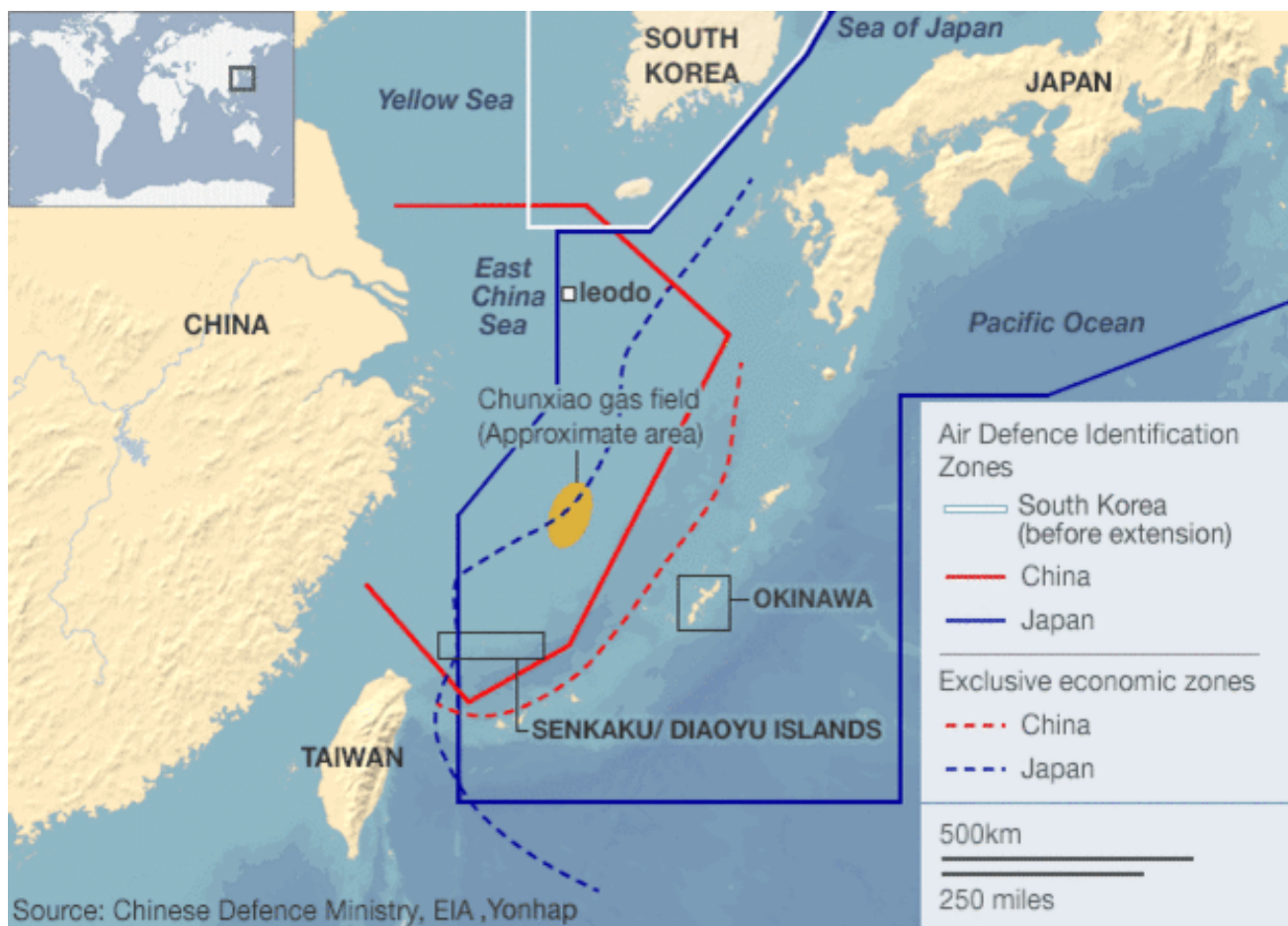


Figure 4: ADIZs in the East China Sea and the declared Chinese ADIZ (red) (BBC News, Nov 2013)

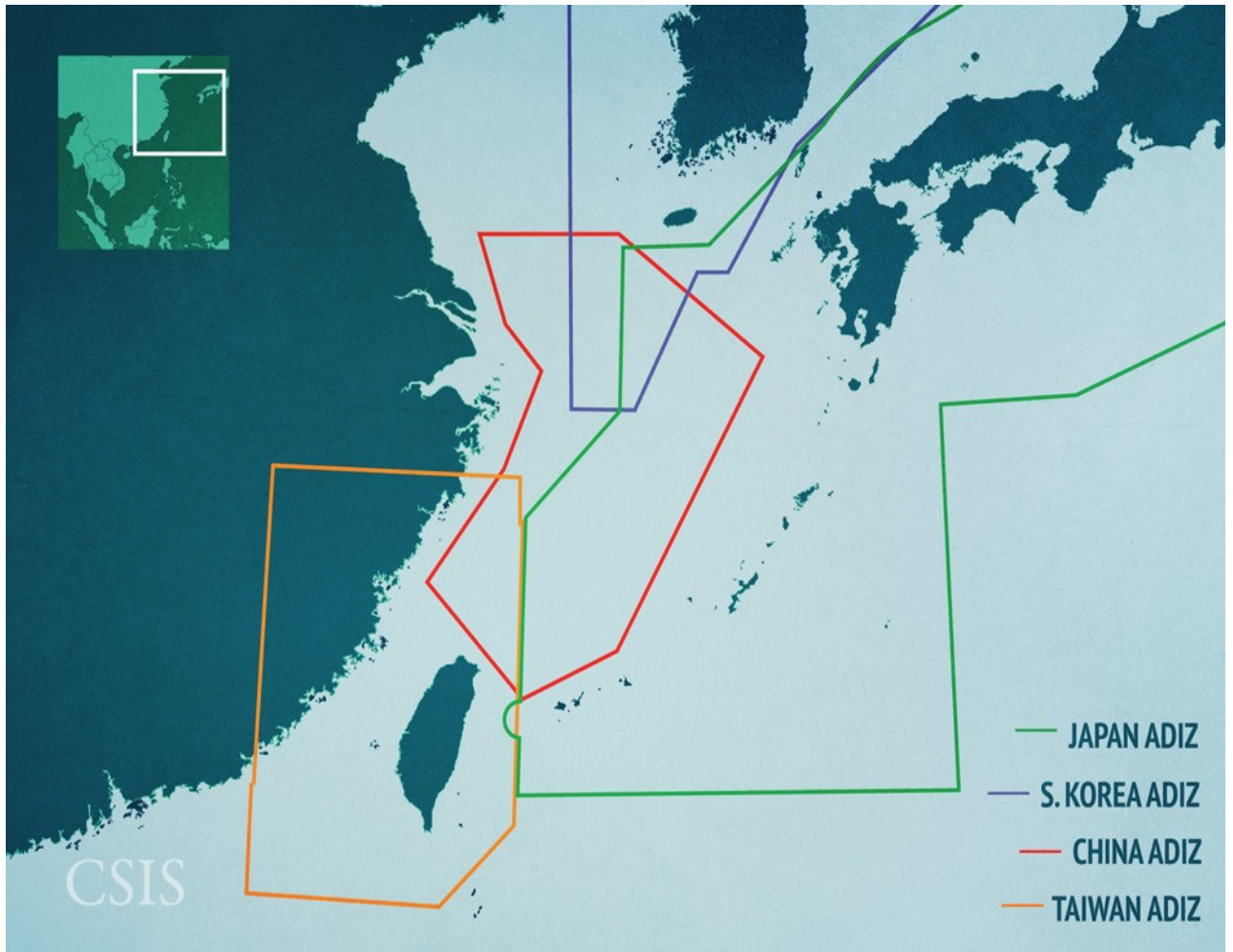


Figure 5: ADIZs in the East China Sea after November 2013. Note the expansion of the South Korean ADIZ (blue) south in defiance to China's ADIZ (Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2014)



Figure 6: China's nine-dot line: China places claims on everything that falls within the lines. (Centre for Strategic & International Studies, 2014)

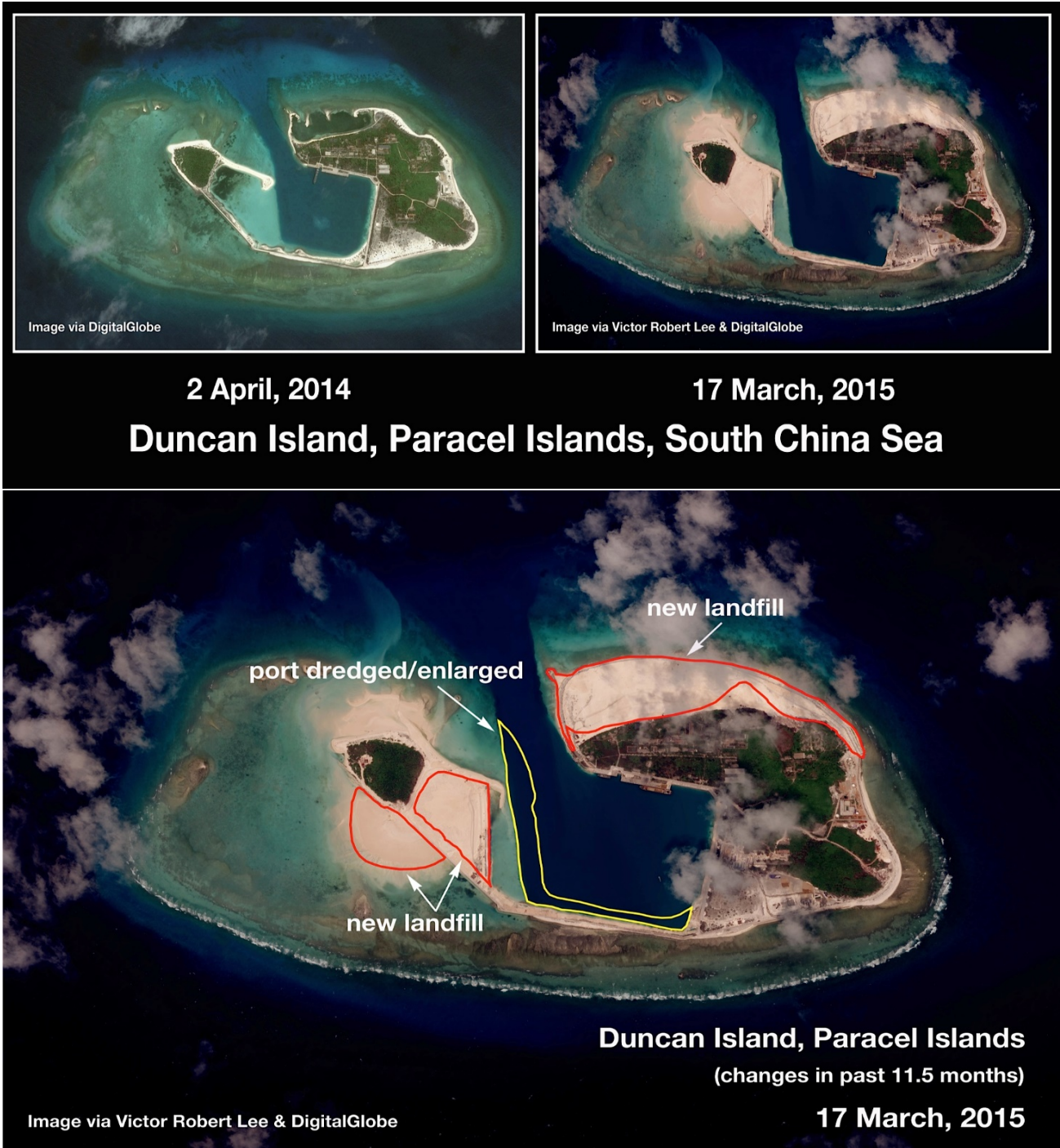


Figure 7: Duncan Island, seized by the China from Vietnam in 1974. A major land reclamation project is underway (Lee, 2015)

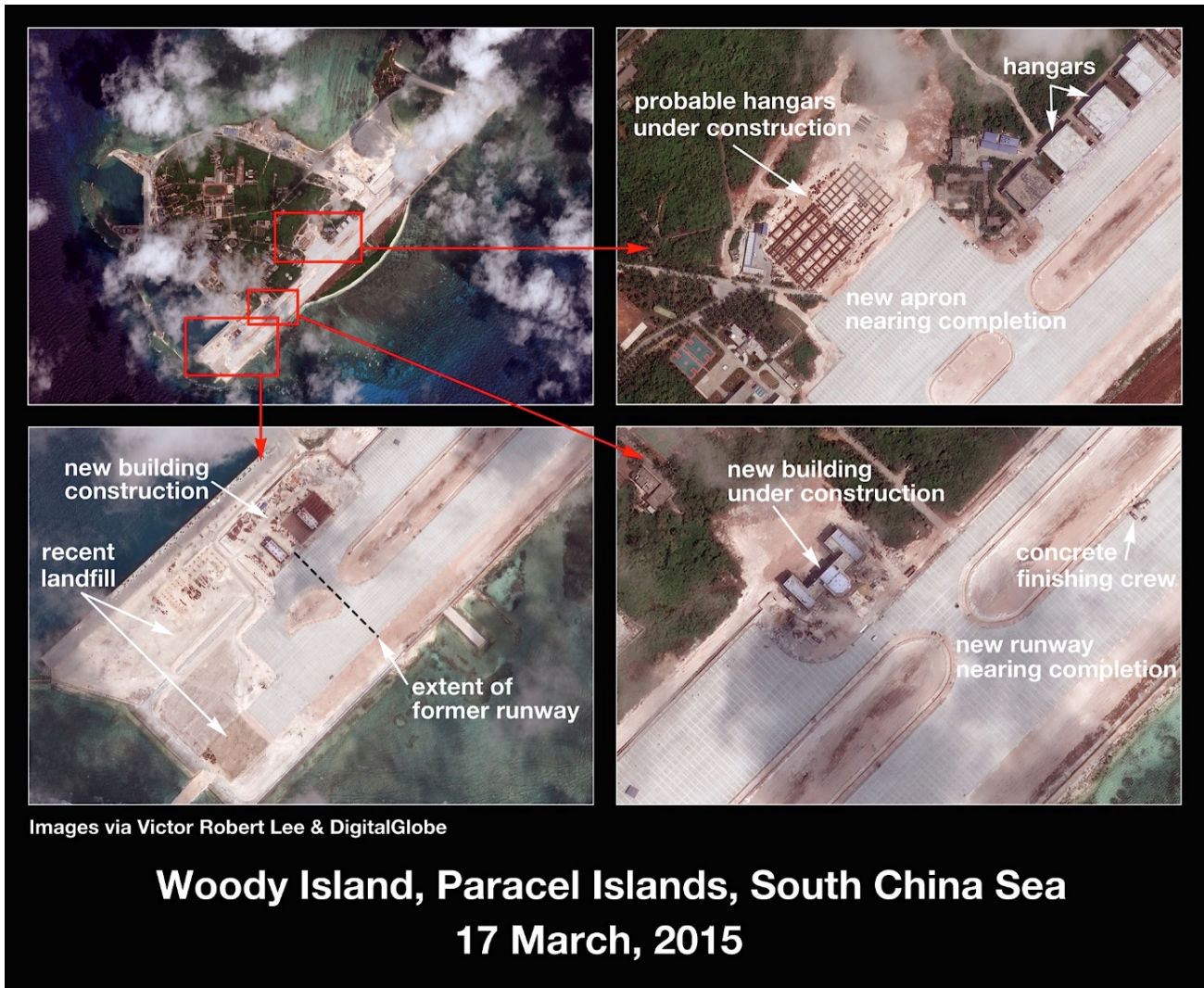


Figure 8: Woody Island occupied by China in 1956: major expansion of the runway and airport facilities (Lee, 2015)



Figure 9: Activity on Fiery Cross Reef in the Spratlys, this is the first such runway for the Chinese in the Spratlys (BBC, 17 April 2015) (IHS Jane's Defence Weekly, 2015)



Figure 10: PLAN strategy dictates that China be able to control the water off its shore. To this end Chinese ambition is to increase their control first to the First Island Chain and then to the Second Island Chain hence denying them to American Carrier Groups. Many predict that by 2020 China will be able to secure the First Island Chain (The Economist, 2012)

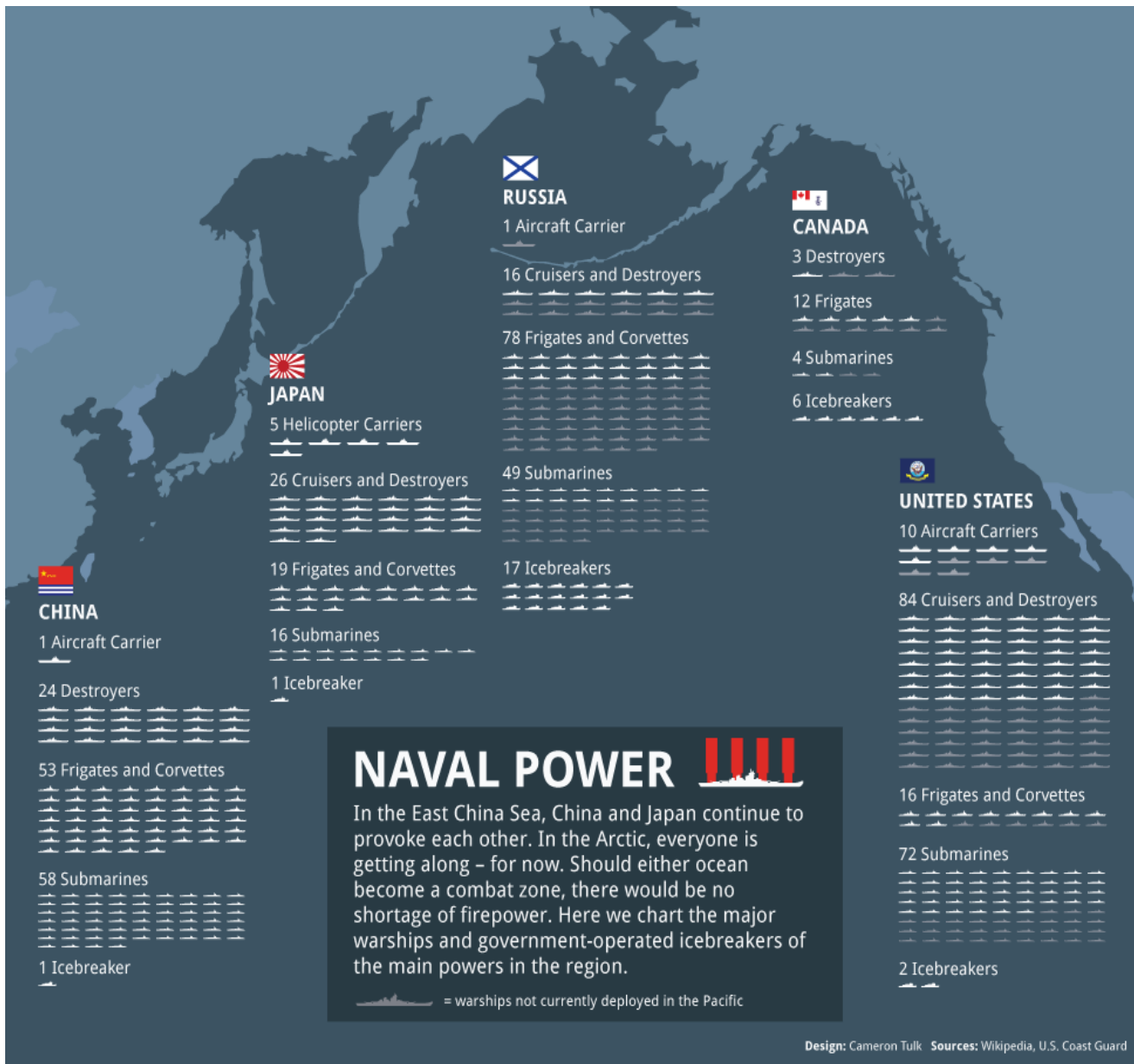


Figure 11: Naval firepower in the Northern Pacific Rim (The Washington Post, 2014)

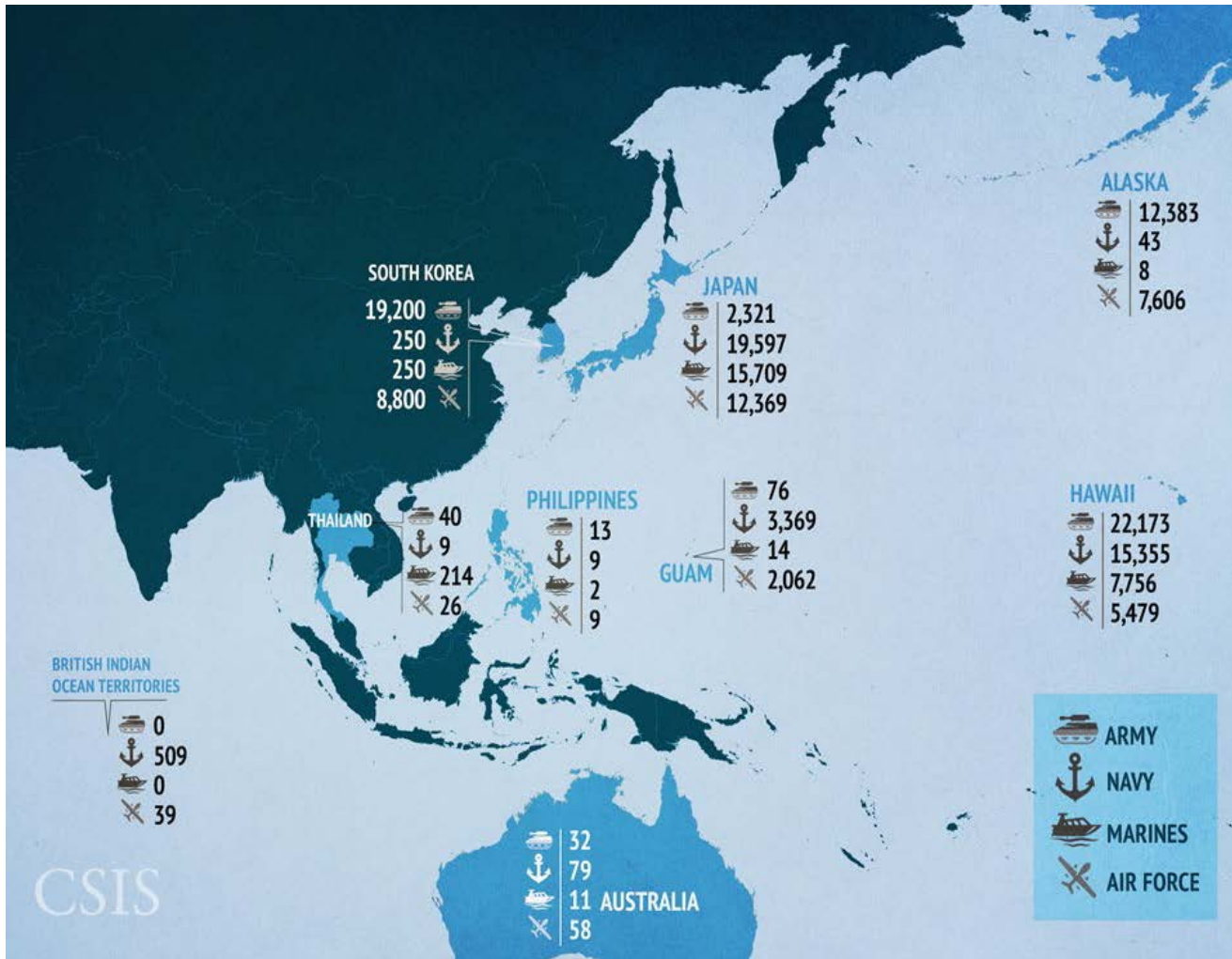


Figure 12: US forces deployed in East Asia (Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2013)

America's Forward Deployed Military Is Key to Regional Stability

Since the end of World War II, the U.S. military has remained forward deployed in the Western Pacific. It currently maintains dozens of bases in the region, most notably in South Korea and Japan.

SOUTH KOREA

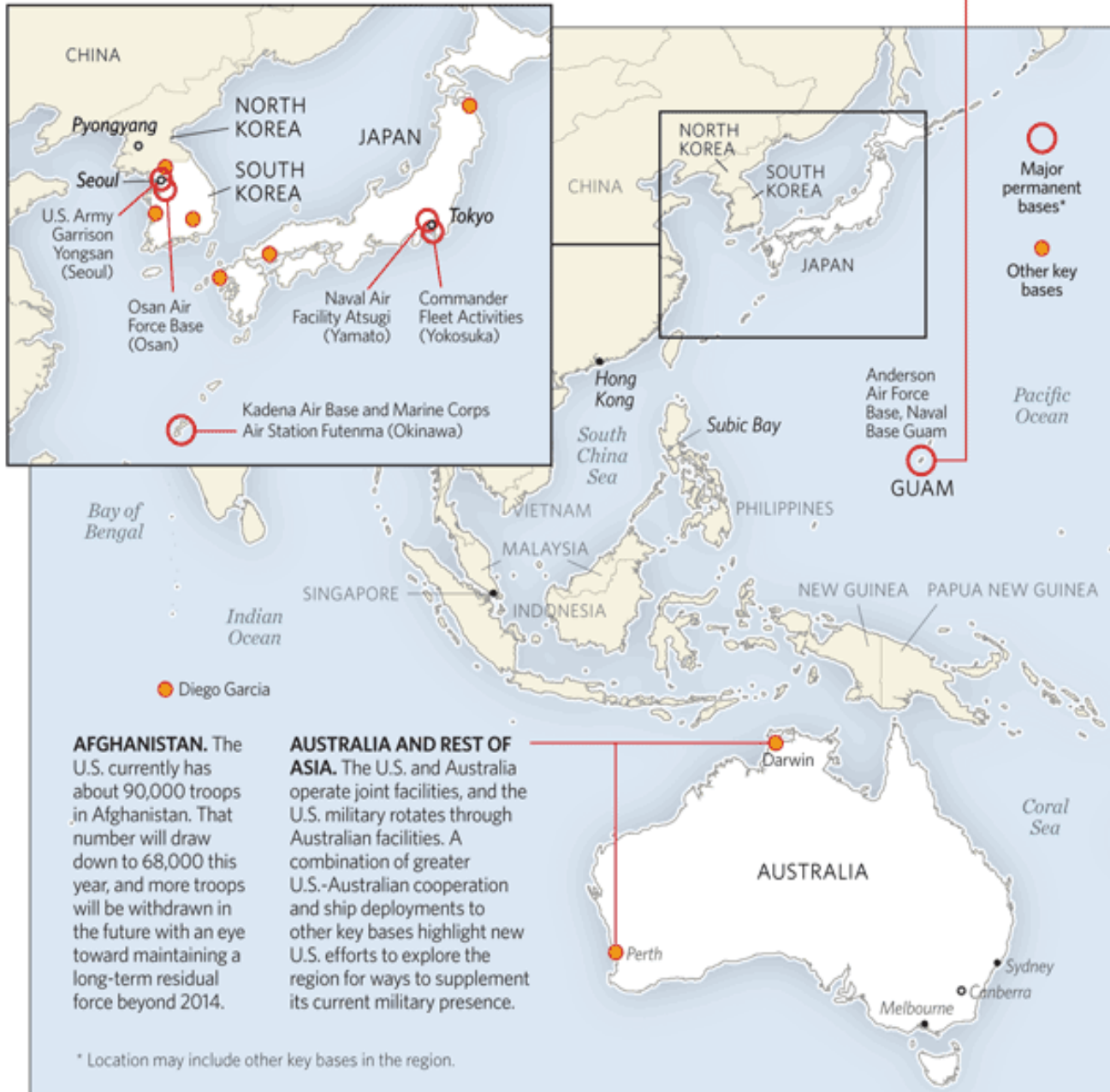
The U.S. is committed to maintaining a minimum of 28,500 troops on the Korean Peninsula to deter North Korean aggression. The two Korean nations are technically at war, having only signed an armistice in 1953.

JAPAN

The U.S. military maintains dozens of bases in Japan, accommodating a total of 38,000 Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps personnel. The U.S. Seventh Fleet is home ported in Yokosuka.

GUAM

Guam is a U.S. territory and growing security hub. It hosts two major bases and 12,000 American service personnel.



Sources: U.S. Department of Defense, "Military Installations," <http://www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil/pls/psgprod/f?p=MI:ENTRY:0> (accessed March 5, 2012), and Heritage Foundation research.

Figure 13: US bases in East Asia (US Department of Defence, 2012)



Figure 14: New bases opening in East Asia as part of the US pivot to Asia (*The Washington Post*, Jan 2012)

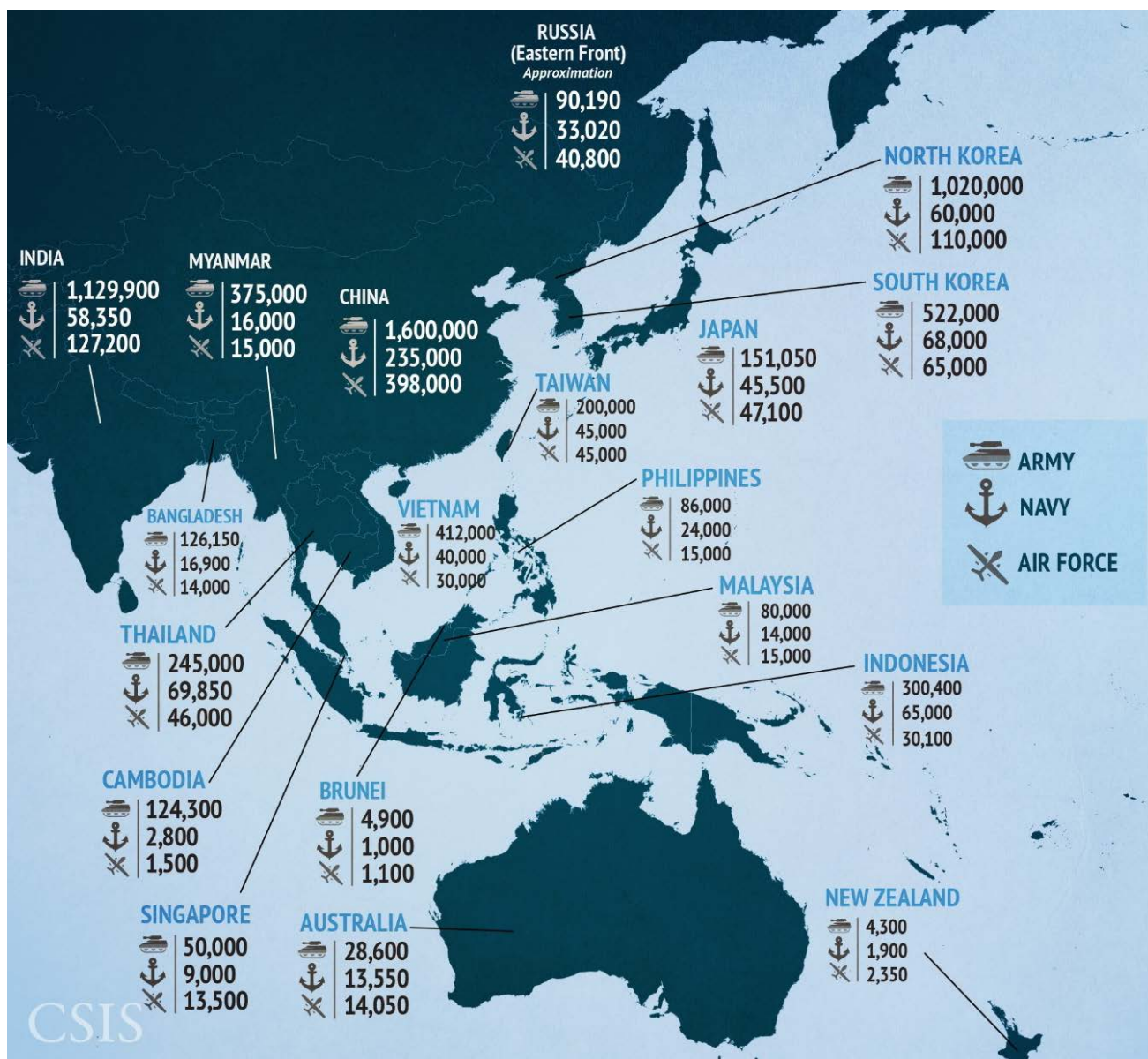


Figure 15: Military Power in East Asia; estimates of military personal of East Asian Countries (Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2014)

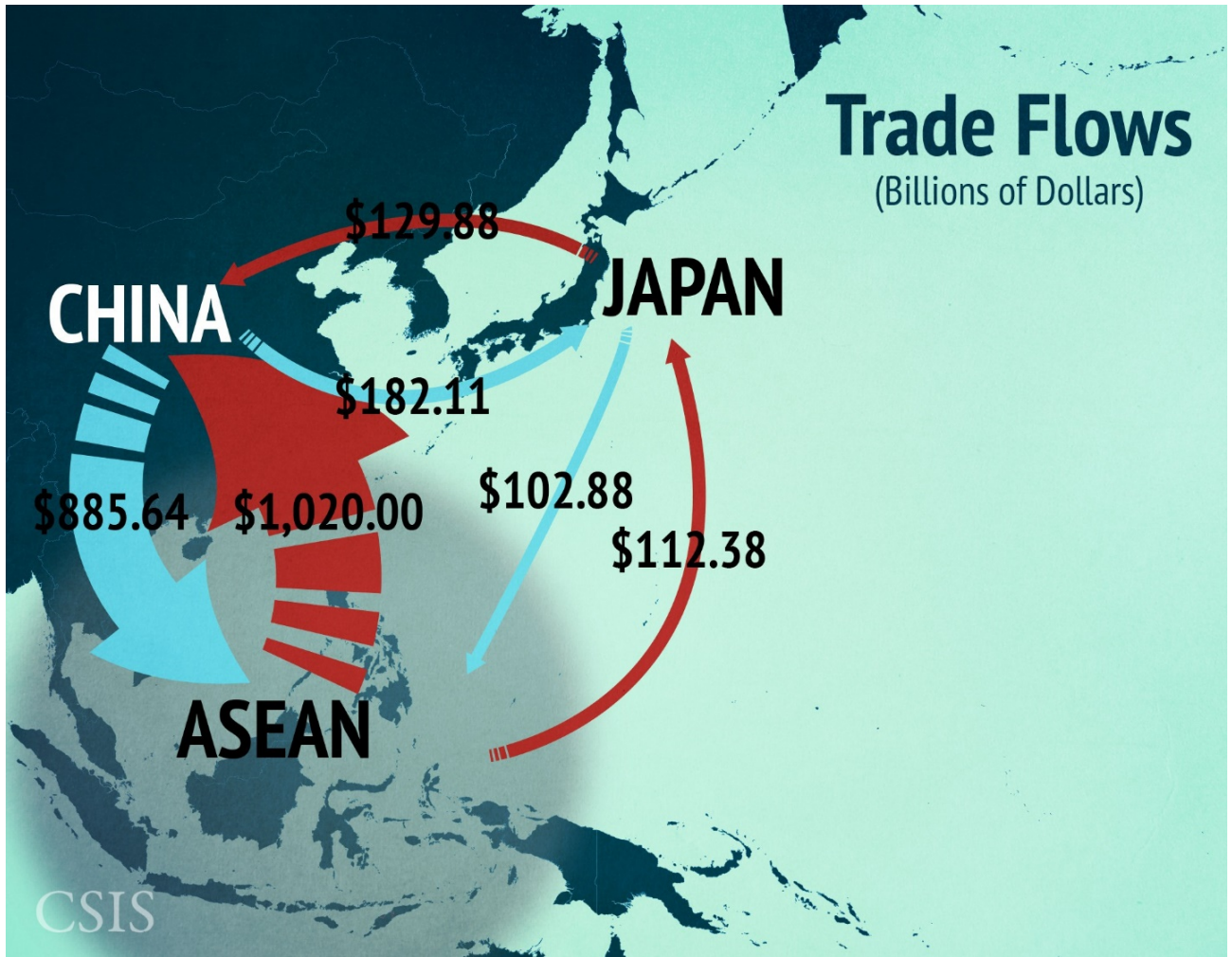


Figure 16: Trade flow in East Asia. Note the huge flow between China and ASEAN

(Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2014)

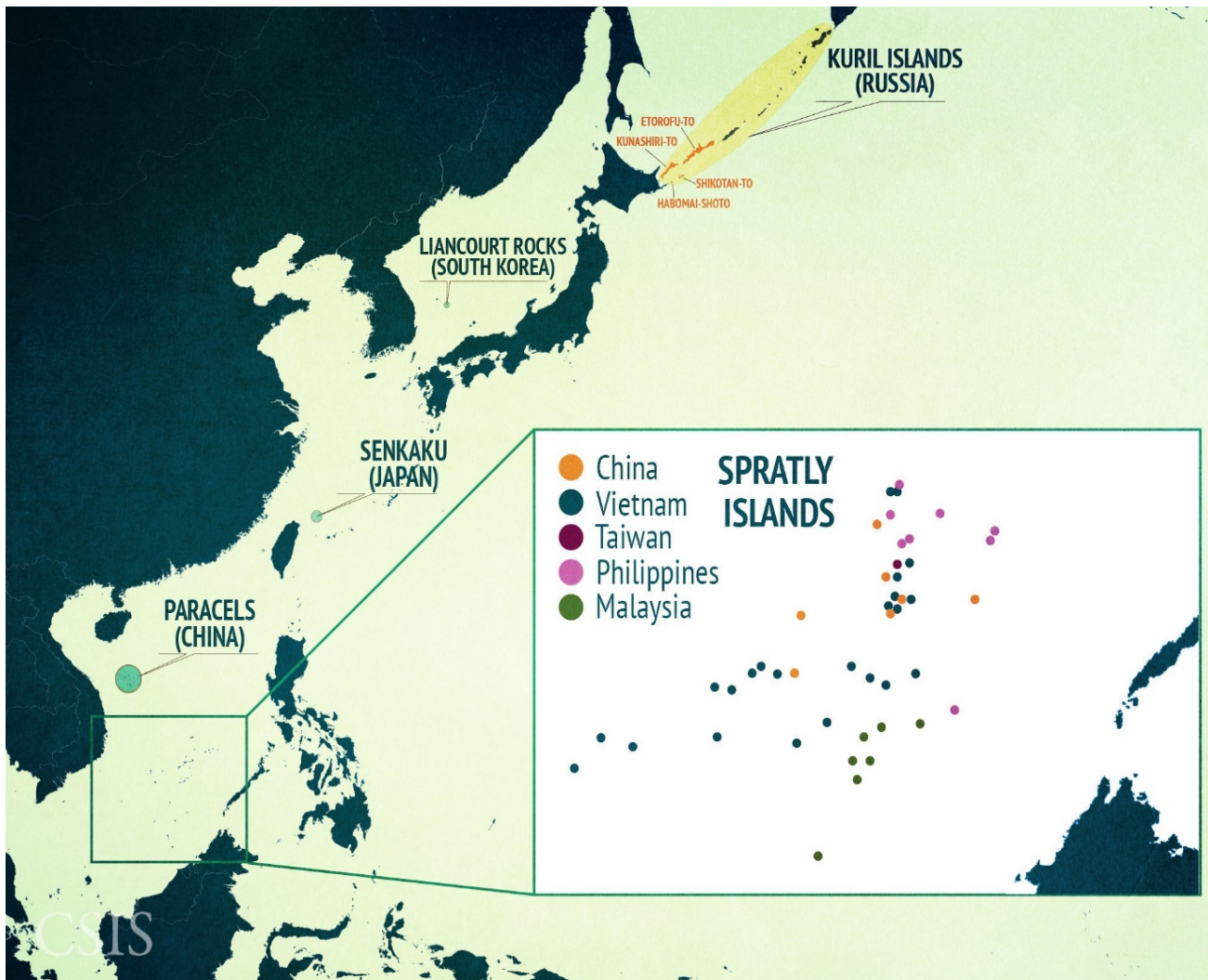


Figure 17: The Spratly Islands. Although claimed by various countries, no country alone occupies the entire chain of islands, instead the contestants occupy the various shoals that make up the chain. This is the reality of East Asian territorial disputes where islands de facto belong to those who are able to occupy them or deter others from occupying them (Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2014)

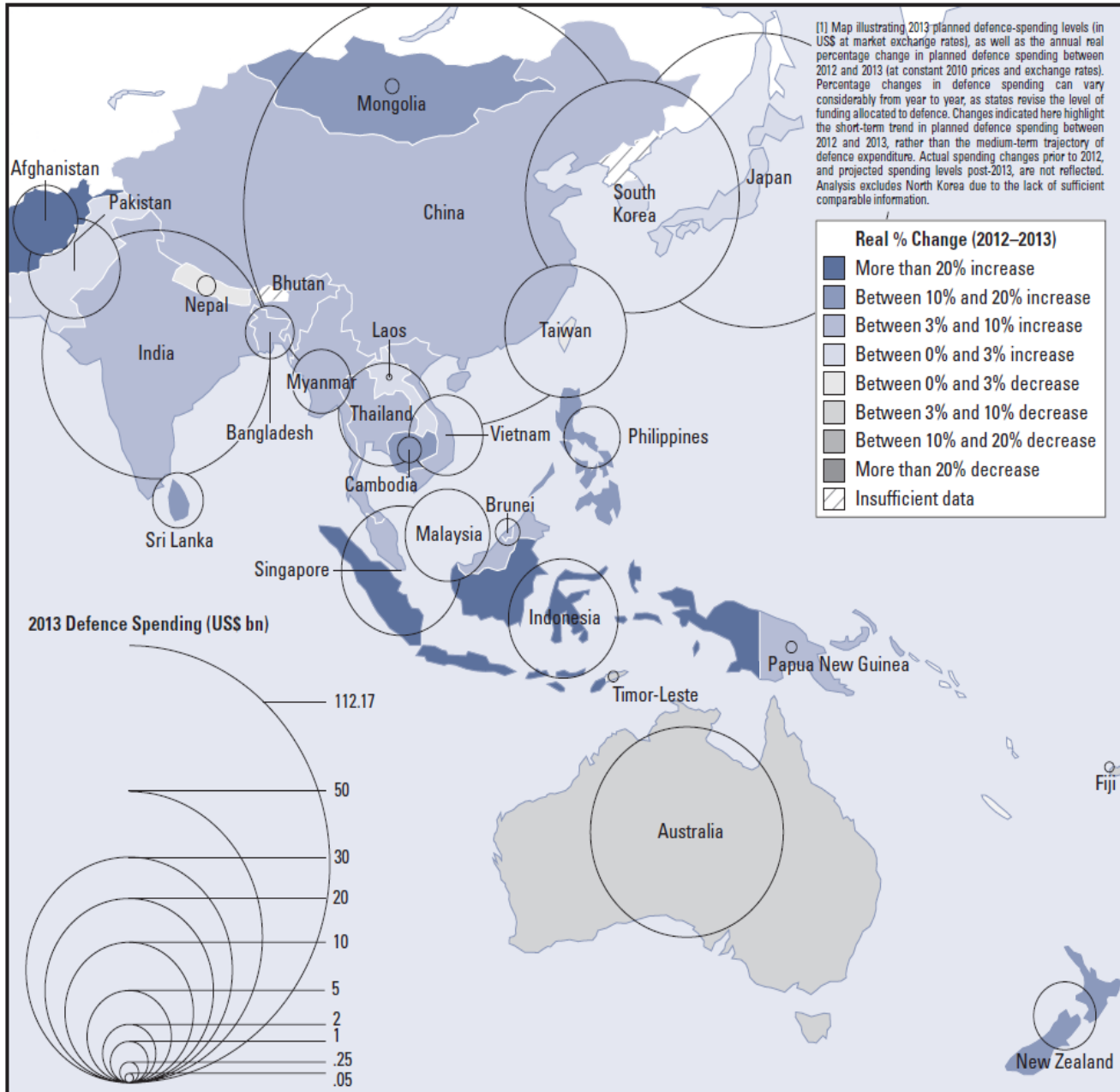


Figure 18: The increase in military budgets across East Asia since 2012. Note the across the board increase in budgets surrounding China (The Military Balance, 2014)

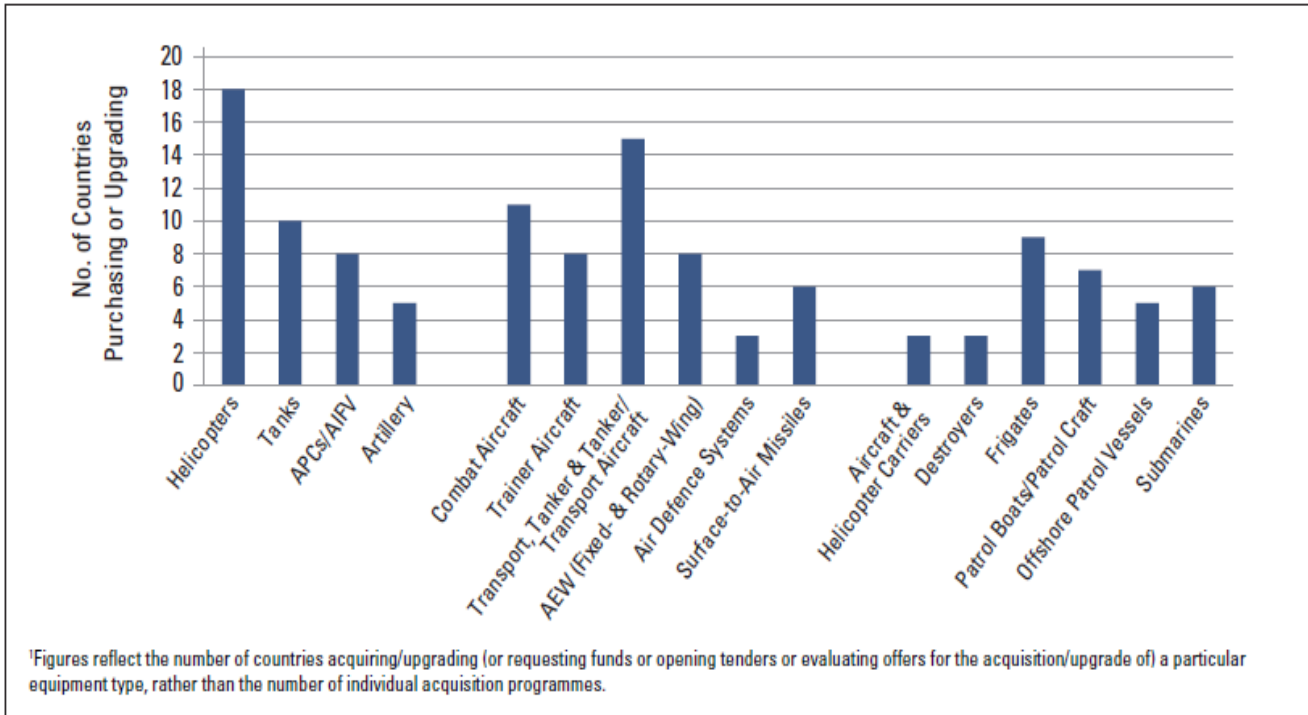


Figure 19: Upgrade Priorities in East Asia since 2009. East Asian militaries invest substantially more in aerial and naval assets and A2/AD weaponry like submarines and missile systems (The Military Balance, 2014).

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Maritime partnerships are critical to safeguard freedom of the seas to secure the world's oceans.

22
nations



49
ships

6
submarines

200+
aircrafts

25,000
participants

Capabilities & Exercises

Participating naval forces exercise a wide range of capabilities that center around:



Learn more about the world's largest international maritime exercise!

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Figure 20: RIMPAC 2014 infographic (RIMPAC Facebook page, 2014)

Appendix B: Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution

“第九条 日本国民は、正義と秩序を基調とする国際平和を誠実に希求し、国権の発動たる戦争と、武力による威嚇又は武力の行使は、国際紛争を解決する手段としては、永久にこれを放棄する。

二 前項の目的を達するため、陸海空軍その他の戦力は、これを保持しない。国の交戦権は、これを認めない。”

Official English Translation:

CHAPTER II

RENUNCIATION OF WAR

Article 9. Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

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