



China and Maritime Cooperation: Piracy in the Gulf of Aden

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China's People's Liberation Army-Navy (PLA-N) has just celebrated its 1st anniversary of deployment to the Gulf of Aden, its first overseas mission. This paper will assess this first year and attempt to determine the degree of Chinese learning regarding a maritime cooperative security strategy to counter piracy. China's maritime strategies are evolving incrementally towards greater convergence with American and Japanese approaches to maritime order driven by an interactive process of Chinese domestic debates with rapidly changing facts on the ground, praxis, especially when encountering crises that require Chinese adaptation.

The author has previously written on Japanese maritime strategies and the formation of ReCAAP as a counter-piracy maritime regime that China was slowly socialized within and eventually joined.¹ The focus of this paper is primarily on China's maritime strategies and how Beijing has responded to US and Japanese initiatives.

As we witness deeper engagement by China with international institutions and responding to transnational threats, questions remain: does Beijing play by the rules, is it solving global problems and strengthening the international system as a responsible stakeholder, and is Beijing willing to take on a proactive leadership role?²

This paper's focus is on China's adaptation to international maritime cooperation as a process of learning from the bottom-up through operational coordination. The process of learning may lay the groundwork for a trilateral or multilateral maritime arrangement. It is argued that the institutional design of a potential East Asian maritime regime should be viewed as a

¹ "Japan and the East Asian Maritime Security Order: Prospects for Trilateral and Multilateral Cooperation," *Asian Perspective* vol. 33 no. 3 (2009): 107-149; "Chinese and ASEAN Responses to the U.S. Regional Maritime Security Initiative," in *China Turns to Multilateralism: Foreign Policy and Regional Security*, Guoqiang Wu, ed. London: Routledge, 2007, p. 127-146.

² Nina Hachigian, Winny Chen, and Christopher Beddor. *China's New Engagement in the International System: In the Ring, but Punching Below its Weight*. Washington DC: Center for American Progress, November 6, 2009, <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/11/chinas_new_engagement.html>.

dependent variable that is the result of this learning, rather than an independent variable that structures maritime cooperation.³

Comprehensive Security in Maritime Issues

Chinese have used comprehensive security, cooperative security and common security interchangeably, although in the case of Somalian piracy they are analytically distinct. A comprehensive security approach to the problem of Somalian piracy would address the root causes of piracy – poverty, lack of economic development, and threats to environmental security by commercial overfishing that has forced Somalian fishermen into piracy. The UN has taken this kind of comprehensive security approach to Somalia, as have many developing countries concerned that the Somalia model of dispatching warships on counter-piracy missions might eventually be applied to them. China's official policy on Somalian piracy closely parallels the UN's position, and reflects an emphasis on comprehensive security instead of the use of warships.

Nevertheless, the Chinese deployment to the Gulf of Aden is taken to be a major opportunity for China's participation in cooperative security. Cooperative security is generally defined as a multilateral security arrangement that is inclusive and creates habits of dialogue and cooperation.⁴ It is often associated with nontraditional security issues and transnational threats to security. The ASEAN Regional Forum was created on the basis of cooperative security.⁵ The Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) is a non-governmental, Track II dialogue for security issues in the Asia-Pacific that provides support for the ARF.⁶

Li Wei, Director of the Anti-terrorism Research Center, China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, claimed the Somalia deployment was a huge breakthrough because it represented a shift in China's perception of security from traditional security to non-traditional security.⁷ Chinese scholars had been writing about cooperative security and non-traditional security issues in the Asia-Pacific for several years but it was now being put into practice by the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLA-N).

China's interest in comprehensive security dates back to the 1970s when Japan's government adopted a concept of "comprehensive security" which influenced Chinese scholars at that time. These scholars introduced the concept in publications beginning in the early 1980s, eventually reaching government policymakers. With the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, the concept of "comprehensive security" became more widely used by Chinese government officials.⁸ Chinese approaches to comprehensive security and cooperative

³ Amitav Acharya and Alastair Iain Johnston, eds. *Crafting Cooperation: Regional International Institutions in Comparative Perspective*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 15.

⁴ David Capie and Paul Evans. *The Asia-Pacific Security Lexicon*. (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002), p. 98-107.

⁵ The ASEAN Regional Forum website is at: <<http://www.aseanregionalforum.org/>>.

⁶ Information about CSCAP can be found at: <<http://www.cscap.org/>>.

⁷ "Sailing to strengthen global security," *China Daily*, December 26, 2008, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2008-12/26/content_7342612.htm>.

⁸ Chu Shulong, "Globalization and Security: A Chinese View," presented at the International Symposium on Security Affairs 2004, organized by National Institute of Defense Studies, Japan Defense Agency, p. 17-33, found at:

<http://www.nids.go.jp/english/dissemination/other/symposium/e2003.html>. Chu more recently has written on a trilateral framework for US-China-Japan relations for managing both traditional and non-traditional security issues, *A Mechanism to Stabilize U.S.-China-Japan Trilateral Relations in Asia*, CNAPS Visiting Fellow Working Paper, Brookings Institution, January 2008.

security were reflected in the “New Security Concept” presented by China to the ASEAN Regional Forum in March 1997. However, it was not until the East Asian Financial Crisis in 1997 that officials realized the importance of economic security and included it as part of comprehensive security. Since 1997, Chinese official thinking on security has broadened, incorporating energy security among several non-traditional security concerns which have been given a greater priority than before.

The Chinese adoption of the comprehensive security concept reflects an interactive pattern of scholarly discourse and empirical experience that leads to acceptance of new norms by government policymakers. Government ministries can in turn call on scholars to further elaborate on a concept. For example, the “New Security Concept” was promoted by the Asia Department of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs which asked Chinese scholars to articulate a normative basis for Chinese multilateral diplomacy. The Foreign Ministry needed this rationale to contend with critics of multilateralism in the PLA, the government and academia.⁹

It was the Foreign Ministry’s empirical experience of multilateralism with Southeast Asia in the ARF and CSCAP that generated further scholarly discourse on cooperative security. The Concept would lead to the 2002 China-ASEAN Declaration on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea. Chinese analysts point out that Beijing accepted international maritime relations as governed by international law (UNCLOS) in 2004, and reluctantly adapted to the regionalization of maritime security issues in the South China Sea as inevitable. China-ASEAN relations have steadily improved on the basis of cooperative security in nontraditional security issues.¹⁰ The first Chinese book on cooperative security in the Asia-Pacific was written by Professor Su Hao in 2003.¹¹

Intellectual debates in China have provided a window into Chinese thinking on policy issues over the last three decades.¹² Analysts have identified seven different channels for intellectuals to influence Chinese policymaking.¹³ Chinese debates are ongoing over the utility of comprehensive security vs. traditional security concerns. There are Chinese Realists and Chinese Neo-liberal Institutionalists who disagree on much and debate much.

However, Chinese naval strategy for geographic areas beyond Southeast Asia evolved separately from the New Security Concept. Outside observers noted that China’s New Security Concept with ASEAN did not extend to cooperative security with the US which had several initiatives for security cooperation in Asia and continued to hope for Chinese participation without success. The US wanted practical military-to-military exercises, while Chinese wanted dialogue on CBMs.¹⁴ In fact, Chinese discussion of Asian multilateralism was often a mechanism for displacing the US bilateral military alliances.

⁹ Susan Shirk. *China Fragile Superpower*. (Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 128.

¹⁰ Zou Keyuan, “Maritime Security and Multilateral Interactions between China and its Neighbours,” in *China Turns to Multilateralism*, Wu Guoguang, ed. (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 147-172.

¹¹ Su Hao. *From Dumbbell to Olive: Asia Pacific Cooperative Security Research*. Beijing: World Knowledge Publishers, 2003.

¹² Melissa Murphy. *Decoding Chinese Politics: Intellectual Debates and Why They Matter*. Washington DC: CSIS, January 2008.

¹³ Zhao Quansheng, “The Impact of Intellectuals and Think Tanks on Chinese Foreign Policy,” in *China’s foreign policy making: societal force and Chinese American policy*, Yufan Hao and, Lin Su, eds. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), p. 123-138.

¹⁴ Carlyle A. Thayer, “China’s New Security Concept and ASEAN,” *Comparative Connections* 3rd Quarter (July-September 2000), <http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/0003qchina_seasia.pdf>.

In 2001, Xia Liping had suggested principles for establishment of an East Asian multilateral security mechanism, guided by theories of common and cooperative security, in a dialogue that would be formed around ARF and ASEAN+3.¹⁵ In contrast, American scholars stressed maritime operational cooperation in the Asia-Pacific, operationalizing cooperative security concepts, rather than dialogue. Unfortunately, the ill-fated RMSI was what Americans had in mind.¹⁶ China remained skeptical of maritime security cooperation with the US throughout the 1990s up to the present.

From 1949 to 1980s, the primary Chinese naval strategic concept was “coastal defense.” From 1982, under the direction of Admiral Liu Huaqing, naval strategic concepts shifted towards “offshore defense” sometimes defined as defense of China’s 200 mile EEZ and including the Yellow Sea, East China Sea and South China Sea, waters around Taiwan and Okinawa. Strategic thinking outpaced naval capabilities as the PLA-N didn’t have the resources to implement the strategy of offshore defense.

Most recently Chinese naval strategists and scholars advocate “distance sea defense” or “far seas operations” which is not geographically bounded but rather defined by China’s maritime national interests which have been expanding.¹⁷ This strategy required the PLA-N have a global reach, as it moved beyond concern with Taiwan. The PLA-N also did not have the resources to implement this strategy and will not have them until 2020. Delinking naval strategy from territorial interests opened possibilities for maritime cooperative security with the U.S.

Chinese strategists have debated what role military operations other than war (MOOTW) could play in nontraditional security threats such as piracy, and concluded that these operations can increase China’s soft power as a responsible stake holder maintaining the global maritime order. It was another empirical experience, China’s lack of a role in the coordinated Indonesian tsunami relief in 2004, that resolved the debate in favor of MOOTW.¹⁸

The origins of the “far seas” concept of expanded national interest beyond territorial waters is based in the set of new missions given to the PLA by Hu Jintao in 2004, called *Historic Missions of the PLA in the New Period of the New Century*. These missions included countering terrorism and other non-traditional security threats, defending Chinese sea-borne trade and oil imports, and were in response to Hu’s December 2003 speech on China’s “Malacca Dilemma.”¹⁹ In April 2005, Hu Jintao further articulated a vision of a “Harmonious

¹⁵ Xia Liping, *Prospects for Cooperative Security in East Asia: from Chinese Perspectives*, Partnership for Peace: Building Long-term Security Cooperation in Northeast Asia, The Second Collaborative Workshop on East Asia Regional Security Futures, Nautilus Institute and Fudan University, June 8, 2001
<<http://www.nautilus.org/archives/nukepolicy/workshops/shanghai-01/xiapaper.html>>.

¹⁶ Stanley Weeks, “Maritime Cooperation and Regime Building,” *Maritime Security in the Asia-Pacific*. Report of a Conference organized by IDSS, May 2004, p. 24,
<http://www.rsis.edu.sg/publications/conference_reports/MaritimeConference04.pdf>.

¹⁷ U.S. Office of Naval Intelligence. *The People’s Liberation Army Navy: A Modern Navy with Chinese Characteristics*. August 2009, p. 5-6.

¹⁸ James R. Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, “Is China a ‘Soft’ Naval Power?” *China Brief* 9, 17 (August 20, 2009), p. 4-5.

¹⁹ Mr. Daniel Hartnett, China Analyst, CNA Corporation. *Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic & Security Review Commission, Hearing on China’s Military and Security Activities Abroad*. March 4, 2009,
<http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written_testimonies/09_03_04_wrts/09_03_04_hartnett_statement.php>.

World” which included international “institutional harmony” and regional institution-building, and would eventually be adapted to maritime relations.

In April 2009, the PLA navy celebrated its 60th anniversary with a naval review in the Yellow Sea, off Qingdao port, joined by 14 other nations’ navies. A symposium was held, called “Harmonious Seas,” in which Admiral Wu Shengli gave a keynote speech on maintaining peace and stability. President Hu Jintao conveyed to American and other foreign naval commanders China’s interest in increased international maritime security cooperation. Hu claimed international maritime cooperation would build “harmonious oceans and seas.” The inclusion of so many foreign navies at the event was meant to indicate that the PLA-N is becoming more open and would be increasingly willing to cooperate in the Gulf of Aden and elsewhere.²⁰

Nan Li finds multiple factors driving the PLA-N shift to a “far seas” naval strategy – domestic nationalism, dreams of a blue-water navy and anxiety over the security of the SLOCs China depended on. A maritime strategy delinked from territorial waters, the “distance sea defense,” allowed for incorporation of non-traditional security threats by non-state actors, such as terrorism and piracy.²¹

Robert Ross argues that China’s first long-distance naval deployment to the Gulf of Aden was part of a maritime strategy to build up naval forces into a blue-water navy that he calls “naval nationalism”, a “prestige strategy” that governments pursue to bolster their domestic legitimacy. Ross considers naval nationalism to be a suboptimal maritime strategy not driven by rational security considerations or cost-benefit analyses.²²

Erickson and Goldstein suggest that if China’s naval strategy were to shift to SLOC defense with a blue-water navy, beyond counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden, it would be preceded by domestic debates. If there were to be such a shift, there would be a sequence of events: first debates, then speeches, then published doctrines, followed by procurement, and then deployment. These debates are currently still ongoing.²³

With a focus on non-traditional security issues, a cooperative security approach was a possibility but Chinese naval strategists did not dwell on maritime cooperation. In deploying to the Gulf of Aden, China’s original intention was to protect Chinese interests in the SLOCs by guarding only Chinese ships. However, SLOC security is an international public good that would require Chinese naval strategists to adapt to emerging conditions on the ground.

²⁰ “China sets sail on unity for ‘harmonious’ seas,” *Shanghai Daily*, April 24, 2009, http://www.shanghaidaily.com/sp/article/2009/200904/20090424/article_398735.htm.

²¹ Nan Li, “The Evolution of China’s Naval Strategy and Capabilities: From ‘Near Coast’ and ‘Near Seas’ to ‘Far Seas,’” *Asian Security* 5, 2 (2009): 144-169.

²² Robert Ross, “China’s Naval Nationalism: Sources, Prospects, and the U.S. Response,” *International Security* 34, 2 (fall 2009): 46-81.

²³ Andrew Erickson and Lyle Goldstein, “Gunboats for China’s New ‘Grand Canals’?” *Naval War College Review* 62, 2 (Spring 2009): 43-76.

China-Japan Maritime Relations²⁴

Much of the credit for increasing Chinese acceptance of norms of maritime cooperative security is due to Japan's influence and the formation of ReCAAP, originally based on an ASEAN+3 framework but later expanded.

Chinese thinking on Japanese maritime strategies slowly evolved. Prior to 2005, Chinese writing on maritime security focused on defending China's maritime rights in relation to Japan, in a confrontational maritime environment of the Asia-Pacific.²⁵ But by 2005-06, Chinese writing on Japan's maritime strategy recognized that Japan had an emerging new concept of sea power. A major work on maritime cooperation, *Sea Lane Security and International Cooperation*, had several chapters on maritime security cooperation.²⁶

Assessing Japan's international maritime security strategy, it concluded that Japan pursued traditional security objectives with the U.S. such as in PSI, while also pursuing nontraditional security strategies in cooperation with China, South Korea, and ASEAN to fight piracy.²⁷ The volume claimed that international maritime cooperation was needed for SLOC security, especially the SLOCs in the Indian Ocean and to the Middle East. Oil dependence on the Middle East has been a major driver of Chinese concern over the SLOCs.²⁸

Chinese analysts argued that China's response to Japan's changing maritime strategy should be to re-examine its own maritime strategy, be more vigorous in presenting to the world its own maritime rights, and actively promote maritime cooperation in East Asia, including cooperation with Japan applying the lessons learned from the long history of Sino-Japanese cooperation on land and adapting these lessons to maritime cooperation.²⁹

A Japanese analyst in 2006 suggested a Japan-U.S.-China trilateral maritime cooperation framework, using the three nations' coast guards to protect the SLOCs, creating an international public good of SLOC security, especially in the Malacca Strait. Obstacles to realization of trilateral cooperation included very different maritime strategies and mutual distrust.³⁰

By 2006, Chinese writing was more positive on Japan's strategy to build a multilateral maritime security cooperation mechanism. Applying China's New Security Concept to maritime issues, and continuing to advocate common security and comprehensive security, Chinese argued China should participate in Japan's initiative against piracy (ReCAAP) in order to maintain maritime regional order.³¹ China, in fact, did join ReCAAP. Chinese writing took greater note of the influence of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on East Asian countries and their maritime territorial disputes and their

²⁴ This section draws from Christoffersen, "Japan and the East Asian Maritime Security Order: Prospects for Trilateral and Multilateral Cooperation," *Asian Perspective* vol. 33 no. 3 (2009): 107-149.

²⁵ Xu Shiming [Naval Academic Research Institute], "Perspectives of Maritime Security in the Asian-Pacific Region," *International Strategic Studies* no. 1 (1990), pp. 18-23.

²⁶ China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, ed. *Sea Lane Security and International Cooperation*. (Beijing: Shishi chubanshe, January 2005).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 320-326.

²⁸ Gabriel Collins, Andrew Erickson, Lyle Goldstein, and William Murray. *China's Energy Strategy: The Impact on Beijing's Maritime Policies*. (Annapolis, MD :Naval Institute Press, 2008).

²⁹ Zhang Jingquan, "Japan's Sea Power Mentality and Maritime Strategy," *Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies* no. 5 (2005), pp. 35-40.

³⁰ Yasuki Nakahata (JMSDF). *For the Security of Sea Lanes: Multinational Maritime Operations by China, Japan and the United States*. (Washington, D.C.: Stimson Center, August 2006), found at: <http://www.stimson.org/eastasia/pdf/SecurityOfSeaLanes.pdf>.

³¹ Gong Yingchun, "Japan and the Construction of a Multilateral Marine Security Mechanism," *Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies* no. 7 (2006), pp. 15-22.

development of national maritime legislation. There was Chinese suspicion, however, that Japan was using the piracy issue to build its naval capacity as it moved towards becoming a “normal” country.³²

Global Maritime Partnerships: US-China Cooperation

For the United States, Admiral Mike Mullen is credited with promoting a new norm in June 2006, a new maritime strategy that shifted from the old Cold War maritime strategy that focused on sea control to a new strategy that would need maritime partners to protect trade routes, counter terrorists and interdict WMD, who would “watch over the seas together” a vision of maritime comprehensive security.³³ Initially this partnership was called the “thousand-ship navy” but later was called the Global Maritime Partnerships (GMP) as presented in “A Cooperative Maritime Strategy for 21st Century Sea Power.” The emphasis was on cooperative security approaches to maritime security with both allied naval powers and in partnerships with non-allies such as China.³⁴ India, which had opposed PSI, as had Malaysia and Indonesia, was skeptical that GMP might be just a reincarnation of PSI.³⁵ US military allies Japan and South Korea were positive but non-allied countries were wary and uncertain what membership would entail.³⁶

One forum for Chinese learning and socialization took place in Track II CSCAP, especially the Study Group on Facilitating Maritime Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific – Meeting on the Roles of Maritime Security Forces, which discussed, at its December 2006 meeting, contemporary concepts of maritime security and the ways to implement the concepts in actual cooperation. The meeting reviewed the US idea of Global Maritime Partnerships, and Japanese participants mentioned creating a Council for Comprehensive Maritime Policy. Chinese participants mentioned that the PLA-N was expanding into nontraditional security areas of terrorism, piracy, and smuggling.³⁷ The second meeting, in April 2008 in Seoul, discussed a seamless approach to SLOC security in the East Asia – Indian Ocean – Middle East regions.

Track I ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) meetings benefited from CSCAP work. In June 2003, ARF had issued the *ARF Statement on Cooperation Against Piracy and Other Threats to Security* committing ARF member countries to multilateral maritime cooperation to combat piracy. The ARF has in fact held a series of workshops on maritime cooperative security from November 1998 to March 2009. But because these are Track I, there is less learning or socialization occurring than in the Track II CSCAP workshops where there is effort made to develop a shared understanding of key concepts.

³² Zhu Fenglan, “Asian-Pacific Nations’ Maritime Policies and Their Influences,” *Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies* no. 5 (2006) pp. 30-38.

³³ Christopher P. Cavas, “New global ‘maritime strategy’ needed, says CNO,” *Navy Times*, June 15, 2006, <http://www.navytimes.com/story.php?f=1-292925-1873067.php>; CNO Calls For New Maritime Strategy,” *Military.com* June 20, 2006, <<http://www.military.com/features/0,15240,101925,00.html>>.

³⁴ *A Cooperative Maritime Strategy for 21st Century Sea Power*. (October 2007), <<http://www.navy.mil/maritime/MaritimeStrategy.pdf>>.

³⁵ Gurpreet S. Khurana, “‘Thousand-Ship Navy’: A Reincarnation of the Controversial P.S.I.?” *IDSA Strategic Comments*, December 28, 2006, found at: <http://www.idsa.in/publications/stratcomments/GurpreetKhurana281206.htm>.

³⁶ Ronald E. Ratcliff, “Building Partners’ Capacity: The Thousand-Ship Navy,” *Naval War College Review* (Autumn 2007): 45-58.

³⁷ CSCAP Study Group on Facilitating maritime security cooperation in the Asia Pacific—Meeting on the Roles of Maritime Security Forces, December 15-16, 2006, Wellington, <<http://www.cscap.org/index.php?page=facilitating-maritime-security-cooperation-in-the-asia-pacific>>.

China cautiously approached GMP with less negativity compared to the Chinese response to PSI and RMSI. In 2007 the Chinese Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Wu Shengli, visited Washington and met with Admiral Mullen. Mullen proposed that China join the Global Maritime Partnership (GMP). Wu could not give him a definitive response at that time. According to Yang Yi, China needed to study the initiative, “It is imperative for China to undertake a full-scale, in-depth study of what the GMP program entails and what it will mean for the Chinese military.”³⁸

Yang Yi argued that China would first do a comprehensive study of what it would mean to participate in GMP, including a cost-benefit analysis, to determine all the ramifications, how it would synchronize with Chinese strategies and national interests. On the benefit side, it would enable China to be a responsible power contributing to regional order and the provision of international public goods. GMP could be the opening wedge for improving US-China military cooperation if it, according to Yang, observed several principles: activities must be under UN auspices and international law, respect for territorial integrity of other countries, avoidance of the use of force, confined to nontraditional security threats such as terrorism, religious extremists and national separatists, and there should be efforts at CBMs to increase mutual understanding. Yang warned that China would not participate in maritime interceptions without authorization by the UN Security Council. Yang further stated that US and Japanese strategic intent was not transparent which made it very difficult for China to engage in maritime cooperation with them.³⁹

A Chinese analyst based in Singapore, Mingjiang Li, argued that Beijing was willing to join concrete programs with limited objectives, such as the Somalia deployment, but it would avoid what he called “Grand Schemes” of the US--PSI, RMSI, Global Maritime Partnership – which had broader strategic implications that Beijing did not trust and had not thought through yet.⁴⁰

The initial Chinese reaction was skeptical, claiming that GMP was a continuing effort to contain China although it was disguised as a new US initiative.⁴¹ However, Su Hao assessed the “Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower” as a US Navy effort to maintain US leadership while integrating China into the maritime order.”⁴² Wang Baofu argued the new US maritime strategy perpetuated the thinking of Alfred Thayer Mahan, thus stressing continuity with the past century and doubted that the US had given up its “maritime hegemonic mentality.” Mahan, a late 19th c. American naval strategist, had stressed control of seaborne commerce and engaging in strategic denial of the SLOCs to the opponent. Nevertheless, Wang conceded that there had been some transformation in US thinking.⁴³ The new *Chinese Defense White Paper 2008* came out in January 2009 with greater emphasis on

³⁸ Yang Yi [Director, Institute for Strategic Studies, PLA National Defense University], “Engagement, Caution,” *China Security* 3,4 (Autumn 2007): 29-39.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁴⁰ Mingjiang Li, “China’s Gulf of Aden Expedition and Maritime Cooperation in East Asia,” *China Brief* 9,1 (January 12, 2009).

⁴¹ Andrew S. Erickson, “New U.S. Maritime Strategy: Initial Chinese Responses,” *China Security* 3,4 (Autumn 2007), p. 43-45.

⁴² Su Hao (Professor, China Foreign Affairs University), “The U.S. Maritime Strategy’s New Thinking: Reviewing the ‘Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower,’” *Naval War College Review*. 61, 4 (Autumn 2008).

⁴³ Wang Baofu, (deputy director of the Institute for Strategic Studies at the National Defense University), “The U.S. Military’s ‘Maritime Strategy’ and Future Transformation,” *Naval War College Review*. 61, 4 (Autumn 2008): 62-67.

missions countering non-traditional security threats and had a very small section on international cooperation and expanding the PLA-N's operational range to distant waters.

The Global Maritime Partnership goal of creating an international public good of SLOC security was put into practice in countering Somalian piracy. The U.S. response to Somalia was to establish a new command, Combined Task Force 151 (CTF-151), announced January 8, 2009. Previous to that, the CTF-150 was formed in 2002, consisting of allied forces, as a counterterrorism patrol unit. In contrast, CTF-151 was created for maritime cooperation with non-allies and "Eastern navies" – China's PLA-N and Japan's MSDF which would not or could not engage in collective security and lacked authority to use weapons in counterterrorism – and other non-allied countries if they supported the U.S. goal of deterring, disrupting and arresting Somalian pirates.⁴⁴ CTF-151 is an example of the U.S. Navy's operationalizing the Global Maritime Partnership concept.

CTF-151 was created for nations that would participate in antipiracy patrols at the operational level but wanted to avoid counterterrorism activities that might be PSI or RMSI in disguise. The Turkish navy took command of CTF-151 in May 2009 for a few months and then command rotated back to the U.S. South Korea announced that it also would work with CTF-151.⁴⁵ Tokyo and Seoul agreed to cooperate closely in Somalia including escorting each other's ships but would not conduct joint escort missions because of restrictions on the MSDF.⁴⁶

China in the Gulf of Aden

China's deployment of three ships, DDG-171 Haikou and DDG-169 Wuhan, missile-armed destroyers, and Weishanhu, a supply ship, to the coast of Somalia and the Gulf of Aden, arriving January 6, 2009, was a major turning point--China's first operational deployment outside of Asia. Chinese purposes were to defend Chinese merchant shipping but also to demonstrate how China was a responsible stakeholder maintaining the security of the SLOCs. *People's Daily* claimed that this was a significant test of the Chinese navy in its first escort mission far from China but it expected many more "firsts" for the PLA-N in the near future.⁴⁷ It was in fact the Chinese Maritime Safety Administration, rather than the Ministry of Defense, that was the major driver behind the PLA-N mission to Somalia.⁴⁸

Beijing was very cautious to ensure a positive international reaction, probing beforehand international opinion on its deployment, announcing at the UN that it was considering deployment, and using a Chinese media campaign to justify it under international law.⁴⁹ The Chinese media claimed there was a debate among naval strategists and international relations experts on China's Somalia mission.⁵⁰

The *Liberation Army Daily*, prior to deployment, ran an article claiming the boundaries of China's national interests extended far beyond Chinese coastal and territorial waters to

⁴⁴ Andrew Scutro, "Anti-pirate Task Force Stands Up: Admiral Assigned to New Effort," *Navy Times*, January 8, 2009, <http://www.navytimes.com/news/2009/01/navy_antipiracy_010809>.

⁴⁵ Jung Sung-Ki, "New S. Korean Naval Unit To Deploy to Somalia," *Defense News*, March 3, 2009.

⁴⁶ "Aso, Lee have plan to cooperate on antipiracy effort off Somalia," *Japan Times*, January 26, 2009.

⁴⁷ "Escort mission tests the Chinese navy," *People's Daily*, January 7, 2009, <<http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90786/6568685.html>>.

⁴⁸ Lyle J. Goldstein, "Chinese Coast Guard Development: Challenge and Opportunity," *China Brief* 9, 23 (November 19, 2009), p. 5.

⁴⁹ Mingjiang Li, "China's Gulf of Aden Expedition and Maritime Cooperation in East Asia," *China Brief* 9, 1 (January 12, 2009).

⁵⁰ "Experts debate China's role in Somalia mission," *China Daily*, December 12, 2008.

include wherever Chinese freighters sailed, i.e., the global sea lines of communication (SLOCs).⁵¹ The deployment marked a major step towards the PLA-N becoming a blue-water navy. A section of the *Liberation Army Daily* online, titled “Chinese Navy Fights Pirates,” is devoted to news articles of PLA-N accomplishments in the Gulf of Aden and off the Somalia coast.⁵² In an interview with Rear Admiral Du Jingchen, commander of the naval escort taskforce, Admiral Du claimed it was a solemn duty and sacred mission of the Chinese navy to protect territorial waters and “marine strategic passages” (SLOCs).⁵³ A Chinese law professor claimed the PLA-N Somalia mission would be “a milestone for the Chinese Navy since the fleet will embody the country’s sovereignty.”⁵⁴

Peter Dutton has noted that China has generally avoided cooperative maritime security arrangements with the US and other countries. Yet he argued there were several areas of US-China agreement in the Gulf of Aden: ungoverned maritime space required coordinated action by the two nations, as did capacity building of coastal states. To cooperate, there would need to be much better communication between US and Chinese naval forces. They could achieve coordinated actions, even while disagreeing over interpretations of UNCLOS, and work towards a common goal of SLOC security.⁵⁵

The US encouraged Beijing’s deployment of the PLA-N to Somalia and wasted no time during China’s Somali operation to ask Beijing if it would join the GMP but got no immediate response. The NATO Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, also welcomed the engagement of China and applauded China’s Somalia deployment, stating “I do not exclude, at a certain stage, that when the United Nations would create a sort of roof under which these whole anti-piracy operations take place, NATO and China will meet under that roof.”⁵⁶

Ye Hailin hinted at debates over whether China should build a blue-water navy, what China’s maritime strategy should be, what its maritime interests were, and what were the threats to its maritime security, as China’s identity shifted from a land-based power to a maritime nation. Ye delineated China’s maritime interests according to each ocean. In the East China Sea and South China Sea, China was focused on resource exploitation with numerous territorial disputes and driven by popular nationalism. In the Indian Ocean, China’s maritime interests were solely SLOC security without nationalist impulses. It was in the Indian Ocean that China could achieve a “harmonious ocean” through regional and international cooperation.⁵⁷

Ye Hailin recognized that Beijing was responsible for regional suspicions because it had never published an official Maritime Strategy, only a few pages on international cooperation in China’s Defense White Paper. Ye felt that in this vacuum, unofficial Chinese writings are misconstrued as authoritative. An example of this is Ni Lexiong’s essay “Sea Power and China’s Development,” a strident nationalist treatise on expanding China’s blue-water navy.⁵⁸ Ye argued that China has a limited, conservative maritime strategy except for security of the

⁵¹ Willy Lam, “China Flaunts Growing Naval Capabilities,” *China Brief* (January 12, 2009), p. 4.

⁵² <http://english.chinamil.com.cn/site2/special-reports/2008hjdjhd/indexg.htm>.

⁵³ “Sacred mission for Chinese navy,” *Liberation Army Daily*, December 26, 2008, http://english.chinamil.com.cn/site2/special-reports/2008-12/26/content_1599416.htm.

⁵⁴ Yan Hao, “Support for likely deployment of Chinese fleet against pirates,” *Xinhua*, December 17, 2008.

⁵⁵ Peter Dutton, “Charting a Course: US-China Cooperation at Sea,” *China Security* 5, 1 (Winter 2009): 11-26.

⁵⁶ “NATO chief praises China’s participation in anti-piracy campaign off Somalia,” *People’s Daily*, January 20, 2009, <<http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6577119.html>>.

⁵⁷ Ye Hailin, “Safety at Sea,” *Beijing Review*, April 15, 2009.

⁵⁸ Ni Lexiong, “Sea Power and China’s Development,” *Liberation Daily*, April 17, 2005.

SLOCs where there is a shift to greater activism. He claimed Beijing was weighing three options regarding the Somalia deployment:

1. Seek a temporary logistics base since the PLA-N ships were not designed for long-term, long- distance deployment;
2. Declare the mission accomplished and go home, leaving other nations to guard the SLOCs;
3. Create a long-term cooperative arrangement with regional partners and set up a logistics base in the Indian Ocean.

Ye felt all three approaches were needed and Pakistan would be the ideal logistics base. Ye, speaking in March 2009, also mentioned that China might initiate or join an international joint naval fleet but it didn't sound like it would include the US which he referred to as a "thalassocracy," a maritime hegemon.⁵⁹

In May 2009, Chinese media claimed Chinese maritime experts were calling for an overhaul of China's maritime strategy due to disputes in the South China Sea. Malaysia and Vietnam had just jointly filed their territorial claims in the South China Sea to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf according to Article 76, paragraph 8, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. A US ship the *Impeccable* had just had a run-in with Chinese ships.⁶⁰

Despite Beijing's cautious approach to deployment to Somalia, Southeast Asia was attentive to Chinese comments including those of Admiral Wu Shengli, Commander of the PLA-N, who was quoted as saying "It's the first time for us to organize a naval force on an international humanitarian mission and the first time for our navy to protect important shipping lanes far from our shores," and also "It's the first time we go abroad to protect our strategic interests armed with military force."⁶¹ Southeast Asia was concerned about precedents set in the Somalia operation that might be applied to the Malacca Strait and the rest of Southeast Asia. Beijing has reassured Southeast Asia that it believes MALSINDO can secure order in the Malacca Strait.

Malaysians worried that the lessons of Somalian antipiracy operations, as a vigilante exercise, would be extended to Southeast Asia, and argued instead that the lessons from Southeast Asia should be applied to the Somalia operation by enhancing local capacity--political stability, economic development and training indigenous militaries in counter-piracy measures.⁶² Southeast Asians thought the lesson from the Malacca Strait was to "go local."⁶³ Indonesia had objected to the first draft of UNSC 1816 because the US had implied that the Somalian intervention by outside maritime powers would be applied elsewhere, including the Malacca

⁵⁹ Ye Hailin, "Securing SLOCs by Cooperation--China's Perspective of Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean," International Maritime Conference 3, National Maritime Policy Research Center, Bahria University Karachi, Pakistan, March 7, 2009, <http://www.iapscass.cn/english/Articles/showcontent.asp?id=1233>.

⁶⁰ "Change tack with sea strategy: China experts," *China Daily*, May 13, 2009.

⁶¹ "China navy off to hunt African pirates," *Bangkok Post*, December 26, 2008, <<http://www.bangkokpost.com/breakingnews/135610/china-navy-off-hunt-african-pirates>>.

⁶² Mark J. Valencia and Nazery Khalid, "The Somalia Multilateral Anti-Piracy Approach: Some Caveats," Nautilus Institute, February 12, 2009, <<http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/09012ValenciaKhalid.html>>.

⁶³ Joshua Ho, "Piracy in the Gulf of Aden," *RSIS Commentaries*, S.Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, January 22, 2009, <<http://www.idss.edu.sg/publications/Perspective/RSIS0092009.pdf>>.

Strait. Indonesia insisted that the Somalian intervention was not a precedent for interventions in other pirate-infested waters and must be conducted in a manner consistent with UNCLOS. Both Malaysia and Indonesia were wary of RMSI re-emerging in a different form.⁶⁴

Under the auspices of the UN with US encouragement the Contact Group on Piracy Off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) met in New York in January 2009. The US expected to create an international public good of maritime security initially off the Somalia coast but with possibilities for a much larger mandate. CGPCS issued a statement calling for establishing a regional counter-piracy coordination center in the vicinity of Somalia, emulating ReCAAP's center in Singapore.

CGSCP adopted a plan of action and created four working groups:

- Working Group 1** in charge of establishing the regional coordination center.
- Working Group 2** tasked with judicial issues of piracy with support from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.
- Working Group 3** tasked with strengthening shipping capacity and self-awareness with support from the International Maritime Organization (IMO).
- Working Group 4** would take charge of public information on counter-piracy efforts.

The US only chaired Working Group 3, with the UK, Denmark and Egypt chairing the other groups.

The third meeting of the CGSCP, in May 2009, commended participating nations for their operational coordination achieved through the Shared Awareness and Deconfliction (SHADE) meetings held periodically in Bahrain in which China, Japan, and numerous other countries participated. The SHADE mechanism is considered to have a successful open and inclusive structure that allows for military coordination with varying degrees of autonomy. China took the initiative to suggest that CGSCP establish areas of responsibility for escort operations. This suggestion was assigned to Working Group 1, in charge of operational coordination.

By May 2009, even Malaysia was offering to serve in the CGSCP. Malaysia had independently sent escort ships to the Gulf of Aden for the previous year. The Foreign Minister claimed that Malaysia could contribute to CSGCP based on its experience in MALSINDO, but also cautioned that the two situations may differ substantially.⁶⁵ In May 2009, Malaysia held the "Kuala Lumpur International Conference on Piracy and Crimes at Sea" that was attended by all CGSCP countries. The purpose of the meeting was to develop shared understandings on best practices for CGSCP countries. The meeting issued a resolution calling for "coordinated efforts" by naval forces, emphasizing the basic principle already found in MALSINDO, that the littoral states had primary responsibility for combating piracy while the non-littoral states should be limited to capacity building. Malaysia cautioned that the Gulf of Aden CGSCP should learn the lessons from the mechanism created by the littoral states of the Straits of Malacca.⁶⁶ The meeting did not accept a proposal from a group of major trading nations calling for more of a "joint response" in a UN-led "international

⁶⁴ Valencia and Khalid.

⁶⁵ Lee Wei Lian, "Malaysia offers to serve in UN anti-piracy group," *The Malaysian Insider*, May 18, 2009, < <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/index.php/malaysia/26858-malaysia-offers-to-serve-in-un-anti-piracy-group>>, (accessed June 12, 2009).

⁶⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur International Conference on Piracy and Crimes at Sea, <http://www.kln.gov.my/klicc/chairmannotes.html>, (accessed June 12, 2009).

maritime force.” Malaysia emphasized the root causes of piracy, poverty and lack of economic development, should be addressed and the use of warships should be deemphasized.

The way in which CGSCP was formed seemed to bring together the lessons learned in East Asia: drawing on ReCAAP success and RMSI failure, and to operationalize the concept of the “Thousand-ship Navy” without calling it as such. CGSCP was based on networks rather than military alliances, organized around principles of cooperative security, under the auspices of the UN, adhering to UNCLOS, with the US “leading from behind.” The CGSCP will report periodically to the UN Security Council.

The PLA-N Somalia deployment received much Chinese media attention. An article in *China Daily* claimed it demonstrated China’s intention to create a harmonious international community and take on overseas missions that maintained world peace and security, but the article recognized that how China could smoothly coordinate and cooperate with other navies continued to be a major problem. Nevertheless, participating in regional and global maritime cooperation was a good way to demonstrate a peaceful image for China.⁶⁷

When Beijing first announced its Somalia deployment, a Defense Ministry spokesperson claimed “China is ready to exchange information and cooperate with the warships of other countries in performing humanitarian rescue tasks.”⁶⁸ The exact nature of China’s cooperation with other navies, including the US and Japan, is a moving target, a work in progress, that many have struggled to define.

One American analyst optimistically predicted that a successful Somalia anti-piracy operation would lead to the elusive and long-stalled goal of East Asian maritime security cooperation between the US, Japan and China, and creation of a regional maritime security regime.⁶⁹ Other Americans were more cautious, finding numerous difficulties such as Chinese reluctance to coordinate with other nations’ navies which demonstrated that integrating the Chinese navy into multilateral cooperation was an ongoing challenge with a long way to go.⁷⁰

Still another American analyst felt that it was noteworthy that China’s participation demonstrated a new outward orientation for the PLA-N; this was the PLA-N’s first experience with relying on foreign sources for logistics support, and the first time the PLA-N had operated in an environment of international naval forces. Cooperation with the US Navy was inevitable as the US and Chinese navies coordinated search patterns, communicating via VHF radio, and exchanged information on suspected pirates.⁷¹ Nevertheless, some felt it was clear that the PLA-N, by operating in the vicinity of CTF-151, was participating in a Global Maritime Partnership with the US envisioned by the “thousand-ship navy” concept but had not publicly acknowledged that.⁷² Some felt it would lead to US-China-Japan trilateral or

⁶⁷ Yang Yi, “Joining anti-piracy battle a responsible move,” *China Daily*, December 23, 2008, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2008-12/23/content_7330711.htm>.

⁶⁸ “Warships to Set off on Friday for Somalia Pirates,” *China Radio International*, December 23, 2008, <http://english.cri.cn/6909/2008/12/23/189s435892.htm>, (accessed June 12, 2009).

⁶⁹ Brian P. Klein, “Chance for East Asian Security Cooperation,” *Japan Times*, January 14, 2009.

⁷⁰ Phillip C. Saunders, “Uncharted Waters: the Chinese Navy Sails to Somalia,” *CSIS Pacific Forum PacNet* no. 3 (January 14, 2009).

⁷¹ Dr. Bernard D. Cole, Professor, National War College. *Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic & Security Review Commission, Hearing on China’s Military and Security Activities Abroad*. March 4, 2009, <http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written_testimonies/09_03_04_wrts/09_03_04_cole_statement.php>.

⁷² RADM Eric McVadon, USN (Ret.), Director of Asia-Pacific Studies, The Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, Inc., Washington, DC. *Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic & Security Review*

multilateral cooperation, urging the US to "find a way to formally affiliate itself with the PLA-N destroyers while on-station."⁷³

China's relationship with CTF-151 is hard to define. China operates independently, originally intending only to escort its own national flag vessels, operating in a parallel fashion rather than integrated with CTF-151. However, there is continuous dialogue at the tactical level, an "ad hoc tactical collaboration" in the Gulf of Aden.⁷⁴ CTF-151 has the necessary characteristics that would lead Beijing to participate: (1) authorized by a UN Security Council Resolution, (2) the Somalian government requested international assistance, (3) UNCLOS allows for anti-piracy operations. Chinese activities are said to be independent but coordinated with the US which permits cooperation even while retaining differences over interpretations of international maritime law. By contrast, Beijing would not join CTF-150, a coalition of the willing, because nations involved accept US interpretation of international maritime law, and CTF-150 is under the chain of command of the US admiral commanding the 5th Fleet.⁷⁵

Vice Admiral William Gortney, in testimony to Congress, reported that American and Chinese naval officers were communicating via unclassified emails in their Yahoo accounts.⁷⁶ The official US Navy response to China's deployment to Somalia was very positive and encouraging. Admiral Timothy Keating, Commander of the US Pacific Command, stated it could lead to a renewal of US-China military exchanges which had been stopped by Beijing in October 2008 after US arms sales to Taiwan. During US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton's visit to Beijing, it was agreed that the Strategic Economic Dialogue would be expanded to include security issues.

The US-China Defense Policy Coordination Talks between defense ministries did resume in Beijing on February 27, 2009, led by U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asia and Pacific Security Affairs, David Sedney, and the Director of the Foreign Affairs Office of the Chinese Defense Ministry, Maj. Gen. Qian Lihua. Beyond the Taiwan issue, the US and China also discussed coordinating their antipiracy efforts in the Gulf of Aden. Sedney praised the PLA-N's contribution in the Gulf of Aden, stating, "The work they've done has been highly professional, it's been highly effective, and it's been very well coordinated with the United States and the other navies that are working there."⁷⁷ Retired Rear Admiral Yang Yi commented that the US and China, as major responsible powers, should strengthen cooperation to counter both traditional and non-traditional security threats.⁷⁸ Sedney, in his briefing to the US-China Economic & Security Review Commission on March 4, 2009, said

Commission, Hearing on China's Military and Security Activities Abroad. March 4, 2009, <http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written_testimonies/09_03_04_wrts/09_03_04_mcvadon_statement.php>.

⁷³ Andrew S. Erickson and Justin D. Mikolay, "Welcome China to the Fight Against Pirates," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, 135, 3 (March 2009),

http://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/story.asp?STORY_ID=1809, (accessed June 12, 2009).

⁷⁴ Richard Weitz, "Operation Somalia: China's First Expeditionary Force?" *China Security* 5, 1 (Winter 2009), p. 32.

⁷⁵ Peter A. Dutton, "Charting a Course: US-China Cooperation at Sea," *China Security* 5, 1 (Winter 2009), p. 17.

⁷⁶ Joseph Marks, "Coalition of the Willing Chasing Pirates," *CQ WEEKLY*, April 11, 2009, <<http://www.cqpolitics.com/wmspage.cfm?docID=weeklyreport-000003096054>>, (accessed June 15, 2009)

⁷⁷ Christopher Bodeen, "US praises China anti-piracy role off Somalia," *Associated Press*, February 28, 2009.

⁷⁸ Yang Yi [Rear Admiral, Institute for Strategic Studies, National Defense University], "Resumption of military exchanges a good step," *China Daily*, February 27, 2009, page 6, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2009-02/27/content_7519125.htm>.

he had observed Chinese military leaders “grappling with the issue of how does China work together with the United States, and others, to address common problems.”⁷⁹

A Center for Naval Analysis conference on China’s anti-piracy activities, held in March 2009, noted that the US and Chinese navies in the Gulf of Aden were sharing information through unprecedented daily communications at the tactical and operational level. China’s participation represented a globalizing expansion of Chinese national security interests beyond geographic boundaries, and a willingness to be a responsible stakeholder in the maritime domain. This kind of cooperation could occur even while formal military-to-military relations were strained due to arms sales to Taiwan.⁸⁰ Although Beijing avoided joining CTF-151, China’s PLA-N destroyers in the Gulf of Aden would eventually escort non-Chinese ships including Japanese, Taiwanese, and ships of the UN World Food Program.

For the U.S., CTF-151 is the first real test of the Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower, the GMP concept. Rather than being a top-down initiative as RMSI was, the anti-piracy operations have been unfolding in an ad hoc fashion, a bottom-up initiative that is a work in progress. American analysts felt that as long as all the participating navies agreed to a common set of rules based on UNCLOS, it was workable.⁸¹ A Chinese military expert, Peng Guangqian, suggested a roughly similar set of rules for U.S.-China military cooperation off the coast of Somalia, that U.S.-China cooperation should be conducted within UNCLOS but he also added “equal consultation” and “mutual respect” to the set of rules.⁸²

Despite US-China differences in interpretation of UNCLOS, American analysis finds areas of US-China agreement as both sides believe: they should work together to manage the ungoverned maritime domain, they should strengthen the maritime governance capacity of coastal states, and they should communicate better at all levels.⁸³ American expectations remain modest that China would join a GMP even though at the tactical level the PLA-N is learning maritime cooperation with the US Navy.

In September 2009, the 4th meeting of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia met at the UN in New York, for the purpose of furthering institutionalization of international cooperation off Somalia.⁸⁴ A further purpose was to extend the lessons of Somalia to other transnational maritime, nontraditional security threats.⁸⁵

On October 14, 2009, US Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell called for greater interaction and dialogue between the US and Chinese militaries. He claimed that with the PLA-N deployment to Somalia, with the two militaries operating in increasing proximity and having increasing interactions, but without procedures and mechanisms to coordinate, they needed to develop “rules of the road for how we cooperate in the future” in order to avoid

⁷⁹ “US notes positive transformation in Chinese army,” *International Herald Tribune*, March 4, 2009, <www.ihrt.com/articles/ap/2009/03/04/america/NA-US-China.php>. USCC hearings found at: <http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/hr09_03_04.php>

⁸⁰ Alison A. Kaufman. *China’s Participation in Anti-Piracy Operations off the Horn of Africa: Drivers and Implications*. CNA China Studies Conference Report MISC D0020834.A1/Final, July 2009.

⁸¹ CMDR James Kraska and CAPT Brian Wilson, “Fighting piracy: International Coordination is key to countering modern-day freebooters,” *Armed Forces Journal* (February 2009), <<http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/2009/02/3928962>>.

⁸² “Piracy fight to boost U.S. ties,” *China Daily*, December 22, 2008, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2008-12/22/content_7326061.htm>.

⁸³ Dutton, p. 21-22.

⁸⁴ U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesman. *Key Outcomes of 4th Plenary of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia*. September 16, 2009.

⁸⁵ Andrew J. Shapiro, Assistant Secretary, Political-Military Affairs, “Taking Diplomatic Action Against Piracy,” Remarks to the Global Maritime Information Sharing Symposium, National Defense University, Washington, DC, September 16, 2009.

crises.⁸⁶ Beijing didn't appear to concur. Gen. Xu Caihou, vice chairman to the People's Liberation Army Central Military Commission, visited Washington at the end of October 2009. The results of his visit appeared in the US-China Joint statement that would be issued November 2009 during President Obama's Beijing visit.

The US-China joint statement stated:

...The two sides will actively implement various exchange and cooperation programs agreed between the two militaries, including by increasing the level and frequency of exchanges. The goal of these efforts is to improve their capabilities for practical cooperation and foster greater understanding of each other's intentions and of the international security environment.⁸⁷

There was no specific mention of the Gulf of Aden but a general statement on Building Strategic Trust:

..The United States and China have an increasingly broad base of cooperation and share increasingly important common responsibilities on many major issues concerning global stability and prosperity. The two countries should further strengthen coordination and cooperation, work together to tackle challenges, and promote world peace, security and prosperity.

This statement was bilateral but a bilateral relationship situated in the Asia-Pacific. China welcomed the US as an Asia-Pacific nation, and the two countries stressed their common security interests in the Asia-Pacific. President Obama's speech in Tokyo stressed US interest in Asian multilateralism, "cultivating spheres of cooperation – not competing spheres of influence" in the Asia-Pacific. Obama stressed engaging with APEC and the East Asian Summit.⁸⁸

Chinese Crisis in the Gulf of Aden

In October 2009, a small crisis in the Gulf of Aden presented the Chinese government with a dilemma. The Somalia deployment had been played up in the media, celebrating "naval nationalism," in a way that made the PLA-N appear to manage its long-distance deployment with ease although, in fact, it was struggling to sustain a long-distance maritime presence.

The crisis was the hijacking of a Chinese ship, the *De Xin Hai*, on October 19, 2009 by Somali pirates. The Chinese by themselves could not mount a rescue and were facing a long stand-off that would be a definite loss of face and loss of legitimacy domestically. Chinese media, under the influence of "naval nationalism" called for the PLA-N to quickly respond but the PLA-N ships were far from the *De Xin Hai*. The crisis presented an empirical lesson on the importance of maritime cooperation.

After a few days, Major General Qian Lihua, Director of the Foreign Affairs Office, Chinese Ministry of Defense, announced that a successful rescue would be possible if all the nations involved in the anti-piracy operations off of Somali worked in concert. Qian stated that China

⁸⁶ "U.S. calls for greater contact with China military," AFP, October 14, 2009.

⁸⁷ The White House. *U.S.-China Joint Statement*, November 17, 2009, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/us-china-joint-statement>>.

⁸⁸ The White House, *Remarks by President Barack Obama*, Suntory Hall, Tokyo, November 14, 2009, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-suntory-hall>>.

would organize a meeting of all nations operating off Somalia in order to clarify areas of responsibility and arrange better coordination.⁸⁹

The extent of US-China cooperation began to unfold on CCTV which first mentioned that the PLA-N was guarding non-Chinese ships. On October 28, CCTV revealed to its audience that the US and China were cooperating off the coast of Somalia.⁹⁰ On November 2, 2009, CCTV's Dialogue discussed Gen Xu Caihou's visit to Washington DC and statements on increasingly positive US-China military relations. The show's host, Yang Rui, asked how, amidst serious chronic differences on the legal status of China's EEZ and US military sales to Taiwan, how should Chinese look at the increasingly important non-combative nature of Chinese-US military relations in peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. He also stressed that "the two navies have cooperated in anti-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia."⁹¹ *People's Daily* reported that General Xu and U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates had achieved a consensus over cooperation in seven issue areas. This included several non-traditional security areas: humanitarian rescue, disaster relief, the war on terrorism, officer exchange and training, and joint maritime search and rescue exercises.⁹²

On November 2, 2009, US-China operational-level, tactical cooperation evolved to something akin to sharing strategies. PLA-N Admiral Wang Zhiguo, the commander of TF-529, invited the US commander of CTF-151, Scott Sanders, and four other coalition members of CTF-151, as guests aboard his ship. Commander Sanders, mentioning that China is a reliable partner, stated:

As a partner in maritime security, we have worked with China on a tactical level in order to prevent piracy and maritime criminal activity off the coast of Somalia. Having the opportunity to sit down and share views on counter-piracy with Adm. Wang was an invaluable experience. The cooperation between our nations continues to pay big dividends. Face to face visits at the tactical level are a tremendous opportunity to share lessons learned and coordinate future counter-piracy efforts.⁹³

This kind of meeting did not mean China would join CTF-151 or that there was a fully functioning US-China Maritime Partnership. Nevertheless, the tactical working relationship became better coordinated.

On November 5, 2009 the Chinese Foreign Ministry announced that China would host an international conference to better coordinate anti-piracy naval escorts in the Gulf of Aden, and that it would, in fact, begin the following day.⁹⁴ The purpose was to coordinate escort missions of Russia, Japan, the EU and NATO to assign them responsibility for different geographic areas in the Gulf of Aden, rather than each nation only escorting its own ships, and also to consider the possibility of having joint patrols. Greater coordination would require a sharing of intelligence codes which was too sensitive a political/military issue.

⁸⁹ Chris Buckley, "China mulls military options over hijacked ship," *Reuters*, October 22, 2009.

⁹⁰ "Recent US-China military ties,"

<http://english.cctv.com/program/chinatoday/20091028/102183.shtml>.

⁹¹ "China and the US seek Mutual Military Trust," Dialogue, November 2, 2009,

<http://english.cctv.com/program/e_dialogue/20091102/104569.shtml>.

⁹² "Sino-US military ties progress with trust, retrogress with suspicion," *People's Daily*, November 1, 2009, <<http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90780/91343/6801077.html>>.

⁹³ "CTF 151 commander visits Chinese counter-piracy flagship," United States Central Command, November 2, 2009, <http://www.centcom.mil/en/news/ctf-151-commander-visits-chinese-counter-piracy-flagship.html>.

⁹⁴ "China to host int'l conference on anti-piracy in Gulf of Aden," *Xinhua*, November 5, 2009, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-11/05/content_12394398.htm.

The Ministry of Defense noted that “China always takes a positive and open attitude toward international cooperation on shipping escorts and is willing to cooperate under related UN resolutions.”⁹⁵ The *China Daily* claimed there was skepticism as to whether China’s idea would be accepted by other naval powers because the “major powers have already established their codes of practice at sea, it’s hard for China to restructure the existing naval presence and lead the coordination.”⁹⁶

The Commander of the EU naval forces said other nations were pleased with this “unprecedented” Chinese cooperation, and would be happy to talk with Chinese, but weren’t sure what further coordination was needed since existing cooperation, among the nations that were cooperating, was extensive.⁹⁷ The Chinese noted that the hijacking of the *De Xin Hai* indicated that a higher level of international cooperation was needed since the navies were not under a centralized command structure.

At the meeting, Chinese proposed that China take a more active role in SHADE meetings, and that in fact China should be allowed to lead or co-chair a future monthly SHADE (shared awareness and deployments) meeting. SHADE coordinates NATO, EU and CTF-151 naval forces. SHADE meetings share information and coordinate areas of responsibility. Previously, EU NAVFOR and the Combined Maritime Forces had co-chaired the meeting, i.e., the EU and the US. China asked that it take the lead role of the anti-piracy forces in the Gulf of Aden, a surprising request given its independent stance in the Gulf of Aden and its very cautious initial approach.⁹⁸ The US and EU agreed, hoping Chinese cooperation on anti-piracy would spill over into other areas of security cooperation. China will have an opportunity to co-chair the meetings starting in 2010.

In December 2009, after a visit by Chinese Defense Minister Liang Guanglie to Japan, Japan and China agreed to their first joint naval training exercises. Maritime cooperation would begin with joint search and rescue exercises with expectations that maritime cooperation would expand along humanitarian missions.

On December 28, 2009, the Chinese Foreign Ministry announced that the hijacked Chinese ship, the *De Xin Hai*, had been rescued by “relevant departments and enterprises” and that it was now under the protection of Chinese warships.⁹⁹ Chinese media did not clarify who had rescued the ship. One of the captured pirates told the international media that a ransom of \$4 million had been paid.¹⁰⁰ The *Shanghai Daily*, however, did claim that the ship was rescued by the Chinese navy.¹⁰¹ This ended the crisis of the hijacked ship.

The Chinese Ministry of Defense, summing up the year 2009 that distinguished it from previous years, claimed four achievements: improved military diplomacy, increased joint military exercises, multilateral military activities, and expansion of military cooperation such

⁹⁵ “Navies seek better ways to fight pirates,” *China Daily*, November 6, 2009, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-11/06/content_8921032.htm.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ “China eyes lead naval role against Somalia pirates,” Reuters, November 10, 2009; Greg Torode, “Beijing seeks lead role in piracy fight,” *South China Morning Post*, Nov. 10, 2009.

⁹⁹ <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t648433.htm>.

¹⁰⁰ “Somali Pirates Release Chinese Ship After Payment,” *VOA News*, December 28, 2009, <http://www1.voanews.com/english/news/africa/east/Somali-Pirates-Release-Chinese-Ship-After-Payment-80202317.html>.

¹⁰¹ “Hijacked China vessel rescued by naval fleet,” http://www.shanghaidaily.com/sp/article/2009/200912/20091229/article_424163.htm

as off the Somali coast.¹⁰² All these achievements were related to maritime cooperative security.

Conclusion

China's deployment of PLA-N to the Gulf of Aden is unprecedented on many levels. Cooperation between the US, Chinese, Japanese and Russian navies in the Gulf of Aden is unprecedented. These navies were trained to go to war with each other rather than cooperate. There are better prospects for cooperative maritime security among Coast Guards, as demonstrated by the US and Chinese Coast Guards.¹⁰³ And by the functioning of ReCAAP.¹⁰⁴

This case study of the PLA-N in the Gulf of Aden indicates that the empirical experience of maritime security cooperation was necessary for the PLA-N to absorb and accept the logic of cooperative security arrangements. Chinese scholarly debate alone, without empirical experience, would not have led the PLA-N to embrace the logic of the New Security Concept applied to the Gulf of Aden.

It is often, in fact, the empirical experience of a crisis that acts as a driver requiring Chinese rethinking of previous policies. The Gulf of Aden mini-crisis fits the pattern of previous crises – the financial crisis of 1997 and the 2004 coordinated tsunami relief that China was not part of – that had an impact on Chinese acceptance of the logic of cooperative security. One empirical indicator of Chinese acceptance was China contributing to rule formation and volunteering for a leadership role within the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia. An additional indication was Chinese realization that the PLA-N could not by itself rescue the hijacked Chinese ship which led to requests for greater cooperation.

The Somali antipiracy operation illustrates how the U.S., Japan and China, and other nations, working loosely together can create an international public good of SLOC security, based on the premise of cooperative security, i.e., military cooperation among a mix of allies and non-allies. At the operational-level something akin to cooperation has emerged among the navies operating in close proximity in the Gulf of Aden.

This paper has looked at maritime cooperative security off the coast of Somalia but recognizes that the genuine long-term solution to the Somalian piracy problem would be a comprehensive security approach that addressed the causes of Somali piracy. Nevertheless, within discussion of comprehensive security in Somalia, given the rampant lawlessness there for so many decades, there is also room for consideration of MOOTW within a cooperative security approach.

¹⁰² "Four major characteristics of China's military diplomacy in 2009," *China Military Online*, November 20, 2009, http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2009-11/20/content_4083116.htm.

¹⁰³ Goldstein, p. 7.

¹⁰⁴ Christoffersen, *Japan and the East Asian Maritime Order*.

Remarks:

Opinions expressed in this contribution are those of the author.

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