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China and the United States on the High Seas

Eric McVadon

Dare to Dream

The U.S. Navy is actively promoting an international maritime cooperation concept called the Global Maritime Partnership Initiative (GMPI). In popular parlance the proposal has been coined the “Thousand-Ship Navy” and calls for naval and maritime efforts among many countries around the world.¹ The idea originated with the U.S. Navy in 2005 for navies and coast guards to protect sea lanes, curb maritime terrorism and piracy, and prevent proliferation of materials associated with weapons of mass destruction.² For the first time it holds out the serious prospect for extensive maritime cooperation between China and the United States. The concept’s most prominent proponent, Adm. Michael Mullen, the former head of the U.S. Navy and current chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, has raised the issue of Chinese participation with his counterpart, Adm. Wu Shengli, commander of China’s People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN).³

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China's potential involvement in GMPI has ignited a debate in both Beijing and Washington characterized by a disparate mix of positions that range from its active promotion to concern and even deep skepticism.

The issue has very recently been complicated by several denials by the People's Republic of China of U.S. requests for ship and aircraft visits to Hong Kong.⁴ Beijing is apparently displaying its displeasure of both continuing U.S. arms sales to Taiwan as well as the granting of a prestigious award to the Dalai Lama.⁵ This unexpected hitch in the relationship could conceivably prove to be an obstacle of significance. Beijing, for example, could escalate the matter by linking it to demands for the lifting of either the restraints on U.S. interaction with the Chinese military imposed by Congress almost a decade ago, or the sanctions on technology transfer imposed by Washington after the 1989 events at Tiananmen Square. However, other important elements of the bilateral relationship, such as trade issues, the Strategic Economic Dialogue, other military relations⁶ and cooperation in the Six-Party Talks concerning North Korea have so far remained on track, offering the hope that the problem, like others that have disrupted the relationship over the years, will be short lived.

Beyond this new bilateral issue, many questions have been raised about the purpose and intended form of GMPI. Two of the most senior strategists on the U.S. Navy staff, Vice Adm. John G. Morgan and Rear Adm. Charles W. Martoglio, broadly envision it as a mechanism necessary to meet new global challenges including "piracy, smuggling, drug trading, illegal immigration, banditry, human smuggling and slavery, environmental attack, trade disruption, weapons proliferation including weapons of mass destruction, political and religious extremism, and terrorism."⁷ The problem facing the world today, Morgan and Martoglio state, is that no nation, not even the United States, has the capacity to single-handedly deal with transnational threats. Maritime security requires an international solution with close cooperation between like-minded nations to eliminate transnational threats.⁸ Such multinational cooperation would also be of benefit in other areas including search and rescue and humanitarian relief operations.

Rather than a joining of naval forces to support combat operations, GMPI is intended to be implemented by a combination of national, international and private-industry efforts to provide platforms, people and protocols to secure seas. It is a concept for the voluntary development of a network of sensors (from simple radars to sophisticated methods for detecting illicit activities) and responders (rapid-reaction capabilities such as ships, interdiction teams and aircraft) capable of ensuring maritime security. Virtually every nation can contribute in some way, whether through blue-water naval vessels, the provision of sensors at sea, improved sealift capabilities or maritime law enforcement – whatever capability matches each entity or country's commercial or national interest.⁹

The proposed Thousand-Ship Navy marks a new chapter in cooperation as it emphasizes the management of shared security interests of all maritime nations essential to the global economy. This would mean the absence of a hierarchical organizational model; individual regions would be left to establish their own arrangements, without overt U.S. leadership. In some cases, perhaps no one would be in charge. It is meant to be an elastic concept where the most capable navies would bring along the less capable. The old notion of a structured command and control (C2) could be replaced, where appropriate, with a new one of cooperation and coordination. In some areas, less capable countries could be aided with port security. Special relationships between countries would also be leveraged. Other regions could have a loose ad hoc collective relationship among participants, perhaps with only advisory control over each other. No single solution must necessarily fit and constrain the various arrangements as each country would participate in accordance with its own national policies.¹⁰

GMPI could allow a shrinking U.S. Navy to meet both its traditional and new missions in a world of shifting dangers. Equally important, it would facilitate ties between countries with maritime interests, including China – a country emerging as a major maritime power. Perhaps for the first time, China could assume a role as partner of the United States.

U.S. Navy forces are reaching their smallest numbers in more than half a century.

The Case for Global Maritime Partnership

There are important reasons to pursue U.S.-China maritime cooperation. Most important, the protection of international and national waters from today's new and difficult-to-detect threats can no longer be accomplished by any one nation. The days when the United States could largely patrol the high seas single-handedly are gone, if they ever existed. Coupled with today's more diverse global context, integration is now essential to adequately enforce maritime security. China, as a player with international interests, concerns about its own energy security, and a growing naval capability, is a natural candidate for this cooperation.

Globalization has heightened the significance of the maritime domain, and threats to sea lanes persist despite efforts to combat them. The risk is difficult to quantify but is almost universally seen by senior naval commanders as both pervasive and growing steadily. For example, pirate attacks continue to increase, with 85 attacks on ships in the April-June quarter of 2007, up from 66 attacks in the same period a year earlier.¹¹ Terrorism, proliferation, piracy, smuggling, pollution, disaster relief efforts, search and rescue, coast guard operations, maritime resource supervision and managing disputes between littoral countries are all challenges currently on the rise or unrelentingly persistent.

Rear Adm. Joseph Nimmich, the U.S. Coast Guard assistant commandant for policy and planning, told the Navy League in April 2006 how the maritime security environment has been fundamentally altered. "[We] can kill anything [we] can find. [We] just can't find it... Because finding it no longer means just tracking a vessel."¹² He went on to emphasize that identifying threats in a post-Sept. 11 world is not a straightforward process, and simply making contact with a vessel is rarely sufficient to determine if it is a danger to the country.¹³

These new maritime realities are occurring as U.S. Navy forces are reaching their smallest number in more than half a century.¹⁴ During the past 20 years, the U.S. fleet has been reduced by half: from 600 to less than 300 ships.¹⁵ When Chief of Naval Operations, Mullen noted: "We had only four ships in the FY [fiscal year] '06 budget; we're at 280 ships total right now and that's just not enough. We're

as low as I'm comfortable going."¹⁶ This smaller fleet is currently heavily engaged in only a small fraction of the world's seas (primarily the Middle East and East Asia), forcing Navy planners to explore new ways to cover more missions with fewer assets.¹⁷

In the fall of 2007, the U.S. Navy finds itself heavily engaged in the Middle East where, for example, the *USS Enterprise* carrier strike group has been operating in the Persian Gulf. The *Kitty Hawk* group, normally home-ported in Japan, has conducted an exercise in the Bay of Bengal, and the *Nimitz* group has transited the South China Sea. Of the eight remaining carriers, three were at home or in home waters ready to surge for contingencies, two were in a post-deployment stand-down, and three were undergoing major maintenance. As of Nov. 7, 2007, 138 of the Navy's 279 battle force ships (49 percent) were away from homeport and 107 (38 percent) on extended deployment.¹⁸ The long-standing goal is a six-month deployment followed by a year in homeport (a deployment rate of 33 percent), the period of time required for proper maintenance, training and other preparations for subsequent deployment. Surges and additional emerging nontraditional missions and tasks can, to some extent, be accommodated, but the consequences of doing so result in deteriorating morale, lower personnel retention rates, a lack of opportunities for training and specialized schooling, as well as difficulties with readiness from the wear and tear of equipment from overuse and unperformed maintenance. Mullen has made the case for the Thousand-Ship Navy, asserting that it would be impossible for the United States alone under current budgets to cover even single critical areas like the Persian Gulf. Others have pointed out that the U.S. Navy not only lacks the capability to ensure stability and security of the world's maritime environment but also has no desire to "go it alone."¹⁹

The disconnect between critical missions of the U.S. Navy and their means to execute them has not been lost on military planners. As such, the GMPI proposal has been widely supported by the Navy as a way to meet these fundamental maritime security challenges. It provides a tool to conduct existing and expected tasks and provide fuller and more timely coverage of critical global sea lanes,

while also enhancing the ability for naval forces to be more ready and capable to surge for other contingencies. In short, it makes more assets available to meet greater challenges and expectations.

Another compelling argument for international maritime cooperation, particularly relevant between China and the United States, is the globally

The disconnect between critical missions and their means to execute them has not been lost on military planners.

encompassing issue of energy security. To many observers dubious of U.S. engagement with China, the expanding thirst for limited resources of energy (mainly oil but also natural gas), which is preponderantly satiated through sea transport, will lead inexorably to disruptive competition

and, according to some, conflict between the United States and China.²⁰ Others see the energy dynamic between China and the United States as leading to an epic opportunity, even necessity, for cooperation. This point of view characterizes China and the United States as confronting a situation of “mutual assured dependence” in their growing and ineluctable demand for energy.²¹

Positions on whether conflict or cooperation between the United States and China will prevail in the years ahead hinge on interpretations of each nation’s strategic intentions and how each will act on its interests. Yet it is undeniable that the actual interests – that of the need for unfettered access to energy – are wholly common and parallel. Chinese and U.S. interests fully converge in the need to secure the sea lanes for the energy that fuels their respective economies and the global trade system. Even those highly distrustful of China and pessimistic about bilateral relations between a superpower democracy and an authoritarian mega-state must see that there is no fundamental difference in interests here.

On strategic and commercial logic alone, energy indeed holds out unprecedented impetus for Sino-American collaboration in maritime security. While the United States need not pursue cooperation at the expense of continuing national security concerns vis-à-vis China, it is equally unnecessary to pursue strategic goals at the exclusion of cooperation. Despite doubts and concerns about Chinese intentions,

the energy issue is something that Washington and Beijing should work on in concert, even amidst a degree of strategic competition. The United States has certainly done this with China in the areas of terrorism and nonproliferation. On these issues Washington and Beijing diverge significantly in approach and even to a certain extent the desired final outcome; yet cooperation has prevailed precisely because it is in both their interests.

Form and Function

While the contours of maritime cooperation have only been vaguely sketched out, aspects and goals have been articulated by a number of senior naval officers in support of the idea. First, there is the realization that such cooperation would go to the heart of the problem of the deficit in current military relations between China and the United States. Adm. Dennis Blair, former four-star commander of U.S. forces in the Pacific from 1999 to 2002, has publicly expressed frustration over the state of military dialogue between the United States and China. GMPI would be important in creating what he calls “habits of cooperation” to help allay suspicion. This could begin with search-and-rescue exercises, and move up to peacekeeping, humanitarian, anti-terrorism and anti-piracy exercises.²²

Second, it has been recognized that GMPI would not be limited to naval cooperation, but would provide broad opportunities for cooperation in areas of nontraditional security. Maritime cooperation centered only on military and traditional security may be difficult to sustain strategically, if not politically. Thus, the concept would make possible a network of not only navies and coast guards, but also maritime commerce and other oceanic interests. GMPI need not be limited to even these bounds. Cooperation could include initiatives in the fields of disaster relief, fishing and the extraction of other ocean and seabed resources, maritime safety, oceanography, hydrography and port and container security. Anti-pollution efforts, ship construction, and scientific activities such as weather and sea forecasting, climate research and tsunami detection also represent the kind of constructive engagement across many fronts that GMPI could reinforce. The implications on the Sino-U.S relationship could be significant, and could

assist in the building of what will undoubtedly be America's most important strategic relationship in the 21st century.

A third element characterizing GMPI is *flexibility* in both its make-up and leadership. Ron O'Rourke, a respected naval analyst of the Congressional Research Service, has suggested that the notional contribution from other navies could be as much as 700 ships (to make the total 1,000), a rough and somewhat arbitrary number used more for its catchiness rather than as a precisely calculated figure.²³ Contributions to such an initiative would be voluntary, and any amount of participation would be welcome. Such a cooperative concept would be a global maritime partnership that unites navies, coast guards, other maritime forces, port operators, commercial shippers and many other government and non-governmental agencies to address maritime concerns. It is envisioned that the command structure could also be less U.S. dominant and more flexible than previous arrangements. Several precedents point to possible models for broader cooperation and flexible command. The deployment of ships to the U.S. Central Command for Operation Enduring Freedom consisted of 91 ships from 12 nations, two-thirds of those from the 11 coalition partners. This joint effort reflects the extent to which the United States relies on other nations, particularly in terms of naval forces.²⁴ Also, 45 ships from seven nations sailed with the U.S. fleet in 2006 as part of the Maritime Security Operations in the Persian Gulf, a portion of which were commanded by a U.K. flag officer.²⁵

In addition to these broad benefits that characterize the concept of GMPI, others would also accrue. For example, procedural improvements and operational experience stemming from GMPI activities would foster better operational and tactical communications between nations. The importance of communications was dramatically demonstrated in December 2004 as 18 nations united to provide relief in the aftermath of the Tsunami in the Indian Ocean. Interviews with naval officers involved in that effort indicate that, while the forces ultimately got the job done, coalition communications at sea remain an ongoing challenge.²⁶ Coalition operations, of whatever stripe, demand coordinated implementation along the

lines of a Thousand-Ship Navy, regardless of other factors.

Another direct and related benefit would be Sino-U.S. humanitarian aid exercises and operations. The PLAN was not ready to assist in the 2004 tsunami relief effort. Had Washington and Beijing pressed ahead and scheduled a humanitarian aid exercise, it is possible that the PLAN would have gained the experience and know-how to form a comfortable partnership with the experienced U.S. Navy, which would have been valuable to conduct humanitarian operations to aid Bangladesh after the November 2007 super-cyclone. Some form of humanitarian exercise should be conducted as soon as the current problem of port denial is resolved, to allow the PLAN to gain experience and be ready to act as a partner in future efforts. These are but two examples of advantages accrued from the GMPI with respect to safe and effective coordination, maneuvering and other activities.

Forming “habits of cooperation” through military and other forms of maritime cooperation between the United States and China strike some as being naïve or giving insufficient shrift to historic and systemic national differences. For example, how can cooperation be established without revealing military secrets relevant to U.S. strategic advantage over

the Chinese, which Washington may want to retain if cooperation turns to conflict? Some would argue that the United States, as the far superior partner, would be taking more risk. Even if this were true, it would only hold for the short term; as

Cooperation centered only on traditional security may be difficult to sustain strategically and politically.

China’s capabilities increase over time, it will have more to risk. From another perspective, China, as a weaker partner, is also more vulnerable and arguably faces comparable or greater risk through any collaboration. There is undoubtedly some risk in cooperation, but it is shared by both sides.

Regardless, the concept of GMPI is well suited to controlling access to classified or sensitive information or equipment. The level or intensity of cooperation can

be modulated as desired. For many decades, the United States has selectively shared information with other countries through the use of *NOFORN* (not releasable to other countries) and *Releasable To* (eligible countries) procedures for classified material of every sort. Under GMPI, the U.S. Navy would almost certainly, for practical reasons and for the security of classified information, not initially contemplate anything approaching high-tempo combat operations with the PLAN – even with the prospect of future activities. However, GMPI in no way precludes U.S. Navy operations with other navies involving classified and sensitive areas and combat operations. In short, the concept inherently allows selectivity and flexibility in the form of operations and the level of information revealed.

Any form of GMPI that will have a chance of succeeding with China will also need to avoid the perceived missteps introduced through certain past maritime security arrangements, particularly the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). In fact, Chinese leaders are generally now in concert with their American counterparts on the dangers of proliferation of nuclear and other materials for weapons of mass destruction, but they are wary of the operational aspects as established in PSI, some of which North Korea considers tantamount to an act of war.²⁷ China will prohibit any transit of illegal material through its airspace and seaports but is reluctant to agree on supervision, surveillance and checks on the high seas. Boarding a ship to conduct a check is viewed as a violation of international law, given that one could not be sure of the nature of material aboard. Such a method of enforcement risks armed clashes. Consequently, China would wish to avoid participation in GMPI actions related to PSI implementation at sea. It may not in all cases be easy to differentiate PSI and GMPI actions, but China's role in the maritime partnership need not be related directly to PSI activities. This does not mean a dodging of a crucial problem, rather approaching cooperation differently, with a degree of flexibility built into GMPI. A senior PLA navy officer who is well acquainted with this issue opined that the PSI issue could be finessed, unlike a number of other factors as discussed below.

Baby Steps and Beyond

China and the United States have already entered a period of maturity and stability in their relationship. A GMP-like initiative, if executed, would serve to consolidate ties by enhancing trust, understanding and confidence. Bilateral ties and the commonality of both countries' interests are ripe for a deeper maritime security relationship.

Other forms of cooperation precede the idea of GMPI. Most prominently, concrete forms of maritime cooperation between the United States and China have already begun with the U.S. Coast Guard and the P.R.C. Maritime Safety Administration.²⁸ Over the last five years, the

U.S. Coast Guard has worked with several Chinese ministries and other entities to develop a relationship that includes both exchanges ashore and operational cooperation at sea.²⁹ Chinese officers have attended courses

at the Coast Guard Academy and the fisheries enforcement school in Alaska, and served temporarily on U.S. cutters while taking enforcement actions against Chinese fishing boats in the North Pacific. China is active in the North Pacific Coast Guard Forum, which is the only maritime security organization in East Asia. The forum provides opportunities for international coast guard leaders to interact regularly, and also initiated at-sea combined exercises that began in 2005.³⁰ Together they are working to curb oceanic pollution, enhance maritime safety, promote sustainable and equitable extraction of resources and provide security from threats at sea and in harbors. There is the reasonable prospect that the coast guard component in U.S.-China relations could prove to be the first step toward a broader joint maritime security enforcement that could encompass enhanced naval cooperation.

In addition, the U.S. Navy and PLAN have conducted visits to each others' ports for many years (notwithstanding occasional interruptions such as the current one), along with a number of exchanges of commanders between the

The most nettlesome obstacle for cooperation is China's insecurity over Taiwan.

two navies.³¹ These bilateral exercises have only been conducted very recently, however, and have largely been rudimentary operations. A PLAN destroyer and oiler visited Pearl Harbor and San Diego in September 2006 and completed the first phase of a two-part exercise between the two navies. The first phase entailed communication exchanges and other simple operations near Oahu, Hawaii, and a joint search and rescue exercise off the coast of Southern California. The second phase was conducted off the coast of China during the November 2006 visit of Adm. Gary Roughead, then commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet (now chief of naval operations).³² These exercises conformed to the almost decade-old Military Maritime Consultative Agreement (MMCA).³³ Despite these opening gambits for maritime cooperation, the MMCA has produced disappointingly little substance.

The PLAN has not traditionally participated in multilateral naval exercises and only began conducting bilateral exercises with navies of other countries in 2003. These include the United Kingdom, France, Australia, India, Pakistan, Vietnam, the Philippines and Russia.³⁴ However, in March 2007, two Chinese missile frigates commanded a four-day sea phase of “Peace-07” exercises in the Arabian Sea involving Bangladesh, China, France, Italy, Malaysia, Pakistan, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States.³⁵ In May 2007, a PLAN missile frigate sailed in the American- and Australian-inspired Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) exercise.³⁶ Although China is a founding member of this two-decade-old arrangement, this was the first time it engaged in a live exercise.³⁷ More than 20 warships from 12 countries, including the United States, France and Australia, joined the six-day operation. In short, U.S.-China naval cooperation, while in its infancy, is not an untried idea. Bilateral and multilateral cooperation, with U.S. and PLA Navies participating together, has been successfully undertaken. A previously unsure and wary PLAN has overcome concerns about revealing critical shortcomings and being embarrassed over backwardness. Beijing’s pride and confidence in today’s PLAN make a decision to allow PLAN interactions with advanced navies more likely.

Could GMPI Run Aground?

While the precedents of maritime cooperation are important and the logic for forming them is persuasive, analysts on both sides have voiced a number of concerns. The leap to expanded maritime cooperation, many argue, is simply premature given the existing uncertainty and distrust in the larger U.S.-China bilateral strategic relationship. From the Chinese perspective, the most nettlesome obstacle to any maritime security initiative is China's anxiety over Taiwan. Some mid-level, but influential, naval officers have asserted that Taiwan would have to be specifically excluded – even from the civil or commercial aspects – before China would agree to participate.³⁸ Other PLAN officers have talked of skirting status issues with a formulation – not unlike what has been done with the Olympic Games and the World Trade Organization – whereby both China and Taiwan can participate in the maritime partnership concept.³⁹

On the American side, one prevailing point of view is that Taiwan should not be seen as a decisive obstacle and U.S. interests should be the ultimate governing principle. If the decision is taken that China's participation is paramount, and must come at the exclusion of Taiwan, then so be it.⁴⁰ The existing restraints concerning U.S. military ties with Taiwan armed forces, including the U.S. self-imposed prohibitions against visits by senior officials and officers of the Department of Defense, seem to make this course of action reasonable.

While U.S. strategic interests may dictate cooperation with mainland China, implementing it could be complicated and could face severe political resistance. If finessed the right way, the nature of GMPI may, however, offer a way to circumscribe this potentially intractable issue. A more flexible structure for the GMPI concept, particularly with regard to formal membership could possibly circumvent a stalemate with Beijing and allow Taiwan's (low profile) participation. Thus far, GMPI is being described by its originators as more a concept than an official organization and perhaps could function in some or in all cases absent a process of registration or formal declaration of accession.

Rather, participation might be managed on an ad hoc or case-by-case basis, without a government legal instrument approving the contribution of another entity – whether a country, company or other organization. The GMPI concept is broad and includes opportunities to engage in activities beyond naval forces, including commercial, international trade and security activities: free-form maritime cooperation. Senior U.S. Navy officers explain, “The world needs not just gray hulls flying the U.S. or any other nation’s flag, but a network of international navies, coast guards, port operators, commercial shippers, and local law enforcement all working together to increase security.”⁴¹ Might this become an area of cross-Strait cooperation, starting in some limited, less sensitive way? It is impossible to know if Beijing and Taipei would accept this, but under the right circumstances, both might see this as serving their interests, as with other limited cross-Strait initiatives and burgeoning economic and cultural ties.

Yet another alternative may be to establish Sino-U.S. bilateral and multilateral maritime cooperation outside the GMPI rubric altogether. GMPI could proceed absent Chinese participation. The primary goal advocated here is to achieve U.S.-China maritime cooperation, with or without a boost from GMPI, which will thrive or founder on its own merits. Whatever course is taken, Washington will wish to avoid any appearance that it is negotiating with Beijing on a matter involving Taiwan. However, both sides need now to be attentive to whether there is a problem and how it might be avoided or remedied. In short, this free-form GMPI concept need not run aground; it seems to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate a way around this inclusive of China and also to contend with the various other potential problems to be considered below.

The Chinese have raised concerns with Mullen over the question of how activities under the rubric of GMPI would fit with undertakings directed by the United Nations and activities of regional organizations. U.S. Navy discussions with the U.N. secretary-general, as well as with representatives from many countries, have received apparently enthusiastic responses to the idea, largely because at present, the United Nations plays a limited role in maintaining maritime security.⁴² Beijing is not likely to be wholly content with this response

and instead is likely to demand a fuller explanation of the relationship between GMPI activities and U.N. prerogatives. China shows little sign of sacrificing its power through U.N. authority on issues and decisions where it otherwise fears it has less sway. The United Nations has provided a mechanism for Beijing to put the brakes on certain U.S. undertakings which China disagrees with – notably issues involving Iran and Iraq.

There are other deeper concerns that persist for the PLA and Chinese leaders. While American engagement in the Western Pacific is generally welcome by regional countries, including China, there are latent fears of ulterior motives and hidden intentions of containing China or infringing on its sovereignty. Chinese analysts see the potential imposition of U.S. leadership – let alone dominance or hegemony – where it is not desired. PLAN senior officers continue to suspect that, while GMPI might end up making the

*China fears ulterior motives
and hidden intentions.*

Strait of Malacca safer, it could effectively be put under U.S. control. The U.S. Navy has by far the largest presence in the Western Pacific, but contrary to popular conception, the

Malacca and other relevant straits are generally policed – albeit imperfectly – by littoral countries. Capt. Van Hook, currently the executive director of the CNO Executive Panel, directly responded to these concerns, cautioning against a heavy American hand and urging that the United States avoid arrogance and be more sympathetic to other parties' concerns regarding the tendency of U.S. influence. He contends that regional security arrangements have competent leaders, with shared cultural ties and strategic interests. It remains to be seen if, when this is explained to the Chinese, concerns over undue U.S. Navy influence will be significantly diminished.

There is also doubt among at least some PLA leaders with respect to developing closer military-to-military relations with the United States. The Chinese are wary of getting burned as they have in the past. Memories of the sanctions imposed by Washington in 1989 or the 1993 *Yinhe* incident remain vivid. The former holds

particularly profound lessons for China, where it not only served to embarrass Chinese leaders, but halted burgeoning Sino-U.S. military exchanges (e.g., the U.S. Air Force Thunderbird flight demonstration team had performed over the Great Wall). This incident also brought an end to procurement contracts that would have put an advanced radar in the PLA Air Force's F-8 fighter aircraft and would have given the PLAN several antisubmarine homing torpedoes, among other systems.⁴³ In the *Yinhe* episode, the United States suspected the Chinese ship of carrying materials to Iran for chemical weapons production. After weeks of American pressure, the Chinese government agreed to have the ship searched in a port in Saudi Arabia by a joint Saudi-U.S. team. Nothing was found, and many in China continue to view this as an example of Washington's abuse of power. These were not the first such instances for the PLA. Moscow had dealt them a severe blow three decades earlier in the major Sino-Soviet split.

All of this serves to remind China of the danger of becoming too entangled, even dependent on others, particularly the United States. There is a lingering fear that once China participates in crucial maritime security areas, Washington and the West will change their minds again. Within this is the latent concern that cooperation in maritime security could serve to constrain – whether by external or internal pressures – the development of China's indigenous naval capabilities. Addressing the domestic issues that might bear on China's concerns is beyond the scope of this paper, but fears of external influence on China seem misplaced. GMPI would not necessarily impact a country's naval forces. Despite cooperation, Beijing's fears of falling further behind could be hedged by its acquiring and maintaining sufficient forces for its national security needs. Undertaking a cooperative effort in sea-lane security and other areas of naval cooperation seems a risk worth taking for China.

China's discomfort at the idea of participating in GMPI with the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) is also likely. The close alliance structure between Japan and the United States remains a nagging issue. Fears of a concerted U.S.-Japan effort turning on their Chinese GMPI partner to control the Malacca Strait and sea lines of communication (SLOCs) is a continuing worry. However,

Chinese leaders must appreciate that, for both sides, close cooperation in peacetime would imply a better knowledge of how the other side would conduct combat operations. Currently, the United States and Japan have close ties and would likely be able to conduct such operations against China whether naval cooperation had been undertaken or not. In other words, cooperation does not increase the likelihood of American perfidy toward China. On the contrary, it reduces it. In addition, the PLAN and JMSDF need not be forced to operate together more than they desire, and the GMPI concept could easily allow sufficient flexibility for that. The combination of historical animosity and current disputes over sovereignty issues and extraction of oil and gas dictate that the United States should be cautious and not, for example, make cooperative efforts with the JMSDF a central feature of any propositions to the PLAN and Beijing. Instead, attention might be drawn to the efforts of those in Japan and China to ease tensions and build bilateral cooperative ties, such as recent overtures by a very senior Chinese diplomat concerning trilateral cooperation (including the United States).

U.S. Reservations

In addition to larger, philosophical opposition to expanded maritime cooperation, there are practical issues that face the United States as well. Some have questioned whether the PLAN has the capability, now or in the near term, to participate in the mission of protecting critical SLOCs. Some believe that, although PLAN modernization since the late 1990s has been impressive, the answer is definitively negative.⁴⁴ The question is valid, but only to the degree that China would be required to support an equal or significant share of the maritime security. The better question is whether the PLAN can assist in operations in conjunction with the U.S. Navy and other navies of the region at this point in time, and whether it *can* develop those capabilities in the future. In many situations, naval responsibilities might be delegated geographically, meaning that tactical coordination would not be an issue. In other practical respects, the U.S. Navy will naturally be highly compatible with some and only marginally so with many others, including the PLAN. In many cases, the quantity and suitability of assets

(ships, aircraft, weapons and expertise) to the mission (from natural disasters to terrorist threats) may be more important than the tactical interoperability sought between alliance partners – as with NATO and the U.S. alliances with Japan and the Republic of Korea.

Beyond these practical concerns, however, a number of red flags have been raised regarding the fundamentals of such cooperation. The most disturbing for the United States is the ongoing modernization of Chinese naval, air and missile forces, China's anti-satellite test, and other efforts that have changed the power balance across the Taiwan Strait. First, there is a growing concern over where all of this is headed: what is the end-game for the PLAN and the whole of China's military? What are China's strategic intentions? Second, even if China's intent is benign, as it has often stated, that could change. In an uncertain future there is the perception of the risk that, through maritime cooperation, the United States could be inadvertently helping a Chinese navy that could one day be used against American interests or the United States directly.

Central to these deeper concerns is the familiar specter of the PLA's lack of transparency and reciprocity in terms of the extent and intention of China's military buildup. In the past, China has failed to show American visitors installations and equipment comparable to what PLA visitors are shown in the United States. There are many issues regarding China's military modernization efforts that have yet to be clearly understood. The suspicion and uncertainty, well-founded or not, have amplified the concerns of these more skeptical voices of military-to-military cooperation.⁴⁵ Although progress has not yet satisfied U.S. critics of the military relationship, there have been improvements; for instance, American requests to see previously denied facilities and ships and aircraft have on occasion been approved.⁴⁶

These criticisms need to be tempered by two points. First, a mindset persists within the Chinese military that as the weaker power, a degree of secrecy is appropriate, particularly with regard to specific platforms and capabilities. China's military transparency undoubtedly needs improvement, particularly with respect to specific platforms, systems and capabilities, as U.S. Secretary

of Defense Donald Rumsfeld noted in 2005 after visiting Beijing. For example, Beijing has not cleared up the mystery surrounding its plans with respect to aircraft carrier development. However, the United States must also accept a certain amount of opaqueness as par for the course.

Second, Beijing has argued that it has indeed moved to accept a far larger degree of transparency, reciprocity and even confidence-building measures particularly with regard to the more important issues of intention. Both to assure neighbors and promote regional stability, as well as from pressure by the United States, China has published several defense White Papers. While official documentation carries limited utility in this respect, on a broader scale, no serious PLA-watcher can fail to understand that China's intention lies in having the ability to deter or defeat Taiwanese independence and to thwart U.S. intervention. Beijing has even enacted the *March 2007 Anti-Secession Law* that provides a legal basis to use military force against Taiwan if necessary to prevent separation. In this respect, China's strategic intent is clear. Beyond the sovereignty issues of Taiwan and the East and South China Sea, Beijing asserts that it has no expansionist or aggressive intent. The scope and character of China's modernization in naval, air and missile forces – while significant – is quite transparent and illustrates China's limited regional strategic goals.

Maritime cooperation would serve to foster China's prestige as a regional player.

There is no denying that substantive benefits would accrue to China through U.S.-China cooperation in maritime security. It would help, as noted, to create an environment where China's energy and trade routes would be protected. It is not unreasonable to ask whether the United States wants China to feel confident and secure. Perhaps a U.S. goal should be not to aid or abet China's progress in any way. In fact, perhaps the United States should maintain the option of being able to disrupt the flow of oil to China. After all, maritime cooperation would serve to foster China's continued economic growth. It could also contribute to China's already growing soft power; substantive cooperation with the United States would confer on China further prestige and legitimacy as a regional, even global,

player. In other words, GMPI could directly and indirectly contribute to China's rise, an important element in securing China the means to expand its military capabilities. If China's intentions are suspect, with the possibility of detrimental effects to U.S. interests, then these would be precisely the factors that the United States would wish to curb.

There are no guaranteed answers to these systemic issues. But since they are larger unknowns, it is important to balance them both against more optimistic possibilities and the opportunities to alter worst-case scenarios even if they have real potential for materializing. First, while the side effect of maritime cooperation may support Beijing's strategic and economic interests, GMPI will play a very limited role in that trend. China's regional and global emergence depends far more on its own comprehensive national development than any particular collaborative effort. Barring domestic economic and political upheaval, China's rise is likely to be constant, largely unaltered by U.S. action. There is even considerable evidence to suggest that placing China in a distrustful and adversarial position will harm the potentially beneficial elements of China's development vis-à-vis U.S. interests.

U.S. engagement with China on maritime issues would provide a concrete platform upon which the United States can better understand China's strategic ambitions and perhaps even favorably influence their direction. Playing on those interests and benefits for China to participate in GMPI, the United States might be able to shape China's future decisions without making judgments of China's ill-intent, which come off as arrogant and hypocritical to the Chinese and make such actions counterproductive. While many in the United States may not wish for a strong and prestigious China in its own right, as a partner in maritime cooperation with the United States, it could be a good thing. From an economic and social standpoint, China and the United States are highly interdependent and inextricably linked. In this sense, a secure and prosperous China does greatly benefit the United States.

While there are continuing concerns for the United States with regard to the Taiwan Strait, U.S. interests play out overwhelmingly in support of cooperation

over competition. Maritime cooperation would give the U.S. Pacific fleet an added avenue for operational cooperation in the region. It would also serve as an additional platform for close communication in a sensitive arena. Most important, it will illustrate the willingness to cooperate despite continuing differences across the Strait, an action that would send a strong signal that China and the United States have common interests that go beyond this limited sphere. Naturally, in order to conduct stable joint maritime activities near and around the Strait, Beijing and Washington will have to sustain or improve the existing accommodation on difficult issues, such as America's continuing sale of weapons to the island and Beijing's threat of the use of force to keep Taiwan from becoming independent. These are important issues; however, they are not the whole story, or arguably, the most important part of the story. The bigger picture shows many areas of strategic alignment and cooperative efforts on profound international security issues.

Engagement would serve to better understand China's strategic ambitions and perhaps favorably influence its direction.

The United States and China, among other things, have begun at least a limited strategic partnership with regard to the Six Party Talks over North Korea's nuclear program. Washington and Beijing have significantly closed the gap in their views on fighting terrorism and proliferation. While Beijing obviously disagrees with the United States on many issues, the former has also largely refrained from directly challenging or obstructing U.S. actions in Iraq and in the Central Asian states bordering China. China also has not actively worked to counter the presence of U.S. forces in different parts of Asia. On the contrary, many Chinese strategists acknowledge the benefits to the region – and even to China – of U.S. presence. Beijing is concerned about closer U.S.-Japanese ties and U.S. support of more globally active Japanese military forces but has made no overt moves to challenge this close alliance.

In fact, despite a number of outstanding differences, Beijing and Washington view each other as partners on a number of important issues. The lack of

name-calling (a common practice in the past), is indicative of the deeper common interests underpinning the relationship. Both no longer consider the other as an outsider or an incorrigible troublemaker on any issue of strategic significance. Washington even expects Beijing to take the lead on security issues concerning North Korea where it is deemed appropriate. This is a dramatic change from just a few years ago when Washington saw Beijing as primarily a problem. This development is all the more remarkable in that both capitals fully appreciate that they must still hedge against possible confrontation with one another.

And it is this seeming contradiction of strategic alignment and hedging that is the hallmark of the U.S.-China relationship. It suggests that serious engagement and fulsome hedging are not mutually exclusive courses of action. They may be the new *modus operandi* for the relationship, and it is in this environment that a cooperative maritime security initiative should be viewed. It would not exist in isolation of other cooperative arrangements between the two, but alongside them and has the potential to be the prime candidate for further consolidating cooperative relations. ☹

Notes

¹ Twenty-five chiefs of navies from around the world offer their views on the Thousand-Ship Navy concept in “The Commanders Respond,” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, March 2006, Vol. 132/3/1,237: pp. 34-51.

² Vice Adm. John G. Morgan and Rear Adm. Charles W. Martoglio, “The 1,000-Ship Navy: Global Maritime Network,” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, November 2005, Vol. 131/11/1,233: pp. 14-17.

³ Parameswaran, P., “US Asks China to Help Maintain Global Maritime Security,” *AFP*, Apr. 10, 2007, http://www.terraily.com/reports/US_Ask_China_To_Help_Maintain_Global_Maritime_Security_999.html. This article describes the initial overture by Mullen to Wu, as also described to the author by participants in the April 2007 discussions in Washington. Chinese and American participants also told the author that the GMPI idea was, as expected, discussed directly and candidly during Mullen’s August visit to Beijing. This is alluded to in various press reports, including: “China, U.S. Discuss Navy Cooperation,” *CCTV*, Aug. 22, 2007, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-08/22/content_6582122.htm. The Chinese did not reply definitively and continued to ask questions about the concept.

⁴ Several Hong Kong port visit requests were denied by Chinese authorities in November;

such requests are generally routinely approved. The first was a request for a fueling stop for two minesweepers during a time of bad weather – an extraordinary denial given the jeopardy of the two craft, low on fuel in poor weather. Another request was for a Thanksgiving holiday visit to Hong Kong by the carrier *Kitty Hawk* and escorting ships – with hundreds of family members awaiting the ships' arrival. The reversal of the *Kitty Hawk* denial, said to be done on humanitarian grounds, came too late, and the crews and families were not together for the holiday; the ships returned to Japan where, coincidentally, a PLAN ship was making an unprecedented port visit. Also, a New Year's holiday port visit for a frigate as well as a cargo plane stop in Hong Kong were denied.

⁵ "China: Cancellation of Navy visit was no misunderstanding," *USA Today*, Associated Press, Nov. 30, 2007, p. 4A.

⁶ Tyson, Ann Scott, "U.S. protests China's denial of port entry," *The Wall Street Journal Asia*, Nov. 30, 2007, p. 10.

⁷ Morgan, J. and C. Martoglio, "The 1,000-Ship Navy: Global Maritime Network," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, November 2005, Vol. 131/11/1,233: p. 15.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 14-17.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

¹⁰ Van Hook, Gordan, "How to Kill a Good Idea," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, October 2007, Vol. 133/10/1,256; pp. 32-35. Captain Van Hook is currently the executive director of the CNO Executive Panel, a prestigious advisory group charged with advising the head of the U.S. Navy on emerging technologies and policy issues. Captain Van Hook's insights, published in October 2007, are especially valuable because of his unique position and association with Mullen and other senior leaders of the U.S. Navy.

¹¹ "Piracy Threat Remains High Despite Fall Off of Attacks in July," *International Herald Tribune*, July 31, 2007, <http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/07/12/asia/AS-GEN-Pirate-Attacks.php>.

¹² Rear Adm. Nimmich's remarks to the Navy League in April 2006, see http://www.navyleague.org/public_relations/SAS%20Transcript_%205Apr06_MaritimeDomainSeminar_%202pm.pdf.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Kinkead, Cliff, "China Builds World's Largest Navy," *Accuracy in Media*, Sept. 19, 2007, http://www.aim.org/aim_column/5758_0_3_0_C/.

¹⁵ Corn, Tony, "The Revolution in Transatlantic Affairs: Perils and Promises of a Global NATO," *Hoover Institution Policy Review*, August 2007, <http://www.hoover.org/publications/policyreview/9179587.html#note33>.

¹⁶ "CNO Speaks at SNA Symposium: Sea Power too Narrowly Defined, Navy to Expand Missions," *U.S. Navy*, Jan. 11, 2006, http://www.news.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story_id=21929.

¹⁷ "Why the World Needs the 1,000 Ship Navy," *Hidden Unities*, Mar. 31, 2007, <http://hiddenunities.wordpress.com/category/1000-ship-navy/>.

¹⁸ The U.S. Navy, see http://www.navy.mil/navydata/navy_legacy.asp?id=146.

¹⁹ Speech by Rear Adm. Carlton "Bud" Jewett at 2006 IFPA-Fletcher Conference, see <http://www.ifpafletcherconference.com/oldtranscripts/2007/Jewett.pdf>.

²⁰ Blumenthal, D. and J. Lin, "Oil Obsession," *Armed Forces Journal*, June 2006, <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/2006/06/1813592>.

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²¹ Pollack, Jonathan, "Energy Insecurity with Chinese and American Characteristics: Realities and Possibilities," revision of a paper provided for the U.S. Naval War College conference on Maritime Implications of China's Energy Strategy, Dec. 6-7, 2006. The conference papers will be published in a forthcoming U.S. Naval Institute book.

²² Minnick, Wendell, "Habits of Cooperation: Former PACOM Chief Calls for U.S., Chinese Militaries To Work Together More," *Defense News*, Apr. 30, 2007, <http://defensenews.com/story.php?F=2715206&C=america>.

²³ O'Rourke, Ronald, "Navy Role in Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) – Background and Issues for Congress," CRS Report for Congress, see <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RS22373.pdf>.

²⁴ Galdorisi, G. and D. Sutton, "Achieving the Global Maritime Partnership: Operational Needs and Technical Realities," *Royal United Services Institute Maritime Security Operations*, see http://www.rusi.org/downloads/assets/Galdorisi_and_Sutton,_Achieving_the_Global_Maritime_Partnership.pdf.

²⁵ "CNO Speaks at SNA Symposium: Sea Power Too Narrowly Defined, Navy to Expand Missions," *U.S. Navy*, Jan. 11, 2006, http://www.news.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story_id=21929.

²⁶ Galdorisi, G. and D. Sutton, "Achieving the Global Maritime Partnership: Operational Needs and Technical Realities" *Royal United Services Institute Maritime Security Operations*, see http://www.rusi.org/downloads/assets/Galdorisi_and_Sutton,_Achieving_the_Global_Maritime_Partnership.pdf.

²⁷ PSI is a U.S.-initiated multinational initiative to curb the transfer of WMD-related material.

²⁸ Goldstein, Lyle, "China: A New Maritime Partner," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, August 2007, Vol. 133/8/1,254, pp. 26-31.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

³¹ The first PLAN commander to visit the United States was Adm. (General for most of his long career) Liu Huaqing in 1985; the last of the total of four visits was by Vice Adm. Wu Shengli in April 2007. The first of four ship visits was the training ship Zheng He to Hawaii in 1989; the last were the destroyer and oiler mentioned here in 2006. The author's personal recollections of these visits were confirmed at the Global Security website, see <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/china/plan-fp.htm>.

³² "U.S. Pacific Fleet Commander Visits China," U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs, Nov. 13, 2006, http://www.news.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story_id=26570.

³³ The NTI Research Library entry for MMCA states: "The agreement provides for operator level exchanges to discuss issues of maritime safety and communication; the accord also expands cooperation in a number [of] related areas including search and rescue at sea, and humanitarian assistance. The first annual MMCA meeting took place in Beijing in July 1998..." See <http://www.nti.org/db/china/mmcaorg.htm>.

³⁴ China's Navy 2007, Office of [U.S.] Naval Intelligence, see <http://militarytimes.com/static/projects/pages/20070313dnplanavy.pdf>, p. 116. The document states: "In 2003, the PLAN conducted its first joint maritime search-and-rescue exercises during separate visits by vessels from Pakistan and India. Since then, it has conducted similar exercises with French,

British, and Australian vessels. The PLAN also conducted search-and-rescue exercises during its ship visits to the United States, Canada, and the Philippines in late 2006.”

³⁵ “Sea phase of ‘Peace-07’ exercises ends,” *Xinhuanet*, Mar. 12, 2007, <http://big5.cctv.com/english/20070312/101407.shtml>.

³⁶ The WPNS is a forum that initiated in 1988 for naval professionals. It aims to increase naval cooperation in the Western Pacific by providing a forum to discuss professional issues, which will generate the increased flow of information and opinions and lead to common understanding. The rationale was to have the leaders of regional navies meet for frank and open discussions to promote mutual understanding and to discuss common challenges. There are currently 18 members and four observers. Members: Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, China, France, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russia, Singapore, Thailand, Tonga, the United States and Vietnam. Observers: Bangladesh, Canada, Chile and India. Semaphore, The Sea Power Centre Australia, Issue 14, July 2006, see http://www.navy.gov.au/spc/semaphore/issue14_2006.html#fn.

³⁷ Lu Desheng and Li Gencheng, “‘Xiangfan’ returns in triumph after joining maritime exercise of WPNS,” *PLA Daily* (in English), May 24, 2007, http://english.pladaily.com.cn/site2/news-channels/2007-05/24/content_825510.htm.

³⁸ The author has heard these concerns directly from Chinese officers and think-tankers. These interlocutors are not speaking for their government but rather offering an alert to the problem that they believe could be insurmountable, especially so if unrecognized or handled clumsily.

³⁹ Conversation in early fall 2007 with a PLA Navy officer who is fully aware of the debate on this issue in the PLAN.

⁴⁰ Dr. Susan Shirk, head of the Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue forum and former deputy assistant secretary of state, and Dr. David M. Lampton of the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University are among the many who have in discussions with the author advocated this position of putting U.S. interests first.

⁴¹ Van Hook, Gordan, “How to Kill a Good Idea,” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, October 2007, Vol. 133/10/1,256; pp. 32-35.

⁴² The author raised this issue with Morgan in late September 2007 and received this response.

⁴³ This author, serving as defense attaché in Beijing following the Tiananmen Incident, dealt with the aftermath of the imposition of sanctions. Other pending transfers to China that were affected included counter-artillery radar, a factory for large-caliber artillery fuses, gas turbine engines for combatant ships, and spare parts for helicopters.

⁴⁴ Mulvenon, James, “Dilemmas and Imperatives of Beijing’s Strategic Energy Dependence: The PLA Perspective,” unpublished paper provided for the U.S. Naval War College conference Maritime Implications of China’s Energy Strategy,” Dec. 6-7, 2006, p. 9. The conference papers will be published in a forthcoming U.S. Naval Institute book.

⁴⁵ These problems have brought about provisions in the fiscal year 2000 National Defense Authorization Act limiting Chinese access and requiring an annual reporting to Congress by the secretary of defense on military interaction with the PLA.

⁴⁶ For example, Gen. Richard Myers, while chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, became

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the first foreigner to visit the Beijing Aerospace Control Center; Garamone, Jim, "Myers is First Foreign Visitor to Chinese Space Center," *American Forces Press Service*, Jan. 14, 2004; see <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=27502>. Michael Mullen told CBS News that he had been given unprecedented access to China's navy during his visit, and indicated he would continue to nurture ties after taking over as President George W. Bush's main military adviser and leader of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines... Mullen said his trip had included a speech to midshipmen at a naval academy and the observation of naval exercises from on board a Chinese warship. "There were several things that I did that I was told had not been done before," Mullen said. "To get under way on a destroyer and to see an exercise that included air, submarine and surface exercises" was a first for a U.S. Naval officer, he said. "Incoming Joint Chiefs Chair Visits China," *CBS News*, Aug. 21, 2007, see <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/08/21/politics/main3188954.shtml>.

Engagement, Caution¹

Yang Yi

Opportunity or Not?

In 2005, then U.S. Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Mullen, announced for the first time the “Thousand-Ship Navy” (TSN) proposal at an international symposium on international naval development. As the U.S. Navy explained it, TSN would neither be a traditional fleet of 1,000 warships flying the same flag nor a plan of the U.S. Navy to build 1,000 more warships. Rather, its purpose is to address global maritime threats by establishing close partnerships with foreign navies to form an international maritime alliance. Two years later, in April 2007, while China’s top admiral and chief of Naval Operations, Wu Shengli, visited Washington, Mullen proposed that China consider the possibility of joining the Global Maritime Partnership Initiative.

It is imperative for China to undertake a full-scale, in-depth study of what the TSN program entails and what it will mean for the Chinese military. Since

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the founding of China in 1949, no country has ever succeeded in forcing China to do anything it is unwilling to do, be it the former Soviet Union or the United States. Only after weighing all the positive as well as negative consequences and ramifications of joining such an initiative should China decide whether to join this program.

China's national security and economic strength have strengthened rather than weakened through the implementation of reform and opening-up policies begun by Deng Xiaoping. As a great power that enjoys high levels of economic

What is the deeper U.S. strategic intention of the TSN program?

growth, China relies heavily on international cooperation and globalization. As such, China and the international community are faced with a wide array of security challenges and threats that no single country can possibly cope with single-handedly. Therefore, China must get over a "victim mentality" and move toward a more confident and open-minded approach in the face of new ideas like TSN.

In general, China should play a constructive role as a responsible great power and cooperate more vigorously with foreign countries, including the United States. The same mentality should be applied to an examination of the TSN proposal. Although the United States has already extended the invitation to the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy to join the TSN program, the Chinese government and military have yet to officially respond to the invitation.

Some civilian policy analysts and academic scholars, however, have raised a number of concerns. For instance, what is the deeper U.S. strategic intention of the TSN program in addition to the declared purpose of fighting global terrorism? Does it fit in with China's foreign policy to participate in such a program? How will participation impact China's national security interests? Can China open its ports and provide logistic support to the U.S. Navy? These suspicions of U.S. intentions go beyond a few individuals and include a significant group of people in China, for good reasons.

Regardless of these suspicions, China should form a new strategic perspective

and take advantage of any positive aspects such a proposal brings, while preventing any compromises to its national interests. In terms of the issue of whether or not China should open its ports to provide logistic support for the U.S. Navy in an effort to safeguard regional peace and security, it is not an issue that entails a simple “yes-or-no” response. Further consultations between the two sides will be necessary. Although it is impossible to give any definite answer now, China should not hastily slam shut the door on the proposal.

The United States Needs the “China Threat”

Whether Chinese and American navies should or can team up under the framework of TSN needs to be closely examined from a greater strategic context. One undeniable fact is that China and the United States harbor strategic suspicions towards each other in the sphere of traditional security. While China suspects that the United States has a strategic intention of containing China, the United States is skeptical of how China will leverage its growing military might and whether China will challenge the dominant position of the United States in the world’s power structure.

A number of conditions have set the strategic tone. First, changes in the relative strength of China and the United States have led the United States to develop a sense of strategic uneasiness. The United States still holds an absolute superiority in comprehensive national power, especially military power. In the past four years, however, the United States has been busy with the global anti-terrorism war on one hand and, on the other hand, bogged down with the restoration of post-war order in Iraq. The long battle-line in the Middle East has stretched the U.S. military so thin that it has impaired the routine building of its defense capability. Furthermore, the rift between the United States and its allies created by the launch of the Iraq war has not yet been fully mended.

Conversely, China is enjoying an increasing international influence as well as political and social stability and economic prosperity. Guided by the military preparations against the “Taiwan independence” movement, PLA has been

noticeably strengthened through the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMAs) with Chinese characteristics, which focused on the two-pronged development of mechanization and “informationalized warfare” capability. Such a shifting in relative strength between the two great powers has made the United States feel uneasy, as it continues its effort to consolidate its power and maintain its current global position.

Second, the United States needs a threat like China to maintain its military hegemony. After the end of the Cold War, the United States shifted the focus of its military strategy from competing with the Soviet Union for world hegemony to tackling regional conflicts and preventing the rise of regional powers that may challenge the United States. Russia’s military strength has greatly diminished since the Cold War and it is unlikely it will regain strategic footing with the United States in the near future. Moreover, Russia – as a major military target – can no longer mobilize the American public and achieve a bipartisan consensus as in the past. Only China can fulfill that role.

Contradictions Facing Peaceful Development

China’s rapid development and expanding national interests require peace and stability not only in Asia but throughout the world. At the same time, China should, as an important and responsible member of the international community, contribute to safeguarding world peace and promoting progress for all. China’s advocacy for building a “harmonious world” is by no means an empty political slogan, but a serious political pursuit.

China’s commitment to peaceful development is sincere. But history has taught the Chinese that peaceful development can never be realized only by a dint of good intentions. To achieve peaceful development, China must face the profound contradictions associated with its national security strategy and its strategy for economic development. First, there is a contradiction between China’s rapidly growing interests and the means to protect those interests. At another level, there is a contradiction between the urgency of strengthening the means of protecting China’s expanded national interests and the ever increasing

external constraints for its growth.

China's expanding economic scale has led to rapidly growing interests overseas, where the raw materials, energy resources and markets necessary for its economic development are spreading globally. The number of Chinese living overseas and their assets are also continually on the rise, and are becoming an increasingly important part of China's national security. Thus, as the Chinese economy and the world economy grow interdependent, peace and stability in the world, especially within the Asia-Pacific region, is crucial to China's national interests.

Though China's interests around the world are continually expanding, its influence to help safeguard those interests remains insufficient. China lacks the strategic power to actively influence and shape the direction and process of major international affairs. In other words, China military power lags far behind its political, diplomatic and cultural power to better protect its national interests in the world. China gravely lacks a military deterrent and real combat capability to effectively address both traditional security threats as well as anti-terrorism, international disaster relief, humanitarian aid, U.N. peacekeeping operations and, consistent to international norms, the evacuation of its overseas citizens in the case of a major international crisis. As a responsible big power, China should make greater contributions to the international community. Therefore, it needs to build a powerful military that is commensurate with its international position. This is a necessity to protect both China's interests of national security and development as well as world peace and development of all.

China's expanding economic scale has led to rapidly growing interests overseas.

Importantly, however, China's military modernization has created a second contradiction: the need to strengthen the means for the protection of national interests versus the international suspicions that result from doing so. Some countries are fearful of China's military modernization. These doubts and anxieties have been used by some with ill-intent to spread and exaggerate the "China

threat theory.” This has complicated the security situation in China and caused greater security pressure on the nation.

Wealth, Not Hegemony; Strength, Not Aggression

Discussion between China and the United States about cooperation – naval cooperation included – is always dominated by the issue of transparency. The Chinese believe that military transparency should be more than just the “technical transparency of hardware,” including such things as military budgeting, the size of the army, the scale of weaponry and armament. More importantly, strategic intention is fundamental to transparency. Military capability cannot indicate whether that military force constitutes a threat or not. The key to that judgment is what strategic intention it has, what policies are implemented and how it uses its military forces.

The strategic intention of the United States and Japan is not transparent in many aspects. For example, the United States deliberately maintains a “strategic ambiguity” in respect of its military intervention in a military conflict across the Taiwan Straits, including under what scenarios and scope a U.S.-Japan alliance would function. The United States has taken advantage of the war against terrorism to seize important strategic points and adjust the deployment of its military forces toward its actual strategic targets. In another example, Japan has ballyhooed the “missile threat” and “nuclear threat” of North Korea to create a reason for the political transformation and pursuit of the status of a military great power. The strategic intention of both countries is highly deceitful, making cooperation on the sea difficult.

Whether one country’s military build-up constitutes a threat to others can be determined by how it uses such power rather than how powerful it is. The strategic target of the United States is to maintain its hegemonic position in perpetuity. To this end, it must possess unrivaled power, especially military power. The strategic goal of China is what it says it is: to not seek regional and world hegemony. At the same time, however, China must achieve the means that can match its national position and protect the expansion of its national interests.

China must implement a defensive military strategy. Even though in the future, China will become one of the greatest powers in the world, it needs to build a military strength capable of both offensive and defensive operations. It is the legitimate pursuit of any sovereign state. China indeed has no need to develop a military power rivaling that of the United States, because China's strategic target is different. The Chinese will be content with a military strength just powerful enough to make anyone think twice before attempting to bully China. The fact that China will not enter an arms race with the United States does not mean that it will not work hard to develop its military power. A responsible large country of the world inevitably needs to have a comprehensive strength and the strategy and policies for its rational use thereof.

China calls for the construction of a harmonious world. This means that the use of national strength also needs to be "harmonious," by combining "soft power" with "hard power." China has consistently advocated the "soft" use of hard power to provide more public goods in efforts to achieve greater security in specific regions and the world in general, of which the best example is China's contribution to peacekeeping operations, disaster relief and humanitarian aid.

Mil-to-Mil Relations

Driven by their political leaders, Chinese and American militaries are gradually deepening their engagement. The military-to-military relationship is the most sensitive and most fragile part of Sino-U.S. relations. It is also one of the most important bellwethers for overall bilateral relations between the two countries. The political leaders of China and the United States have reached a consensus to build Sino-U.S. relations characterized as "responsible stakeholders" and "constructive partners." The two countries have made impressive progress in political and economic cooperation. In contrast, their cooperation in the field of security, especially in the field of traditional military security, lags far behind. Is it possible to set up a relationship characterized by stakeholdership and constructive cooperation with strategic mutual benefits between the PLA and the U.S. military? This is indeed a sensitive and difficult question.

Engagement, Caution

From the strategic standpoint of developing stable and sound relations between China and the United States in a general sense, it is both possible and imperative to extend that standpoint to relations between the two militaries. In the least, this should be a goal to boldly pursue. However, we must be sober enough to see that a number of obstacles continue to prevent the two militaries from forming such a relationship, some of which will be difficult to resolve in the near future.

A quick review of recent events makes it clear that suspicions and misperceptions between Chinese and U.S. militaries are unlikely to melt away quickly. In 1996, the United States sent two aircraft carrier battle groups to the Taiwan Straits, which at that time threw the two militaries into a dangerous face-off. After 1997, the two countries resumed the exchange of visits by senior military officers and military groups. But, substantive military cooperation did not rebound to the “peak” level in had reached in the past. U.S. President George W. Bush’s labeling of China as a “potential adversary” early in his presidency, followed by the EP-3 incident in 2001, drove the military-to-military relationship into deep freeze. In particular, the *U.S. National Defense Authorization Act*, adopted by the Congress for Fiscal Year 2000, imposed a number of restrictions on the interactions between their defense establishment and the PLA. Needless to say, the Chinese and American armies are both making military preparations for worst-case scenarios in Taiwan Straits. So, at present, it is unrealistic for the PLA and the U.S. military to engage in substantial military cooperation.

TSN: Worth a Try?

The key to success in developing military-to-military cooperation is to select the appropriate “thin wedge” to initiate it. TSN may well perform that role. Most importantly, this form of cooperation might be attractive to China because, it helps address the great nontraditional security challenges that all great powers face, China included.

No doubt, many conflicts of interest do and will continue to exist between

countries, especially great powers, and may even lead some nations to head-on confrontations. However, compared with the twentieth century, the probability of a large-scale military conflict between great powers has been significantly reduced. Instead, interests are increasingly characterized by a common set of nontraditional security threats. Terrorism, religious extremism and national separatism have become the most dangerous elements imperiling regional peace, stability and economic prosperity. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction has elevated these threats to an even more destructive and horrific scale. Cooperation between great powers has already been seen by the joint action taken in the global war on terror, tsunami relief efforts in Southeast Asia, the reconstruction of Afghanistan and, in particular, the nuclear weapon programs pursued by North Korea and Iran.

TSN is fundamentally congruent with China's goal of pursuing a harmonious world.

TSN serves many of these Chinese and U.S. interests. It is congruent with China's goal of pursuing a harmonious world. As a responsible and growing power, China can no longer close its doors and only care about its own affairs. Instead, it should use its own power and provide the world with more "public goods." In addition, however, the challenges that face China at the strategic level should be seen for what they are. From the U.S. side, TSN does not originate from U.S. intention to seek hegemony in traditional security, but rather to address increasing nontraditional security threats around the world. The fact is, the United States already has a global naval power that remains unmatched, and that will not face a true rival from any country or group of countries for the foreseeable future. The United States can well maintain its hegemony with its current military power.

To view the TSN program as a possible "test-bed" for military cooperation means neither a rejection nor categorical acceptance of the concept. Instead, it represents an opportunity to begin gradual trust-building and reduce suspicions and misjudgment. It means an exploration in selective and incremental engagement.

Working Framework

The decisive factor that governs the success of military-to-military exchange between China and the United States is the basis and scope of cooperation as opposed to whether or not the cooperation is under a multilateral or bilateral framework.

Having said that, there are several principles that must be observed: all activities should be strictly within the framework of U.N. authorization and consistent with international laws; the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other countries must be respected and the use of force in order to intervene in a country's internal affairs shall be avoided; the target of activity should be nontraditional security threats such as terrorism, religious extremism and national separatism; efforts should be made to increase mutual understanding and promote deeper cooperation with such exchanges. Under these principles, China, as a responsible great power, will be willing to team up with the United States within multilateral and bilateral frameworks. However, China will have difficulty in cooperation if the teamwork involves such sensitive issues as maritime interception, the boarding of vessels for inspection, blockage and embargo that are not authorized by the U.N. Security Council.

Step-by-Step

As the United States gradually shifts the focus of its military strategy from Europe to the Asia-Pacific region, and as China modernizes its naval power, contact between the two navies will increase. If the two are in a state of serious mutual distrust, "incidents" will never cease to crop up. This will ultimately impact Sino-U.S. relations. The establishment of a Sino-U.S. maritime military security consultation mechanism will help the naval and air forces of both countries prevent accidents, misconception or misjudgment.

The first step to accomplish this is to strengthen the communication and contact between the PLA Navy and the U.S. Navy, and to conduct joint exercises where both nations work together to develop practices to prevent accidents and any military operation that may arouse misunderstanding. For example, the two

countries could undertake communication exercises, which are an integral part of joint search and rescue operations. Looking to the United States and the Soviet Union as an example of such cooperation, after signing a maritime security agreement in 1972, the number of maritime incidents between the two countries dropped by 60 percent.

In 1997, the United States and China concluded an agreement to establish a maritime military security consultation mechanism. This occurred after the *Harbin* and the *Zhuhai* from the Chinese fleet visited the Hawaii and San Diego ports respectively – the first time a PLA naval fleet visited the homeland of the United States. More recently, in September, the two sides held joint maritime search and rescue exercises near China's coastline. The two nations can look at the possibility of more frequent joint search and rescue as well as humanitarian aid exercises, and could even explore joint maritime operations at a higher level if the U.S. Congress lifts the laws and decrees that restrict exchanges with PLA.

The gap in strength and capabilities between Chinese and U.S. navies will remain unaltered for a very long period of time, if not forever. But, this should not be an obstacle to greater Sino-American naval cooperation. Naval powers in Asia which are much smaller and weaker than that of China conduct exercises and cooperate with the U.S. Navy. Why cannot China? Ultimately, maritime cooperation is primarily a matter of the right political environment and sufficient political will. Political determination will be up to the leadership of both countries. As for the right environment, it is only a matter of time that the PLA Navy and the U.S. Navy will break out of the old mode of thinking and change their strategic perspectives and postures towards each other. Achieving peace, stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond will demand it. ☪

Notes

¹ The views expressed herein are personal only do not represent any government agency or department.

New U.S. Maritime Strategy: Initial Chinese Responses¹

Andrew S. Erickson

No Turning Back

The United States unquestionably remains the country with the largest stake in the security of the oceans. It must safeguard its 8.8 million square kilometers of exclusive economic zone (EEZ) – more than any other nation in the world² – and nearly 21,000 kilometers of coastline.³ Most importantly, the United States still operates the world's most advanced maritime forces and largest economy – one deeply dependent on overseas commerce in a world where a staggering nine-tenths of all trade and two-thirds of all petroleum is transported by sea.⁴

Enter China. This increasingly capable and influential nation is acquiring a growing interest in maritime security and commerce, which are essential to its national program of “peaceful development.” China arguably already possesses the world's second largest navy and largest civil maritime sector.⁵ In 2006, maritime industries generated an estimated 10 percent of its GDP (US\$270 billion), a

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significant increase from 2005,⁶ and may reach \$1 trillion by 2020.⁷ China also has 18,000 km of coastline, claims over 4 million square km of sea area, and operates over 1,400 harbors. Already the world's third largest ship builder (after South Korea and Japan), China aims to become the largest by 2015. By some metrics, China has more seafarers, deep sea fleets and ocean fishing vessels than any other nation.⁸ Seven maritime universities and colleges and 18 vocational maritime institutes are training China's seafarers today. This maritime economic revolution increasingly hinges on homeland maritime security. China has five of the world's top 10 ports by cargo volume;⁹ and ships entered Chinese ports more than 1.5 million times in 2005 alone.¹⁰

A new era of shared stakes in the global maritime commons is upon the two nations. How China and the United States interact on the high seas will be of enormous import to their respective futures and that of the international system. The United States is forging a new path with the recent promulgation of a new maritime strategy and China's reaction to it will significantly impact its direction and even perhaps its realization and success.

Strategies at Sea

The new direction for a U.S. maritime strategy began with a landmark speech delivered at the 17th International Seapower Symposium, held at the U.S. Naval War College in September 2005, by the then-U.S. chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Mullen. He called for a series of Global Maritime Partnerships spearheaded by a "Thousand-Ship Navy" that would bring the maritime forces of friendly nations together based on their abilities, needs and interests to provide collective security against a variety of threats in the maritime commons.¹¹

Under the leadership of Mullen,¹² and Adm. Gary Roughead, the current chief of Naval Operations, the U.S. government has for the first time brought all three of its maritime forces (the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard) together to produce a unified strategic document, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*. This new strategy was guided by the objectives set out in the *U.S. National Security Strategy*,¹³ the *National Defense Strategy*,¹⁴ the *National Military Strategy*¹⁵ and

the *National Strategy for Maritime Security*.¹⁶ It incorporates the ideas of U.S. military officers, government civilians and academics.

As U.S. Secretary of the Navy Donald C. Winter has cautioned, the United States is “not walking away from, diminishing, or retreating in any way from those elements of hard power that win wars – or deter them from ever breaking out in the first place.”¹⁷ But this first major U.S. maritime strategy in twenty-five years is based on the premise that “...preventing wars is as important as winning wars”¹⁸ and does place renewed emphasis on cooperating to protect the global commons on which the security and prosperity of nations around the world depend. In this new vision, U.S. maritime forces will focus more on participating in collective security efforts that recognize the importance of broad coalitions “in an

A new era of shared global stakes is upon China and the United States.

open, multi-polar world.”¹⁹ Long-term engagement with other nations, in the form of maritime law enforcement (e.g., against terrorism, proliferation and drug trafficking), regional maritime governance frameworks, capacity building, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief will be emphasized. This is because “trust and cooperation,” while vital to collective defense against security threats, cannot simply “be surged” to respond to a crisis; they must be painstakingly built and maintained on a permanent basis.²⁰

The new U.S. Maritime Strategy represents a significant departure from the last major strategy, as defined by Navy Secretary John F. Lehman, Jr. in his 1986 “Maritime Strategy.”²¹ War fighting played a much more prominent role in that document and whereas the Soviet Union was the explicit focus of the 1986 strategy, today there is no identified adversary. While the new 11-page strategy document is not detailed, it does contain a powerful vision. In today’s increasingly globalized and uncertain world, U.S. maritime forces are committed to work with others to maintain the security of the global maritime commons. Every nation has an opportunity to participate in this process; no nation is explicitly excluded. Rather, it is only those nations and sub-state actors that actively decide to challenge or disrupt this process that could become a threat to the existing order and hence trigger countermeasures on the part of the United States and its

global maritime partners.

While it is premature to predict the degree to which the new U.S. Maritime Strategy will succeed in shaping and safeguarding the global maritime commons, a variety of indicators should be monitored over the next several years.²² Within the U.S. Navy, continued CNO support and the appearance of the maritime strategy's principles in key navy planning documents²³ as well as national strategy pillar documents,²⁴ will provide important barometers of success. As in the past, reactions from other military services, the Congress and the media will signal policy and monetary support for relevant programs. Regardless of who the next U.S. president is, implementation is likely to be subject to budgetary limitations, particularly given the ongoing challenges associated with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Cooperation and coordination between the U.S. Navy, Marines and Coast Guard will be particularly important to the strategy's successful functioning. A broad acceptance of and participation in the Global Maritime Partnership Initiative by the international community will likewise be essential if the strategy is to fulfill its intended goals.

The new U.S. Maritime Strategy contains a variety of crucial elements that could facilitate enhanced cooperation with China. First, the emphasis on conflict prevention echoes many elements of Chinese strategic culture and doctrine. Second, the avowed objective of securing the global maritime commons is highly compatible with China's strategic interests. China relies increasingly on the oceans to both import tremendous amounts of energy and raw materials, and to ship its finished goods to market. At the same time, while its navy is increasingly formidable regarding Taiwan and littoral maritime areas, it has not yet developed the extensive blue water capabilities needed to independently safeguard interests further afield. The key for the United States will be to attempt to convince China that the goals and intentions of the new strategy are real and not, as many in China fear, merely "window-dressing" or a disguise for a "containment" of China. Third, the new emphasis on humanitarian operations, especially, offers opportunities for bilateral cooperation to build mutual trust without participat-

ing in activities that Beijing may deem objectionable.

A Cautious Reaction

In the nearly two months since the new U.S. Maritime Strategy's promulgation, there has been muted public reaction in China. This could indicate a number of possibilities. The new strategy may not be perceived as a bona fide shift in new U.S. policy – and therefore a strategic opportunity – for China. Other events, such as Taiwan politics, may be demanding greater attention at this time. It may also represent a deliberate hedging strategy to avoid definitive judgments until the new document is better understood.²⁵

Nevertheless, several articles already offer some insight into possible Chinese assessments of the U.S. Maritime Strategy. One of the first Chinese reports appeared in *International Herald Leader*,²⁶ a weekly general affairs newspaper.²⁷ The article describes a new emphasis on soft power and highlights the document's balance of preventing war with winning war. While seemingly open to this new approach, the article quotes a U.S. official as stating that the new strategy fails to address such critical issues as “[c]ommercial fleets, industrial bases, polar resources and missile defense.” In a theme common to nearly all Chinese articles on the subject, the author states, “so-called ‘international cooperation’ still serves the global deployment of U.S. sea power.”²⁸

More blatant suspicions of U.S. intent are also often on prominent display. Many Chinese observers contend that U.S. military activities are specifically designed to “encircle’ China.” In one case, emphasis is expressed with regard to U.S. military activities with the Philippines, which, being located in Southeast Asia and so close to Taiwan, is seen by two Chinese reporters as being vital for such “encirclement.”²⁹ This last point, while seeming to ignore the overwhelming rationale for counterterrorism cooperation between Washington and Manila, does underscore the centrality of Taiwan to the U.S.-China relationship.

Such a tendency to ascribe malign motives to nearly all U.S. actions, even those specifically targeting terrorism, is at odds with Beijing's frequent insistence that

it has no intention to exclude the United States from East Asia, or even to challenge its position there. Moreover, on this basis, what is the United States to make of increasing Chinese influence in Latin America, particularly given Beijing's close ties with Cuba and Venezuela? The U.S. media has certainly exaggerated some of the latter issues. Elements of China's media are increasingly subject to market forces, which promote a similar demand for sensationalist reporting. Still, the theme of Chinese "encirclement" is likely to continue to influence bilateral strategic interactions. The larger question is, given that China avowedly accepts the current robust U.S. presence in East Asia, how would the United States demonstrate that its actions were not specifically designed to "contain" China?

Characteristic of many foreign policy writings on China's *Liberation Army Daily* website in its tone of suspicion, one representative article infers ulterior motives for the new U.S. Maritime Strategy.³⁰ It seems there is a foregone conclusion about the intentions of the United

States and that therefore its strategy's content matters little. This suggests that some elements in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) at this early stage

The United States must convince Beijing the new strategy is not a disguise for a containment of China.

of the new strategy's application may already believe that U.S. sea power and ambitions remain fundamentally unchanged, and continue to challenge China's interests. By this logic, the manner in which Washington describes its maritime policies will have little effect on PLA perceptions. This apparent willingness in at least some PLA quarters to prejudge the U.S. Navy without specific evidence raises important questions about strategic communications and transparency. Does the United States have the responsibility, or even the ability, to convince China that its intentions are sincere? Nevertheless, it is worth emphasizing that this particular assessment does not reflect official Chinese policy, which in any case is largely determined by the nation's civilian leadership.

Other unofficial sources do articulate the balance of challenges and opportunities for China in the area of maritime strategy. The *People's Daily Online* attempted to place the new document within the larger context of America's strategic con-

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ditions.³¹ Having previously suffered from a “strategically confusing” period with the removal of its Soviet competitor, and having labored mightily to respond to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and support the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. Navy has been too busy to conduct a systematic self-examination of its long-term development until very recently. The new U.S. Maritime Strategy is thus correctly seen as an attempt to recreate strategic clarity and direction for U.S. maritime forces. On a more positive tone, the article allows that the new U.S. Maritime Strategy is “quite gentle, and it really embodies the lofty ideal of ‘cooperation’, and regards war prevention as an important mission of U.S. sea power.” Moreover, the author notes, “this is the first time that a U.S. official document has put forward the concept [of a] ‘multi-polar world’,” a foreign policy goal long championed by China.

Yet, the gist of the analysis is consistent with the others in its concern with and suspicion of U.S. motivations. Had Washington not revised its maritime strategy to emphasize fighting nontraditional security challenges such as terrorism in keeping with world events, “the mighty U.S. fleet [would] be like a giant that [had] lost its way, a colossus without any merit.” Renewed U.S. emphasis on cooperation and humanitarian operations is thus not seen as being altruistic – what nation’s policies truly are? Rather, they are a utilitarian repackaging of a time-honored “power-politics approach.” “Americans have recognized the weaknesses of the unilateralism of the last several years,” the article concludes. “What [the strategy] expresses can only be one thing, that is, American hegemony has put on a new cover called ‘cooperation.’”³²

These preliminary unofficial Chinese reactions suggest that revising America’s maritime strategy alone will not persuade China of positive U.S. intentions. In these Chinese views, while the new Maritime Strategy recognizes the limits of unilateralism, a perceived fundamental arrogance of American power is seen as structural and unchanged. Thus, while there is a degree of competing perspectives on the future use of U.S. naval power, the initial reaction remains highly circumspect and more will need to be done to overcome Chinese suspicions. In this regard, America’s actions must ultimately speak louder than its words.

Despite these concerns, however, there is room for optimism in the sense that the views from Chinese think tanks, policy analysts and government officials – like those of their U.S. counterparts – once they become available, are likely to be more balanced and pragmatic in acknowledging the many potential benefits of more actively cooperating with the United States in the maritime dimension. Here it will be important for U.S. officials and scholars to engage deeply with a wide variety of Chinese interlocutors to explain in great detail the strategy’s genesis, intent, evolution, and potential applications as well as to discuss specifically Chinese concerns and reactions. In this sense, the strategy can serve as a catalyst for much-needed Sino-American strategic dialogue and engagement.

Cooperation under the Radar

Amid the suspicious rhetoric of its official media, China is quietly cooperating with the United States on a number of maritime security activities.³³ The premise for these increased activities may be China’s 2006 Defense White Paper, which for the first time acknowledges that “[N]ever before has China been so closely bound up with the rest of the world as it is today.” China, in this statement of national policy, is “[C]ommitted to peace, development and cooperation” as it seeks to construct “together with other countries, a harmonious world of enduring peace and common prosperity.”³⁴

This new wave of cooperation already extends from the corridors of government to the Pacific Ocean. Here the two nations’ navies and other maritime services have the opportunity to do what other services have not: establish a new and cooperative relationship. This special maritime role is not a coincidence. Given the unique nature of sea-based presence, port visits and diplomacy, as well as their critical role in constantly maintaining trade, maritime forces interact in peacetime in a way that other services generally do not. For the U.S. and Chinese maritime forces, this generates many compatible and overlapping strategic priorities. Indeed, when seaborne bilateral trade is considered, the two nations already have a major maritime partnership, albeit one in which the military element lags far behind the commercial. This peacetime contact, particularly between the U.S.

and Chinese navies, is potentially vital; given the nature of the volatile Taiwan issue, U.S. and Chinese naval forces would also be the most likely to directly engage each other in the unfortunate event of kinetic war. Thus, there is a strong impetus for the two nations' maritime forces, particularly their navies, to better relations regarding issues critical to both peacetime and times of conflict.

Underscoring the value of the new Maritime Strategy's comprehensive sea service scope, the U.S. Coast Guard has established a working relationship with its Chinese counterparts.³⁵ In May 2006, buoy tender U.S. Coast Guard Cutter (USCGC) *Sequoia* became the first U.S. cutter to visit China.³⁶ In August 2007, USCGC *Boutwell* continued these exchanges with a visit to Shanghai during the North Pacific Coast Guard Forum, East Asia's only maritime security organization, in which China and the United States both play substantive roles.³⁷

U.S. Coast Guard officers have provided training and lectures in China, and Chinese officers have studied at the U.S. Coast Guard Academies.³⁸ Chinese fisheries enforcement officers have served temporarily on U.S. cutters (i.e., to interdict

A perceived fundamental arrogance of American power is seen as structural and unchanged.

Chinese ships fishing illegally). Their patrol boats work with U.S., Japanese and Russian counterparts annually to prevent illegal drift-net fishing in the North Pacific. The possible creation of a unified Chinese coast guard organization may provide further opportunities to build on this progress by reducing institutional conflict and confusion. The posting of a U.S. Coast Guard liaison officer, with the rank of captain at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, appears to indicate prioritization of developing the relationship on the U.S. side.³⁹

Despite its greater sensitivity, cooperation between the U.S. and Chinese navies is expanding as well. In July 2006, P.R.C. Central Military Commission Vice Chairman Guo Boxiong became the highest-ranking Chinese military officer to visit the United States since 2001. Qian Lihua, deputy director of the Foreign Affairs Office of China's Defense Ministry, described Guo's visit as "the most important Chinese military exchange with another country this year" and bilateral military relations as being "at their best since 2001."⁴⁰ Then-commander of U.S.

forces in the Pacific, Adm. William Fallon, visited China in May⁴¹ and August 2006. During the first visit, he extended to the PLA an unprecedented invitation to observe the June 2006 U.S. Guam-based military exercise Valiant Shield, which was readily accepted. This gesture of transparency demonstrates that the United States has nothing to hide from China, even in major military exercises in the Western Pacific.

That same month, the U.S. Navy's Pacific Fleet flagship *Blue Ridge* called on Shanghai for the fourth time, which China's official media described as "highlighting warming exchanges between the two navies." Assistant Defense Secretary Peter Rodman led a U.S. delegation to Beijing for the eighth round of annual defense consultations between the two countries. Visits to China were also made in September and November 2006 by Ryan Henry, deputy under secretary of the U.S. Department of Defense, and Roughead, then commander in chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet.⁴² In August 2007, Rep. Ike Skelton (R-Mo.), chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, led a seven-person congressional delegation to Beijing, where they visited a navy destroyer and a Second Artillery brigade.⁴³ Interaction between the nations' institutions of professional military education is also growing.⁴⁴

Building on the foundation of this growing series of exchanges, the United States and China have held a series of unprecedented bilateral exercises. Two decades of cooperative rhetoric were matched with concrete if modest action when a search and rescue exercise (SAREX) took place off the coast of San Diego on Sept. 20, 2006.⁴⁵ Though a series of port visits had previously occurred, and are scheduled to continue, this was the first bilateral military exercise ever conducted between the two nations.⁴⁶ The two navies stationed observers on each other's ships as they practiced transmitting and receiving international communications signals. The 2006 SAREX is envisioned to be "the first in a series of bilateral exercises."⁴⁷

A second phase of the exercise was held in the strategically-sensitive South China Sea in November 2006.⁴⁸ Chinese and American ships and aircraft worked together to "locate and salvage a ship in danger."⁴⁹ Noting that the South China

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Sea had been the scene of the unfortunate EP-3 incident only five years before, *Xinhua's* news service stated, "The same location has witnessed the process of exchanges between the Chinese and U.S. militaries moving from rock bottom to recovery and development."⁵⁰ In *Xinhua's* assessment, "The holding of the joint search-and-rescue exercises indicate that Sino-U.S. military relations are 'moving toward the pragmatic' and carries major significance for the future development of relations between the two militaries."⁵¹

China has also been invited to cooperate more broadly with the U.S. Navy under the framework of Global Maritime Partnerships, as set forth in the new Maritime Strategy. While visiting China in November 2006, Roughead stated to Chinese officials that "our navies can improve the ability to coordinate naval operations in missions such as maritime security, search and rescue, and humanitarian relief."⁵² During PLA Navy Commander Vice Adm. Wu Shengli's April 2007 visit to the United States, Mullen asked him to consider "China's potential participation in Global Maritime Partnership initiatives."⁵³ China's navy is reportedly in the process of considering this proposal.⁵⁴ In a subsequent news conference, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang declined to elaborate on this point, but said that the naval leaders "reached a consensus in many areas."⁵⁵ On Aug. 17-21, 2007, Mullen visited a variety of naval facilities and educational institutions and discussed possibilities for future maritime cooperation with China's top navy officials.⁵⁶

Many of the aforementioned activities would have been unthinkable only a few short years ago. However, one could argue that only the "low hanging fruit" of in terms of cooperation have been attempted thus far, while the truly substantive areas have not yet been fully explored. Much remains to be done before both sides can forge a robust maritime partnership that generates any sort of policy momentum. As the two sides must acknowledge (at least in private), several fundamental issues still serve to undermine the bilateral political and military-to-military relationship and thereby limit the possible options for deeper maritime cooperation.

Key Obstacles to Enhanced Cooperation

Unfortunately, several core differences between the United States and China – absent significant policy changes – are likely to limit cooperation for the foreseeable future. The inability of Beijing and Washington to reach an understanding concerning Taiwan’s status has long been the principal obstacle to improvements in U.S.-China relations, and hence will likely retard some forms of maritime security cooperation.

Since 1949, Beijing has consistently emphasized the vital importance of reuniting Taiwan as a central tenet of national policy. To safeguard its interests in East Asia, Washington must firmly honor its commitment not to support Taiwan independence, while also honoring its responsibility to protect Taiwanese democracy amid massive geopolitical changes. Rising Chinese military strength and economic integration arguably make the island increasingly indefensible in a military sense and complicate the status quo that previously prevailed. The U.S. policy of strategic ambiguity is becoming increasingly unsustainable. Greater policy and strategic clarity is therefore essential.

Despite suspicious rhetoric, China is quietly cooperating with the United States in maritime security.

In order to avoid provoking Beijing into exploiting this situation – a risky and costly proposition, to be sure – Washington must use its considerable leverage with Taipei to make it clear that movement toward independence would constitute a breach of their current relationship. Concrete actions, previously avoided out of consideration for Taiwan’s fledgling democracy, may be critical to demonstrating the U.S. position concerning this grave issue.⁵⁷ Given the increasingly untenable situation, the best option for the United States is to make clear that “Americans will not fight and die to defend a Taiwan that declares constitutional independence from the Chinese nation. At the same time, America should warn the mainland that a military attack on a Taiwan that is still legally Chinese will meet a U.S. military response.”⁵⁸

Amid these challenges, Beijing must recognize that no U.S. president has the power to change a basic reality: the preservation of Taiwan’s democracy is an is-

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sue of critical importance to the United States and one which enjoys overwhelming congressional support.⁵⁹ For this reason, the question of Taiwan's status must be separated from other issues if robust bilateral cooperation is to be achieved. This is certainly a thorny issue, and raises the difficult but unavoidable question: just how strong is the desire of Washington and Beijing to agree to disagree regarding their enduring strategic differences and cooperate to safeguard larger commercial, resource, homeland security and maritime interests?

From the U.S. perspective, China's ongoing lack of transparency, both in terms of capabilities and intentions, coupled with its rapid increases in defense spending and wide-ranging military modernization, remains a source of great concern. This situation undermines U.S. cooperation initiatives – which are being attempted with increasing willingness – for fear that China is unwilling or unable to truly reciprocate. A related concern is that China may attempt to exploit U.S. goodwill by imposing larger political demands. Under these conditions, the political reality in Washington circumscribes the evolution of better military-to-military relations with Beijing, something the latter seems not to fully understand. Beijing's lack of transparency and reciprocity only strengthens the critics of cooperation. This has led to a wide speculation in the United States and elsewhere concerning China's intentions, much of it inaccurate, unsubstantiated and worst-case in nature. But, the lack of communication from Beijing unnecessarily helps feed this trend in Washington.

A number of incidents epitomize this issue of non-transparency and its impact on crisis management between the two nations. Not only have a number of recent events been murky in explanation, there have been confusing signals about who was making the decision (the PLA, the Foreign Ministry, or even China's central leadership). In the case of the tragic April 2001 EP-3 incident, China's official state media continues with implausible claims that the slow, cumbersome reconnaissance aircraft "turned into" the fast, highly maneuverable F-8 fighter. The alleged intrusion of a Han-class nuclear submarine into Japan's territorial waters in late 2004, which occurred shortly before an important summit meeting, was blamed on a navigational error in a manner that does not appear cred-

ible to naval experts.⁶⁰ In October 2006, a Chinese diesel submarine reportedly surfaced unexpectedly within 8 km of the U.S. Navy's Kitty Hawk aircraft carrier as it was operating near Okinawa.⁶¹ China's January 2007 anti-satellite test has still not been satisfactorily explained despite repeated inquiries by the U.S. government. Most recently, the media reported that two U.S. minesweepers and the Kitty Hawk carrier battle group were denied permission, on separate occasions, to make port calls in Hong Kong. This issue raises the larger question as to what degree military-to-military activities will be subject to ever-shifting political winds and strategic disagreement.

There may well be clear explanations for each of the aforementioned events, but unfortunately China's government has been unwilling to provide any thus far. A degree of public clarification is necessary, and would do much to allay U.S. concerns, even if it defends China's strategic reasoning, which the United States may strongly disagree with. While official explanations for China's military development and assertions of benign intent may fulfill domestic political and even cultural imperatives, they ultimately do not serve Beijing's interests vis-à-vis the United States because they are not persuasive, or in some cases even comprehensible, to an American audience.

The obstacles to strategic transparency are sobering. If China provides a vague description of its strategic intentions that fails to explain key behaviors, while the United States offers detail and is still held in suspicion, how can the two sides achieve a firm basis for robust maritime security cooperation?

Sailing Forward?

While China appears to be maintaining a cautious, hedging approach in its rhetoric, low-level yet concrete maritime cooperation is proceeding without great fanfare. The real question is whether this progress has the ability to launch greater maritime and naval cooperation, or broader strategic relations. Given the issues at stake, it is time to explore how to take those important steps. This will require expanding the Bush Administration's vision of both the United States and China as global "stakeholders" more fully into the maritime dimension.

Initial Chinese Responses

With the importance of the high seas as an irreplaceable conduit for international trade and energy, maritime security includes both civil maritime and naval cooperation. Forging a relationship through which the two nations can help to secure this global commons and still avoid conflict is the crux of the issue. Once launched, overcoming the many incidents that could scuttle it will require better communication and a high level of interaction.

A wide variety of non-sensitive cooperation areas will remain the most viable starting point and can likely continue regardless of the state of U.S.-China relations. These include tourism, civilian academic conferences and exchanges, Track II diplomacy (i.e., by the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific), commercial utilization of new maritime resources and technologies, environmental protection, meteorology (e.g., typhoon and tsunami detection) and certain types of scientific research. For these areas, the private sector and non-governmental organizations can continue to play a major role.

For areas of cooperation that impinge more clearly on issues of national security, a more organized and official basis for exchange will be essential. A vital underpinning of both civil maritime and naval cooperation will be the development of robust ties between relevant institutions of professional military educa-

Beijing and Washington will have to live with considerable ambiguity and expect occasional setbacks.

tion. Exchanges of faculty and students, currently limited, can hopefully grow steadily in the future. Exchanges can facilitate fuller explanation of all aspects of the new Maritime Strategy as well as mutual discussion of non-sensitive and technical elements (e.g.,

best practices and simulation procedures). A new community of military officers can be trained to be capable of sophisticated interaction and even some degree of interoperability. Development of bilateral academic links will help to provide continuity to the relationship while facilitating the personal interaction that is essential to a Chinese cultural and bureaucratic context.

Given the fundamental interests of both nations, cooperation on maritime crime, drug and human trafficking, and terrorism should be able to proceed sub-

stantively over the next few years. China's participation in the Container Security Initiative (CSI) is a positive development in this area. China formally joined CSI in 2003 and the ports of Shanghai and Shenzhen now participate. But given that China has seven of the world's top twenty container ports,⁶² and that Chinese ports (including those of the Hong Kong S.A.R.) handled roughly one-quarter of global container traffic in 2004 and nearly 40 percent of global container volume, it is to be hoped that more Chinese ports will soon participate. Cooperating against piracy is more complicated, given its association with international maritime legal issues on which China tends to have different interpretations. Yet, the interests involved are essentially the same here as well. In the minds of many Chinese analysts, energy security is connected to scenarios of naval conflict, but commercially viable confidence building measures can be explored in an effort to remedy this. Technology transfer in clean energy production and coordinated efforts on strategic petroleum reserves could go very far in assuaging suspicions while promoting shared economic interests.

In particular, the new U.S. Maritime Strategy can play a crucial role by facilitating a variety of missions that require substantial coordination but are not viewed as inherently sensitive by either side. Much more can be done in terms of humanitarian operations, particularly as China increases its capabilities in this area. Joint search and rescue exercises can expand from the current ones between civil maritime and select naval forces to more regular naval cooperation. China's apparent launch of its first naval hospital ship in August 2007 seems to demonstrate an intention to project increased "soft power" in the maritime realm.⁶³ Already China's largest deck aviation platform, the multirole aviation training ship *Shichang*, which has a hospital module, has supported domestic flood relief efforts. It has also deployed as far away as New Zealand.⁶⁴ There is no inherent reason why China's already significant domestic maritime disaster relief capabilities could not be mobilized in the future to provide humanitarian assistance overseas – perhaps in coordination with the hospital ship USNS *Mercy*.

As China's naval modernization continues at a rapid pace, and new Chinese aircraft and vessels appear unannounced, American and Chinese military plat-

forms are increasingly encountering each other in or near territorial waters or airspace. These incidents increase the possibility of tactical incidents escalating into major crises. The U.S.-Soviet 1972 Incidents at Sea and 1989 Prevention of Dangerous Military Activities agreements established specific guidelines for conduct in such situations that have been credited with preventing countless crises. The current U.S.-P.R.C. 1998 Military Maritime Safety Agreement provides for annual consultations but offers no specific procedures. The two nations could benefit from a new code of conduct – one that stresses the role of early communication between military platforms in an era of advanced communications and sensing technology.

What the new U.S. Maritime Strategy alone cannot accomplish is to change China's perception of its fundamental national interests. It will not persuade China to participate in activities with implications that it may deem objectionable. Such activities might include intrusive boardings under the aegis of the Pro-

The two nations could greatly benefit from a new code of conduct at sea.

liferation Security Initiative, which China apparently believes to contravene its oft-stated need for U.N.-based legitimacy (a point disputed by many Western maritime legal scholars) and complicates its attempts to stabilize the Korean Peninsula. Even areas

of concern and disagreement must be discussed in fora related to the Maritime Strategy. Cooperative partners must be able to have open and candid dialogue on all issues of mutual interest.

Regardless of its exact parameters, building and sustaining a high level of cooperation will require substantial effort and patience. Washington and Beijing will have to live with considerable ambiguity, and expect occasional setbacks. For the foreseeable future, there will be significant differences in their military capabilities, political systems and national interests. To guard against the threat of conflict as China, the rising power, gains on the United States, the dominant power, both sides will likely find it necessary to “hedge” – not only rhetorically but also economically, politically and even militarily. This transitional power conflict scenario is a natural part of international politics, and will be a highly

destabilizing factor at times, particularly when U.S. and Chinese domestic politics are thrown into the mix.

Despite the long term strategic importance of cooperation, perceptions and misperceptions will continue to wield great influence over its success. Just as a “China threat theory,” continues to maintain a firm grip on many in Washington, many Chinese construe ulterior motives from virtually any U.S. action (an “America threat theory”) as well. American analysts and planners need to look at the big picture, which strongly suggests an overall Chinese desire and need to cooperate with the United States rather than challenge it. And the renewed American focus on humanitarian operations should be seen by Chinese for what it is, an opportunity for better cooperation and improved relations with the United States. Only time, increased interaction and concrete efforts at cooperation will ameliorate these knotty problems of perception and trust.

Maritime security lies at the heart of the survival and prosperity of nations. It is important never to lose sight of the greater perspective: the world’s largest developed nation and its largest developing nation stand to reap tremendous benefits by jointly ensuring the safety of the maritime commons. The possibility of conflict will always threaten the U.S.-China relationship, but the objective rationale of national interests overwhelmingly reinforces the need for durable, if sometimes competitive, coexistence on the world’s oceans. ☪

Notes

¹ The views expressed in this study are solely those of the author as a private individual. This study is based only on publicly available sources and does not represent the official position or analysis of the U.S. Navy or any other organization of the U.S. government [在这篇文章的意见完全是作者个人的学术观点，并不代表美国海军或者美国政府的官方看法或者政策]. The author thanks Peter Dombrowski, Andrew Winner, Nan Li and William Murray for their helpful comments.

² Timiraos, Nick, “Arctic Thaw Defrosts a Sea Treaty,” *Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 3-4, 2007, p. A7.

³ U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, *An Ocean Blueprint for the 21st Century* (Honolulu, HI: University Press of the Pacific, 2004), inset.

⁴ “A Cooperative Strategy for the 21st Century Seapower,” U.S. Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandants of the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Coast Guard, Oct. 17, 2007, <http://>

www.navy.mil/maritime/MaritimeStrategy.pdf, p. 5.

⁵ Capt. Bernard T. Moreland, USCG, "U.S.-China Civil Maritime Operational Engagement," draft paper for presentation at "Defining a Maritime Partnership wWith China" conference, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI, Dec. 5, 2007.

⁶ "10% Of GDP Now Comes From Sea, Says Report," *China Daily*, Apr. 10, 2007, see www.chinadaily.com.cn.

⁷ 徐起 [Xu Qi], "21世纪初海上地缘战略与中国海军的发展" [Maritime Geostrategy and the Development of the Chinese Navy in the Early Twenty-first Century], *中国军事科学* [China Military Science] 17, no. 4 (2004), pp. 75-81, trans. Andrew Erickson and Lyle Goldstein, *Naval War College Review*, 59, no. 4 (Autumn 2006).

⁸ China Fisheries Law Enforcement Command, as reported by Capt. APT Bernard T. Moreland, USCG, "U.S.-China Civil Maritime Operational Engagement," draft paper for presentation at "Defining a Maritime Partnership With China" conference, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI, Dec. 5, 2007.

⁹ American Association of Port Authorities, "World Port Ranking 2005," <http://www.aapa-ports.org/Industry/content.cfm?l>.

¹⁰ *中国海洋年鉴2005* [China Ocean Yearbook 2005], (Beijing: Ocean Press, 2006), p. 201.

¹¹ Adm. Michael Mullen, "The Thousand Ship Fleet," *Pentagon Brief*, Oct. 1, 2005; "Global Maritime Partnership' Gaining Steam at Home and with International Navies," *Defense Daily International*, Oct. 27, 2006, Vol. 7, Issue 42.

¹² Mullen is now Chairman chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

¹³ President George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: The White House, Mar. 16, 2006), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/nss2006.pdf>.

¹⁴ *The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, March 2005), <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Apr2005/d20050408strategy.pdf>.

¹⁵ *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America: A Strategy for Today; A Vision for Tomorrow* (Washington, DC: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2004), <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2005/d20050318nms.pdf>.

¹⁶ *The National Strategy for Maritime Security* (Washington, DC: Department of Homeland Security, September 2005), http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/HSPD13_MaritimeSecurityStrategy.pdf.

¹⁷ Dombrowski, Peter, "Maritime Strategy Project: Overview and Preliminary Analysis," presentation to author, October 2007.

¹⁸ "A Cooperative Strategy for the 21st Century Seapower," U.S. Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandants of the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Coast Guard, Oct. 17, 2007, <http://www.navy.mil/maritime/MaritimeStrategy.pdf>, p. 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²¹ Hattendorf, John, *The Evolution of the U.S. Navy's Maritime Strategy, 1977-1986*, Newport Paper 19, (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 2004), <http://www.nwc.navy.mil/press/newportpapers/documents/19.pdf>.

²² Dombrowski, Peter, "Maritime Strategy Project: Overview and Preliminary Analysis," presentation to author, October 2007.

²³ Such as the Navy Strategic Plan and the Naval Operational Concept.

²⁴ See endnotes 11-14.

²⁵ On this point, it must be recognized that Beijing may require time and further explanation from the U.S. (perhaps in the form of prolonged consultations) before it is ready to issue anything resembling an official response to the strategy.

²⁶ 杨晴川 [Yang Qingchuan], “美国海上力量 ‘三巨头’--海军作战部长拉夫黑德, 海军陆战队司令康韦和海岸警卫队司令艾伦共同出现在罗得岛州纽波特海军战争学院举行的国际海军研讨会上, 向与会的 100 多个国家和地区的海军首脑隆重推出美国新版的海上战略” [The ‘Three Magnates’ of U.S. Sea Power – Adm. Gary Roughead, Chief of Naval Operations; Gen. James T. Conway, Marine Corps Commandant; and Adm. Thad W. Allen, Coast Guard Commandant, Presented the Strategy to Maritime Leaders From More Than 100 Countries Attending the International Seapower Symposium at the Naval War College in Newport, R.I.], 国际先驱导报 [International Herald Leader – Beijing], Oct. 17, 2007, see www.chinesenewsnet.com. Translation by Danling Cacioppo and Nan Li.

²⁷ *International Herald Leader* is published by *Reference News*, a daily that carries materials translated by the foreign press, carried by China’s official news agency, *Xinhua*. Like a brief *Xinhua* English-language summary, and a wide variety of other online articles and internet commentaries, it provides some basic facts about the strategy and the circumstances of its roll-out. See also “U.S. Releases Unified Maritime Strategy,” *Xinhua General News Service*, Oct. 18, 2007, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-10/18/content_6899251.htm.

²⁸ This final point may help to explain the reasoning behind the article’s contention that “Mullen not long ago aroused great concern from the international community by proposing the so-called ‘1000-ship Navy.’” It is important to note that this term appears to have been largely replaced by the phrase “Global Maritime Partnerships” in current U.S. Navy parlance.

²⁹ 刘华, 吴强 [Liu Hua and Wu Qiang], “美国通过新海上战略 指导美军重返菲律宾” [Through the New Maritime Strategy, the U.S. Directs its Military to Return to the Philippines], 国际先驱导报 [International Herald Leader], Oct. 24, 2007, http://www1.chinataiwan.org/xwzx/gj/200710/t20071024_473467.htm. Translation by Andrew Erickson and Nan Li.

³⁰ 杨晴川, 王薇 [Yang Qingchuan and Wang Wei], “美国推出新的海上战略--遏制潜在竞争对手” [The U.S. Releases a New Maritime Strategy – Containing Potential Competitors], 新华网 [Xinhua Net], Oct. 18, 2007, http://www.pladaily.com.cn/site1/xwpdxw/2007-10/18/content_986293.htm. Translation by Andrew Erickson and Nan Li. It must be emphasized that this is not a *Liberation Army Daily* article and did not appear in that publication’s print edition. The brief text gives factual information on the strategy; it is the seemingly arbitrary label “Containing Potential Competitors” that is troubling.

³¹ 邢蓬宇 [Xing Pengyu], “美国新海上战略: 以合作之名谋强权之实” [The United States’ New Maritime Strategy: Solidifying Its Might Under the Banner of Cooperation], 人民网军事频道 [People’s Daily Online: Military Affairs Section], Oct. 24, 2007, <http://military.people.com.cn/GB/8221/51756/81282/81532/6422552.html>. Translation by Lyle Goldstein and Nan Li.

³² Unless otherwise specified, all quotations from this section derived from *Ibid*.

³³ For a positive but realistic exploration of this topic, see Erickson, A. and L. Goldstein, “Hoping for the Best, Preparing for the Worst: China’s Response to U.S. Hegemony,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 6, December 2006, pp. 955-986. This section draws heavily on Erickson, Andrew, “Combating a Collective Threat: Prospects for Sino-American Cooperation Against Avian Influenza,” *Journal Of Global Health Governance*, Volume I, Issue 1, January 2007, http://diplomacy.shu.edu/academics/global_health/journal/.

³⁴ The Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, “China’s

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National Defense in 2006,” Dec. 29, 2006, see www.chinaview.cn, pp. 1, 3.

³⁵ These include the Ministry of Public Security (with its Border Control Department and Maritime Police Division), Ministry of Communications (with its Maritime Safety Administration and Rescue and Salvage Agency), Ministry of Agriculture (with its Bureau of Fisheries) and State Oceanic Administration.

³⁶ In June 2006, USCGC *Rush* called in Qingdao.

³⁷ “Shanghai Hosts U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Boutwell during North Pacific Coast Guard Forum 2007,” U.S. Coast Guard Visual Information Gallery, Aug. 16, 2007, http://cgvi.uscg.mil/media/main.php?g2_itemId=159644.

³⁸ These include in the Coast Guard Academy in New London, CT and at the Kodiak, AK fisheries enforcement school.

³⁹ Unless otherwise specified, data for this paragraph is derived from Goldstein, Lyle, “China: A New Maritime Partner?,” U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, August 2007, p. 29.

⁴⁰ All quotations in the paragraph are taken from “China, U.S. Enjoy Active Military Exchanges in 2006,” *People’s Daily*, Dec. 28, 2006, http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200612/28/eng20061228_336342.html.

⁴¹ For an analysis of agenda items for the May visit, see Qiu Yongzheng, “Four Major Objectives of U.S. Admiral’s Visit to China,” *Qingnian Cankao*, May 12, 2006, OSC# CPP20060515504001.

⁴² Tian Yuan, “This is a Marine Corps That Has Left a Deep Impression on Us’ – Chinese Navy Marine Corps in the Eyes of U.S. Navy Pacific Fleet Commander,” *PLA Daily*, Nov. 17, 2006, p. 7, OSC# CPP20061117710021.

⁴³ Ye Pengfei, “Risk in Taiwan Straits Increases – China and United States Hold Frequent Dialogue,” *Lianhe Zaobao*, Sept. 3, 2007, OSC# CPP20070903530012.

⁴⁴ Xiong Zhengyan, Rong Yan, and Bai Ruishue: “2006: A Year of Most Active Exchanges Between Chinese and U.S. Militaries,” *Xinhua*, Dec. 27, 2006, CPP20061227045002.

⁴⁵ “Chinese Fleet Visits San Diego,” *People’s Liberation Army Daily*, Sept. 18, 2006, http://english.pladaily.com.cn/site2/special-reports/2006-09/19/content_591087.htm.

⁴⁶ Vessels from the U.S. and Chinese navies have previously participated in search and rescue exercises in Hong Kong (e.g., in 2003), but did not directly interact in the exercise. “U.S., Chinese Navies Complete SAREX Together,” *Navy Newsstand*, Sept. 21, 2006, http://www.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story_id=25702.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ The Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, “China’s National Defense in 2006,” Dec. 29, 2006, see www.chinaview.cn, pp. 31-33.

⁴⁹ “China, U.S. Hold Search-and-Rescue Exercise,” *Xinhua*, Nov. 19, 2006, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2006-11/19/content_5349057.htm.

⁵⁰ Xiong Zhengyan, Rong Yan, and Bai Ruishue: “2006: A Year of Most Active Exchanges Between Chinese and U.S. Militaries,” *Xinhua*, Dec. 27, 2006, CPP20061227045002.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* For a similarly positive analysis, see Li Xuanliang and Xiong Zhengyan, “Sino-U.S. Military Exchange Is Not ‘Empty Talk’ Anymore,” *Liaowang Dongfang Zhoukan* [*Oriental Outlook Magazine*], Nov. 30, 2006, No. 48, pp. 24-25, OSC# CPP20061221710018.

⁵² “U.S. Pacific Fleet Commander Visits China,” *Navy Newsstand*, Nov. 13, 2006, see www.news.navy.mil.

⁵³ Parameswaran, P. “U.S. Asks China to Help Maintain Global Maritime Security,” *Agence France Presse*, Apr. 5, 2007.

⁵⁴ Parameswaran, P. “Plea by Pentagon to Top Naval Visitor,” *The Weekly Standard*, Apr. 6,

2007, http://www.thestandard.com.hk/news_detail.asp?we_cat=3&art_id=41726&sid=13026608&con_type=1&d_str=20070406.

⁵⁵ “Transcript of Regular News Conference by P.R.C. Foreign Ministry on Apr. 5, 2007; Moderated by Spokesman Qin Gang,” OSC# CPP20070405071002.

⁵⁶ “中美海军上将握手大洋” [The Chiefs of the Chinese and U.S. Navies Shake Hands Over the Ocean], *当代海军* [Modern Navy], October 2007, title and facing page. Translated by Lyle Goldstein and Nan Li.

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⁵⁸ Christensen, Thomas J., “Clarity on Taiwan: Correcting Misperceptions on Both Sides of the Strait,” *Washington Post*, Mar. 20, 2000, <http://taiwansecurity.org/WP/WP-032000-Christensen.htm>.

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⁶⁰ Dutton, Peter A., “International Law and the November 2004 ‘Han Incident,’” in Erickson, Goldstein, Murray and Wilson, eds., *China’s Future Nuclear Submarine Force* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2007), pp. 162-81.

⁶¹ “U.S. Confirms Aircraft Carrier Had Close Brush with Chinese Submarine,” *Japan Today*, Nov. 14, 2006, <http://www.japantoday.com/jp/news/390343>.

⁶² Choe Sang-Hun, “Asian Ports Struggle to Keep Up with Shanghai,” Dec. 20, 2006, <http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/12/20/business/transcol21.php?page=1>. The author thanks Dr. Lyle Goldstein for directing him to this cite.

⁶³ Internet photos reveal this hospital ship, called Type 920 by Chinese sources, to be painted white with a large red cross. Apparently unarmed, the Type 920 has a rear helicopter hanger and flight deck sufficient to use a medium-size helicopter (e.g., one of the Chinese navy’s *Super Frelons* to evacuate injured persons. Built by Guangzhou Shipyard International, the 920 appears similar to China’s *Qiandaohu* (Fuchi) class 20,000 ton + fleet replenishment ships. See “Qiandaohu Class Fleet Replenishment Ship,” *China Defense Today*, <http://www.sinodefence.com/navy/support/qiandaohu.asp>.

⁶⁴ Erickson, Andrew S. and A. R. Wilson, “China’s Aircraft Carrier Dilemma,” in Erickson, Goldstein, Murray and Wilson, eds., *China’s Future Nuclear Submarine Force* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2007), p. 254.

China's New Military Elite

*Li Cheng & Scott W. Harold**

Beginning of a New Era

Analyses of the 17th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) have largely focused on the policy and personnel changes taken at the leadership conference.¹ Much less has been said about the implications of the massive turnover among the military representatives who sit on the Party's 17th Central Committee (CC), including its powerful Central Military Commission (CMC). While generational turnover is leading to a new Chinese political leadership that is less technocratic and more broadly trained in economic and legal fields, the Chinese military elites on the Party's top bodies are becoming ever more functionally-specialized in their areas of military expertise. Meanwhile, various forms of patron-client ties and political networks have played crucial roles in the

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rapid rise of young and technocratic officers.

These new, and sometimes contrasting, developments are important as one seeks to assess the future of civil-military relations in China and the challenges that the CCP will face in managing its military modernization efforts. What factors contributed to the large turnover among the military leadership at the Party Congress? What are the group characteristics of these rising stars in the Chinese military? What can an analysis of the professional backgrounds and political networks of China's top officers reveal about the dynamics between civilian and military elites? What does an analysis of who's up and who's down tell us about where China's military modernization efforts are heading? At this time, only preliminary answers to these questions can be sketched out by examining the characteristics of the 65 full and alternate members of the 17th CC who represent the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

The Chinese military is in the midst of a major transformation in order to prepare for what the top leaders call the "new era of information warfare." The most remarkable reflection of this transformation, which will very likely accelerate under the new civilian and military leadership in the coming years, is the trend towards ever-greater technocratic leadership among the PLA. China's military elites in the post-17th Party Congress environment are among the best-educated and most well-trained specialists ever to lead Chinese forces. A careful analysis of the profiles of the new Chinese military leadership can give insight into how China envisions transforming the forces of today to prevent, or if necessary, fight the wars of tomorrow and what advantages and shortcomings China's top officers may embody.

The study of Chinese military elites represents an essential starting point for any assessment of civil-military relations in China. As today's Chinese civilian leadership has increasingly focused its attention on issues of economic development and socio-political stability, little headway has been made in the task of building up civilian competency in military affairs. In theory, the CMC reports to the Politburo and its Standing Committee. Since 1992, only Presidents Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao have served on the CMC, and they have held the posts

of chairman and first vice-chairman of the body largely to symbolize the Party's control over the gun. Paradoxically, Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin both sought to avoid turning over the CMC chairmanship to a relatively untested successor by holding on to the seat even after they had stepped down from their political posts. As a result of the transition strategies adopted by previous Chinese top

Little headway has been made in building up civilian competency in military affairs.

leaders, the CMC itself has grown in importance, though without any increase in participation from civilian leaders other than the top Party leader. Sometime in the future, this could conceivably lead to practical challenges in exerting civilian control over the military, a long-standing goal of the CCP. This would especially be the case if the next generation of Chinese political elites come to be perceived as too ignorant about modern warfare to effectively manage the PLA.

At present, civilian control over the Chinese military rests on the shoulders of CCP General-Secretary Hu Jintao through his position as chairman of the CMC. Apart from Hu, no other civilians sit on the CMC, the ultimate decision-making body for Chinese military affairs. In addition, with the exception of Xi Jinping who had previously served as a *mishu* (personal secretary) to former Minister of Defense Geng Biao from 1979 to 1982, few other top contenders from among the fifth generation of CCP political elites have any links to or expertise in military affairs. Hu Jintao will likely appoint one or more figures from the fifth generation to the CMC, most likely to the post of vice-chair, sometime before the next normal rotation of CMC posts in 2012. Moreover, like Jiang Zemin before him, Hu may seek to retain the CMC chairmanship even after he steps down from his posts as president and party general-secretary. This will further enhance, intentionally or unintentionally, the power of the CMC leadership.

At the same time, such rules-bending maneuvers by the CMC chair are likely to grow increasingly difficult over time, as institutional norms take on greater prominence with the decline of charismatic/revolutionary authority such as that possessed by Mao Zedong or Deng Xiaoping. Recently, norms such as mandatory retirement ages and term limits have become more and more relevant in regulating

the civilian leadership's control over the military. It should be noted, however, while meritocratic criteria and standardized procedures carry much more weight in selecting top officers than ever before, informal networks such as blood ties, patron-client bonds, school connections, group army affiliations and regionally-based associations remain extremely important in accounting for the formation of the new military leadership. The characteristics of the new generation of Chinese military leaders – their professional competence and political associations – deserve careful scholarly analysis.

Large-Scale Turnover at the 17th Congress

The overall configuration of the military elites on the 17th CC was in many ways similar to that of the 16th CC. Eighteen percent (65 representatives) of the 371 members of the 17th CC come from military backgrounds, compared with 19 percent (67 representatives) of the 356 members of the 16th CC. Two military leaders, Guo Boxiong and Xu Caihou, serve on the 25-member Politburo on the 17th CC, the same number that sat on the Politburo of the 16th CC. The 17th Party Congress also brought four newcomers to the CMC: Chief of General Staff Chen Bingde, Director of the General Armaments Department Chang Wanquan, Commander of the Navy Wu Shengli and Commander of the Air Force Xu Qiliang.

The main difference between the 17th CC and previous CCs, however, is that no military elite serves on the current Secretariat (the leading Party body that handles daily administrative matters), whereas Gen. Zhang Wannian and Gen. Xu Caihou served on the Secretariat in the 15th and 16th CC's, respectively. The Secretariat, which is responsible for handling the Party's daily roster of events, is an important post that can provide leverage and influence over a broad array of issues. The absence of any military officials on the Secretariat therefore signals the further retreat of the PLA to a narrow focus on military affairs.

Although the overall representation of the military did not change much at the 17th CC, the rate of turnover of individual officers at the recent Party Congress was high. Generally speaking, the turnover rate of the CC as a whole has been

remarkably high over the past 25 years – newcomers constituted 60 percent of the 12th CC in 1982, held relatively stable, and made up 61 percent of the 16th CC in 2002.² Similarly, the military leadership has also experienced a high level of turnover as well. At the 16th CC, for example, approximately 60 percent of the PLA representatives were first-timers and all four directors of the PLA general departments were new.³ The turnover rate of the military leaders at the 17th Party Congress, however, was even higher than the previous CCs.

Among the 65 full and alternate PLA representatives on the 17th CC, an astonishing 66 percent are new arrivals. This is a higher ratio of turnover than that of the civilian elite on the new CC, only 63 percent of whom were first-timers.

**% of New Members from
Military in 17th CC**

CC Status	No. Individuals	No. First Timers	%
Full	41	24	59
Alternate	24	19	79
Total	65	43	66

This reflects a generational turnover, particularly among the alternates, most of whom are 5-10 years younger than their full-member colleagues. These younger officers are being tested as prospective leaders of the next generation

of military elites. Among the new full members, only two – Deputy Secretary of the Central Discipline Inspection Committee Sun Zhongtong and Commander of the Jinan Military Region (MR) Fan Changlong – were promoted from alternate status on the previous CC.

Several factors may have contributed to the large-scale turnover of military elites. First, China's top political leaders understandably do not want to risk creating any charismatic military heavyweights who might be capable of building up their own power bases within the country, and may therefore shift leaders regularly in order to prevent such a powerful figure from emerging within the military leadership. At the same time, the turnover may also reflect Hu Jintao's continuing effort to undermine any remaining influence of Jiang Zemin within the military so as to ensure that the PLA marches to the beat that the Hu-Wen leadership is playing.

CC Military Elites (Yr of Appt to Current Post)

Appt Year	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	not known	Total
No.	25	5	9	7	7	8	1	1	1	1	65

One of the notable characteristics of the 65 PLA representatives on the 17th CC is that an overwhelming majority of them (94 percent) were appointed to their current posts since 2002, when Hu Jintao took over as general-secretary of the CCP. Since former Party General-Secretary Jiang Zemin hung around in his position as chairman of the CMC until 2004, one can reasonably assume that it was Jiang rather than Hu that made many of the military promotions that took place between 2002 and 2004. Even in light of this consideration, however, a full 60 percent of the current PLA representatives on the 17th CC were appointed between 2005 and 2007. This group includes a large number of the most important military leaders in the PLA.

All but two of the 37 most important military leaders – including members from the CMC, top leaders in the four general departments, the four services and three top military academic institutions – serve on the 17th CC (see Appendix 1). This reflects an intention to distribute these posts across the various organs and branches of military leadership as evenly as possible. Of the 37 military appointments, 60 percent were promoted to their current military posts since 2005 and 43 percent were promoted in 2007. All 14 of the commanders and commissars of China’s seven military regions have been made full members on the 17th CC and 12 of them are new appointees to the CC.⁴ Among these top 14 figures with operational control over the functional units that comprise the Chinese military, it is notable that 11 had previously held high-ranking positions in an MR, and six of those previously worked in a different MR than the one they currently serve in. These trends reflect Beijing’s concern with preventing the emergence of regionally-based military factionalism.

Of the 35 top military officers serving on the 17th CC, 21 are first-timers on the CC (including CMC member Wu Shengli), and 20 of them received promotions in military rank since 2005. In particular, among the 19 officers with the rank of

general/admiral, 10 were granted this highest military rank by Hu Jintao after he succeeded Jiang Zemin as the chairman of the CMC in September 2004. None of these military leaders have served in their current positions for more than two terms.⁵

Part of the reason for the large turnover in PLA leadership is related to growing norms related to mandatory retirement ages for military leaders. As a result of an emerging consensus among the top leadership of the CCP, no leader, civilian nor military, who was born before 1940 could serve on the CC elected at the 17th Party Congress. This explains the retirement of former CMC member and Cmdr. of the Air Force Qiao Qingchen, who was born in 1939. Some former top military officers who were born after 1940 also retired, thereby vacating even more seats for newcomers.⁶

Since the late 1990s, the Chinese military authorities have effectively implemented a well-defined regulation of age-based retirement.⁷ There is a specific age limit for the retirement of military officers at various levels, with the exception of the leaders of the four PLA general departments and the CMC.⁸ Age limits in the Chinese system are clearly linked to military rank. In 2000, the Standing Committee of the National Peoples' Congress (NPC) passed *The Law Governing Officers in Military Service*, which stipulates that all officers at the level of division command without the rank of major general or above should be demobilized from military service when they reach the age of 50, and all officers at the level of

regimental commander should be demobilized from military service when they reach the age of 45.⁹

Age Limit for Demob. or Retirement by Level of Mil. Leadership¹⁰

Level of Mil. Leadership	Age Limit
Platoon	30
Company	35
Battalion	40
Regiment	45
Division	50
Army	55
Military Region (Deputy)	60

The regulation of age-based retirement for military officers has led to two important outcomes. First, the average age of PLA officers has been dropping in recent years. The

average age of the State CMC, for example, declined by five years, from 68 in 1998 to 63 in 2003. The average age of the 17th CMC has remained 63. Two officers in their 50s, Chang Wanquan and Xu Qiliang, serve on the powerful CMC. None of the current full commanders or full commissars in the MRs is older than 65. Second, Chinese military elites at the same level of leadership are usually of similar ages. Among the 37 top officers, the total age distribution spans 11 years, with the oldest being 67 and the youngest a mere 56.

It should be noted that a significant number of the newly-appointed top military leaders obtained their current positions through a “two-step jump” (*liangji tiao*) instead of step-by-step promotion. For example, Beijing MR Cmdr. Fang Fenghui, Lanzhou MR Cmdr. Wang Guosheng, and Nanjing MR Cmdr. Zhao Keshi were all promoted from the post of chief-of-staff rather than the post of vice commander. They were all army-level officers (*junji*) four years ago. Wang Xibin and Tong Shiping, the new commandant and commissar of National Defense University, were recently promoted from the posts of chief-of-staff of a military region and assistant director of the General Political Department, respectively. The increasing incidence of “two-step” promotions most likely can be read as a sign of growing favoritism within the PLA linked to political factions led by Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao.

Equally significant, 11 of the 65 military leaders on the 17th CC have the military ranking of major general or lower. The lowest ranking, Air Force Col. Yang Liwei, was China’s first astronaut and it is likely that his membership on the 17th CC will not cause much controversy among the military establishment. Nanjing MR Chief-of-Staff Cai Yinting, Chengdu MR Chief-of-Staff Ai Husheng, Guangzhou MR Chief-of-Staff Xu Fenlin and Lanzhou MR Chief-of-Staff Liu Yuejun are all major generals in rank and all are in their mid-50s. The fact that a significant number of PLA representatives on the 17th CC

Current Rank of Military Leaders in 17th CC

Mil. Rank	No.	%
Gen./Adm.	21	32
Lt. Gen./Vice Adm.	33	51
Major Gen./Rear Adm.	10	15
Colonel	1	2
Total	65	100

hold lower military ranks may reflect political favoritism in expediting their career advancement, and this is likely to cause some resentment from the higher-ranked officers.

The large-scale turnover of military leaders and the rise of relatively young officers may help consolidate Hu Jintao's power and authority within the military. It might be too simplistic to assume that these military appointees will owe their loyalty to the current CMC chairman, since most of them advanced their careers through ordinary step-by-step promotions, but it is highly likely that a good number of those receiving "two-step" promotions will exhibit some degree of personal loyalty to Hu Jintao. Some may have strong residual allegiances or patron-client ties to Jiang Zemin. For example, Xu Qiliang worked with Jiang in Shanghai in the 1980s and has been often seen as Jiang's protégé. Nevertheless, in the years since he took the helm of the military, Hu has been able to move a large number of newer, younger military officers onto the CMC and CC. This is not to say that military leaders promoted for factional reasons are ipso facto less competent than their non-politically-aligned peers. Both factional links and meritocratic factors are present in Chinese military elite formation.

Characteristics of China's Military Elite

Not surprisingly, the PLA is an overwhelmingly Han-dominated, male-run organization, much like the CCP itself. Among the 65 military elites on the 17th CC, there is only one non-Han ethnic minority, Deputy Director of the General Political Department Liu Zhenqi, who is a Hui Muslim. All but one, Chen Zuoming, a leading expert on China's military computer software center, are male.

In terms of their places of birth, 12 of the 65 members of the military elite (18 percent) hail from Shandong province in Eastern China. The prominence of Shandong-born military elites becomes more obvious when one looks at the CMC, where Director of the General Political Department Li Jinai; Cmdr. of the Second Artillery Corps Jing Zhiyuan; and Xu Qiliang are all natives of Shandong. The dominance of Shandong officers among the military elite is not a

new phenomenon. Among the 67 military members of the 16th CC, 14 (21 percent) were born in Shandong and even more astonishingly, 28 percent of the 46 military members of the 14th CC in 1992 were Shandong natives.¹¹

Some observers believe that the overrepresentation of Shandong natives in the military leadership since the 1990s is a result of the fact that two vice chairs of the CMC in the 1990s, Zhang Wannian and Chi Haotian, hailed from Shandong.¹² However, the actual reasons for this phenomenon are almost certainly more complicated, and probably have more to do with historical and cultural factors than native place favoritism by top leaders.¹³ According to a recent Chinese report, an astonishing total of 66 military officials at the rank of major general and above have their roots in Shandong's Wendeng County alone.¹⁴ These include Commissar of the General Armament Department Chi Wanchun and Deputy Director of the General Political Department Sun Zhongtong.

Turning to the question of the age structure of the leadership of the PLA, roughly four-fifths of the military elites on the 17th CC fall between the ages of 55 and 64 years of age, with the largest group being officials in their late 50's. This is in line with the overall effort of the Chinese political elite to create more opportunities for younger officials to move into positions of responsibility. The youngest member of the Chinese military elite is Yang Liwei, who was born in 1965.

Age Distribiton of
Mil. Leaders in the 17th CC

Age (Birth Year)	No.	%
65-67 (born 1940-1942)	5	8
60-64 (born 1943-1947)	24	37
55-59 (born 1948-52)	27	41
50-54 (born 1953-1957)	6	9
45-49 (born 1958-1962)	0	0
40-44 (born 1963-1967)	1	2
Unknown	2	3
Total	65	100

An alternate axis along which one can analyze the Chinese military elite is by looking at when these top leaders joined the PLA. There has been a clear transformation of the age structure and socialization experiences of the Chinese military elite between 1992 and 2007 (see Appendix 2). This progression moved from those officers who joined during the early years of the Communist insurgency and the anti-Japanese

resistance (represented by those serving in the 14th CC), through those whose initial experiences in the PLA came during the era of socialist construction and transformation of the Chinese countryside (1955-1965) and who dominated the 15th and 16th CCs, to the present crop of military leaders, the majority of whom joined the PLA during the decade of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).

Lack of war experience is certainly one of the most salient collective traits of the current generation of the PLA elite. Among the officers at MR level or above, very few have combat experience and the number with combat experience decreased as a result of the 17th Party Congress. In 2004, approximately 96 percent of the highest-ranking PLA officers did not have any war experience.¹⁵ By contrast, the percentage of top military leaders who lacked combat experience in 1988 was a mere 21 percent.¹⁶ Among the 65 military members of the 17th CC, only Liang Guanglie and Liao Xilong have had any substantial combat experience (both participated in China's short war with Vietnam in 1979).

While Chinese military elites have, on average, been growing younger as a cohort, they have also been transitioning as a group in terms of the service branch they hail from. During the Mao-era, when China's focus was on a defensive posture that leveraged China's large territory and massive ground forces to absorb an enemy's first strike, the PLA leadership came mostly from the army. Today, as

A lack of war experiences is a salient trait of the current PLA elite.

China moves towards a more outward-looking posture focused on projecting power offshore, the military elite increasingly reflects this change in focus as an increasing percentage within the CC come from the air and naval forces. The combined percentage of air and naval officers

among the top military elite has nearly doubled from 14 percent in 1992 to 25 percent in 2007. The total number of Air Force representatives has increased by 200 percent during this 15-year period, while those of the Navy have risen by 133 percent. Conversely, representation by ground forces in the CC has steadily declined from 83 percent in 1992 to 69 percent in 2007. It is worth noting, however, that China's ground forces remain the most prominently represented service branch, even if their share of overall CC representation is shrinking.

PLA Reps on Recent CC by Service Branch

Service Branch	14th CC Officers (1992)		15th CC Officers (1997)		16th CC Officers (2002)		17th CC Officers (2007)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Ground Forces ¹⁷	38	82	53	80	53	79	45	69
Air Force	3	7	5	8	6	9	9	14
Navy	3	7	5	8	4	6	7	11
Armed Police	2	4	3	4	4	6	4	6
Total	46	100	66	100	67	100	65	100

Somewhat surprisingly, given the rising number of “mass incidents” (*quntixing shijian*) in China in recent years, the number of representatives on the CC from the People’s Armed Police has stayed constant over the past five years. Perhaps reflecting Beijing’s concern over maintaining territorial integrity, both the chief officer of the Tibet Military District and the chief officer of the Xinjiang Military District serve as full members of the CC.

It is probably not by chance that the number and balance of service branch representatives changed greatly between the 14th and 15th CCs, whereas there was no dramatic change between the 15th and 16th CCs. In the early 1990s, Jiang Zemin, then-chairman of the CMC, was populating the leadership of the Chinese military with officers who would owe their loyalty primarily to his sponsorship, while easing aside those officers who had links to other factions. Since forcing rival elites out is harder and more politically costly than simply adding representatives of one’s own, as Jiang Zemin moved to consolidate his power, he simply expanded the number of military representatives on the CC, a strategy known as “mixing in sand” (*chan shazi*). As a result, between 1992 and 1997, the number of officers on the CC went up by nearly 50 percent from 46 to 66, while the CC as a whole expanded only marginally. By 1997, Jiang’s position within the Chinese political and military establishments was largely unassailable, and he therefore had little incentive to undertake any substantial reshuffling of military elites when the 16th Party Congress met in 2002.

Following a similar logic, when Hu Jintao took over the CMC in 2004, he needed to put some of his own followers in positions of authority in order to consolidate his power base within the PLA. Because Jiang Zemin had already dramatically expanded the number of military representatives on the CC in the mid-1990s, Hu could not simply add more military representatives to the CC and populate the additional seats with his own men. As a result, the only option available to President Hu was to push through a remaking of the composition of the CC, which he could do in part by promoting officers with experience in the air and naval forces that constitute the focus of China's military modernization efforts and which would also be crucial in any Taiwan Strait eventuality. Thus, the number of PLA seats on the CC remained almost statistically constant, while the actual representatives filling the military seats at the 17th CC turned over by a dramatic 66 percent.

The growing professional bifurcation between military and political officers is another important trend in China's military leadership.¹⁸ Officers whose area of focus is military operations (such as commanders and chiefs-of-staff) and officers who work in political affairs (such as political commissars and directors of political departments) have usually advanced their careers by developing specializations, and not by working across the military operations/political affairs divide. Interestingly, despite this shift of the military elite towards greater balance among service branches, the overall functional specializations, broken down along military, political and technical axes, has remained strikingly stable.

Distribution of Elites within PLA Leadership by Expertise

Field	14th CC Officers		15th CC Officers		16th CC Officers		17th CC Officers	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Military	24	52	38	58	41	61	36	55
Political	18	39	24	36	22	33	24	37
Technical/ Academic	4	9	4	6	4	6	5	8
Total	46	100	66	100	67	100	65	100

This suggests that over the past 15 years, Party and military elites have struck what they deem to be a useful balance between military elites whose area of expertise is focused on war-fighting, those whose emphasis is on political control, and those few who specialize in academic or technical fields.

For example, Xu Caihou and Li Jinai, two prominent members of the CMC, have advanced their careers largely in the area of political affairs; interestingly, both also graduated from the Harbin Institute of Military Engineering (HIME). Their technical training in military engineering also gave them educational credentials with which they were able to advance their political careers within the military establishment. Several other military CC members also graduated from the HIME (see Appendix 3). The rise of the HIME school network is partially the result of the emphasis on technical expertise within the PLA. Twenty-one percent of military CC members received post-graduate degrees, some in full-time regular programs and others in part-time programs. Almost all these top military

The rise of young, educated military technocrats may profoundly change PLA officer corps at all levels of leadership.

officers attended the National Defense University for mid-career training, most often in the areas of military operations and/or technical fields. Chen Bingde, Guangzhou MR Cmdr. Zhang Qinsheng and Fang Fenghui are all known for their strong interest and expertise in electronic warfare and joint military operations.¹⁹ 50-year old Chen Zuoming is the chief engineer of China's military computer system. These leaders' ascent to posts in the top of China's military leadership reflects China's drive for military modernization and technocratic expertise.

According to the official *PLA Daily*, at present about 10 percent of officers at the army level in the PLA have received foreign training and 47 percent have undergone high-tech knowledge training at home.²⁰ A number of officers with engineering degrees or doctoral degrees in computer science now serve as vice commanders or chiefs-of-staff in the group armies.²¹ Technical experts and researchers who work at the military academies are now granted a 3-6 month sabbatical after every five-year period of work.²² It should be noted that young technocrats now dominate

the leadership of China's military industries, especially in space programs. Most of these individuals are not in military service. They include 46-year old Zhang Qingwei (minister of Commission of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense), 45-year old Yuan Jiajun (president of the China Space Research Institute), 44-year old Wu Yansheng (president of China Research Institute of Launching Technology), and 48-year old Ma Xinrui (president of China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp.).²³ Zhang and Yuan both serve on the 17th CC as civilians. According to the Chinese official media, the average age of China's scientists involved in missile launching technology in 2003 was 18 years younger than that those working in this field in 1992.²⁴

The rise of young, well-educated military technocrats, which is probably still in its initial stages, may profoundly change the PLA officer corps at all levels of leadership in the years to come. An editorial in the *PLA Daily* in 2003 claimed that the PLA plans to make the transition from an army with mechanical and semi-mechanical equipment to an army with digital capabilities. In order to fulfill this mission, the PLA will need to emphasize education and the formation of strong cohorts of commanders, staff, scientists, technical specialists and junior officers.²⁵ In the medium-term future, young military technocrats whose socialization took place from the mid-1980s through the late 1990s, a time when China's economic take-off began, may be more nationalistic and more assertive than their predecessors who were socialized at a time when China was weaker on the international stage.

Meritocracy vs. Political Networks

According to Party and military guidelines, promotions within the PLA should result from a combination of previous demonstrated competence and a match between skills sets and job openings. In practice, however, China's top military leaders are often advanced in part as a result of their perceived political affiliations, policy positions and other factors. In addition to native place and school ties, other forms of favoritism and nepotism, for example, family ties and patron-client relations (including previous work as *mishu*) and the Group Army

affiliations, have played an important role in the promotion of the new generation of officers.

As in the realm of civilian leadership, where a number of prominent children of former high-ranking officials currently hold important posts, in the military too these “princelings” (*taizi*) are increasingly assuming positions of authority.²⁶ As revolutionary credentials have declined in prominence, other factors, such as political networks, school ties and technical expertise have become increasingly important in elite formation. Among the PLA elite, three princelings have made it onto the CMC, including Li Jinai, Wu Shengli and Xu Qiliang. Among the 65 military CC members, at least 12 can be identified as princelings. Just as in the new Politburo, where the rise of figures such as Xi Jinping, Zhou Yongkang, Bo Xilai and Wang Qishan (all princelings) caused a good deal of consternation amongst Party officials not similarly blessed with comparably prominent offspring, the rise of a cohort of princeling military elites poses the potential to fragment China’s fighting forces along the fault line of nepotism and privilege.²⁷

Chinese analysts and the general public have been quite critical about the prevalence of princelings in the military leadership whose “helicopter-like rises” owe more to nepotism than to professional competence.²⁸ Additionally, if factional struggles break out into the open again in the future, it is possible that, owing to their common identity as children of privilege and the shared political interests that stem from this, China’s military princelings may side with the CCP’s civilian princelings. If so, the prevalence of princelings in the military may prove crucial to the outcome of such intra-elite contention.

Another similarity between China’s civilian and military elites is the prominence of a *mishu* path to power. *Mishu*, or officials who have served as personal assistants, office directors or chiefs-of-staff to top leaders, enjoy advantages in terms of career prospects. Their experience working in close proximity to top leaders gives them opportunities to see how power and authority function up close, allows them to build political ties, and gives them greater chances for career advancement. At least eight of the top 65 most prominent members of the current CC military elite have backgrounds as former *mishu* (see Appendix 4). They include Jiang

Military Leaders with Princeling Backgrounds

Name	Born	Current Post	Princeling Background
Li Jimai	1942	Director, Gen. Political Depart; CMC member	Newpewh of Li Jing (former deputy chief of the General Staff)
Wu Shengli	1945	Commander, Navy; CMC member	Son of a former vice governor of Zhejiang Province
Xu Qiliang	1950	Commander, Air Force; CMC member	Son of Xu Letian (former deputy commander of Air Force)
Peng Xiaofeng	1945	Commissar, Second Artillery Corps	Son of Peng Xuefeng (revolutionary veteran)
Liu Yuan	1951	Commissar, Academy of Mil. Sciences	Son of Liu Shaoqi (former President of P.R.C.)
Zhang Youxia	1950	Commander, Shenyang MR	Son of Zhang Zongxun (former director, General Logistic Dept.)
Zhang Haiyang	1949	Commissar, Chengdu MR	Son of Zhang Zhen (former vice chair, CMC)
Ma Xiaotian	1949	Deputy Chief-of-Staff, General Staff	Son of Ma Zaiyac (former dean of PLA Political Academy)
Liu Xiaojiang	1949	Deputy Commissar of Navy	Son-in-law of Hu Yaobang (former general-secretary of CCP)
Liu Yuejun	1954	Chief-of-Staff, Lanzhou MR	Son of Liu Zhimin (former commissar of Logistics Dept. of Guangzhou MR)
Ding Yiping	1951	Chief-of-Staff, Navy	Son of Ding Qiusheng (former commissar of North Seas Fleet)
Ai Husheng	1951	Chief-of-Staff, Chengdu MR	Son of Ai Fulin (former vice commander, Artillery Corps of Shenyang MR)

Zemin's *mishu* Jia Ting'an (director of the General Office of the CMC), former Vice Chairman of the CMC Zhang Wannian's *mishu* Cai Yingting (Nanjing MR Chief-of-Staff) and former Minister of Defense Ye Jianying's body guard Cao Qing (director of the Central Body Guard Bureau). At present, it is not possible to determine whether or not these *mishu cum* military leaders are professionally competent. The fact that Jia Ting'an received the lowest number of votes among the alternates on the 17th CC suggests that a large number of his political peers were resistant to his appointment.

A number of top ranking military officials have risen together, in part likely owing to the sponsorship of prominent members of the military whom they have worked for in the past. In the history of the PLA, field army associations have been among the most important political networks in the military. In his path-breaking study of political factions of China's military elite, William Whitson observed that the Field Army background was the most important determinant of the rise and fall of military officers of the PLA.²⁹ An overwhelming majority of top officers from 1966 to 1971 were from Lin Biao's Fourth Field Army faction. But after Lin fell, most of the high-ranking officers with Fourth Field Army backgrounds were purged.³⁰ When Deng Xiaoping returned to power after the death of Mao, he promoted many of his own Second Field Army associates to important military positions. Of the 17 full generals that he commissioned in 1988, 10 (59 percent) were from the Second Field Army, and many came from Deng's own unit, the 129th Division.³¹ Of the six military members on the CMC in the late 1980s, half were from the Second Field Army.

The Field Army identities, however, became blurred in the early 1990s because of the frequency of both the shuffling of post assignments among officers and the reorganization of the ground forces. In 1990, the PLA established the group armies system, which now constitutes the most important component in the ground force. As a result, group army affiliations have become essential in the selection of high-ranking officers in the ground force.³² Top military leaders such as Guo Boxiong, Xu Caihou, Liang Guanglie, Chen Bingde and Liao Xilong, for example, all have experience serving as chief officers in group armies. Many

commanders and political commissars in China's seven military regions were selected from the group armies. Their political associations and the networking opportunities that they had in the group armies could explain their quick rise to the top of China's military leadership. For example, a significant contingent of officers who worked with Guo Boxiong in the 47th Group Army in the Lanzhou Military Region, including Chang Wanquan, Liu Dongdong, Fang Fenghui, Xu Fenlin and Director of the Political Department of the Nanjing MR Yiming, have risen to positions of prominence on the new 17th CC.³³

PLA: Hu is in Charge?

The broad demographic and professional characteristics of China's military elites are changing rapidly. The representatives of the Chinese armed forces on the 17th Party CC are better-educated, more specialized and more technologically-adept than any preceding group of military elites in Chinese history. This article shows that the PLA elites of today are more balanced among the ground, air and naval forces than ever before, a development that probably signals China's intention to develop a military capable of projecting power away from China's shores rather than simply overwhelming an adversary with the country's tremendous size and manpower. China's military modernization efforts, much of which focus on enhancing the country's air and naval power, appear to be in the process of being translated into greater representation for these service branches in the Party's CMC and CC.

To interpret the large-scale turnover in military officers at the 17th Party Congress conclusively as a victory for Hu Jintao in his bid to establish his preeminence within the armed forces might be a bit premature, as we are still learning a great deal about the factional links and personal outlooks of a number of top members of the Chinese military elite. Nonetheless, it is probably fair to say that a large number of the newly-minted military members of the CMC and CC owe their positions to CMC Chairman Hu, and more data on these individuals' relationships with the top leader will come out in time. At present, what can be argued with some degree of confidence is that a number of the broad trends that

one sees sweeping through the civilian politics of the People's Republic of China are also manifest in its military politics as well. These include the rise of (and rising resentment against) a cohort of princelings and officials with *mishu* backgrounds, and an increasing trend towards younger, more professional officers.

Thus, an initial answer to the question of what an analysis of the demographic and career trends of the PLA elite tells us about where China's military is heading would appear to be that such an analysis reveals that the Chinese armed forces are experiencing the same broad trends Chinese society as a whole and the CCP in particular. Looking at the elite representatives of the Chinese military, one can see that the decline in charismatic, revolutionary legitimacy and "redness" has been paralleled by rising emphasis on functional specialization and "expertise."

These trends reflect a rebalancing in the distribution of positions of power across the military service branches. These developments appear to be very much in line with China's vision of the future of warfare. Whether this

A large number of newly-minted military members of the CC and CMC owe thier positions to Hu.

will carry any great import for future war-planning/war-fighting, or whether it hints at the importance of planning for eventualities in the Taiwan Strait (as some analysts have suggested), it is probably impossible to say with any degree of certainty at present, but the trends certainly appear to be suggestive of where China sees military affairs headed.³⁴

It is difficult to convincingly distinguish between the promotion of officers whose functional areas of expertise would be useful for a military that seeks to be more competent in the projection of power away from the Chinese mainland, and those officers who have spent their careers engaged in war-gaming for a conflict in the Taiwan Strait that would likely rely heavily on air and naval power. At any rate, whether they were promoted for their expertise in military modernization, their understanding of how best to use force against Taiwan, or for other reasons such as factionalism or seniority, the elevation of air and naval officers is at any rate likely to result in increased advocacy for the interests of these service branches. At the same time, increasing cooperation among the top representatives of these

services could improve China's ability to handle integrated air-sea military operations, a necessity if China ever gets into a war with Taiwan.

Professionalism and favoritism, formal procedures and informal networks, and new concepts of modern warfare as well as traditional methods of military operations all appear to coexist. The PLA's drive towards military technocracy and defense modernization has to overcome a number of technical, logistical and political obstacles. A recognition of the complexities and contradictions in the assessment of China's military leadership, however, should not prevent us from grasping its overall technocratic trend. The characteristics of the new generation of PLA leaders – their biographical traits, professional competence, political associations and military doctrines – will affect China's choices for the future and have significant ramifications far beyond its borders. ☪

Appendix I: China's Top Military Officers (2007)³⁵

Name	Born	Position	Since	Previous Position	Military Rank	Year	17 th CC Member
Guo Boxiong	1942	Vice Chair, CMC	2002	Executive Deputy Chief of General Staff	General	1999	CC Mem, PB Mem.
Xu Caihou	1943	Vice Chair, CMC	2002	Director, General Political Dept.	General	1999	CC Mem, PB Mem.*
Liang Guanglie	1940	Member, CMC (Defense Minister?)	2002	Chief-of-Staff of the General Staff	General	2002	CC Mem, CMC Mem.
Chen Bingde	1941	Chief of the General Staff	2007	Director, General Armament Dept.	General	2002	CC Mem, CMC Mem.*
Li Jinai	1942	Director, General Political Dept.	2004	Director, General Armament Dept.	General	2000	CC Mem, CMC Mem.
Liao Xilong	1940	Director, General Logistics Dept	2002	Commander, Chengdu MR	General	2000	CC Mem, CMC Mem.
Chang Wanquan	1949	Director, General Armament Dept.	2007	Commander, Shenyang MR	General	2007	CC Mem, CMC Mem.*
Jing Zhiyuan	1944	Commander, 2nd Artillery Corps	2003	Chief-of-Staff, 2nd Artillery Corps	General	2004	CC Mem, CMC Mem.
Wu Shengli	1945	Commander, Navy	2006	Deputy Chief-of-Staff of General Staff	Admiral	2007	CC Mem*CMC Mem.*
Xu Qiliang	1950	Commander, Air Force	2007	Deputy Chief-of-Staff of General Staff	General	2007	CC Mem, CMC Mem.*
Sun Dafa	1945	Commissar, General Logistics Dept.	2005	Deputy Commissar, Nanjing MR	General	2007	CC Mem.*
Chi Wanchun	1946	Commissar, Gen. Armament Dept.	2002	Commissar, Defense S & T Univ.	General	2006	CC Mem.
Hu Yanlin	1943	Commissar, Navy	2003	Deputy Commissar, Navy	Admiral	2004	None
Deng Changyou	1947	Commissar, Air Force	2002	Director, Political Dept. Air Force	General	2006	CC Mem.
Peng Xiaofeng	1942	Commissar, 2nd Artillery	2003	Deputy Commissar, NDU	General	2006	CC Mem.*
Wu Shuangzhan	1945	Commander, Armed Police Force	1999	Deputy Commander, Armed Police Force	General	2004	CC Mem.
Yu Linxiang	1945	Commissar, Armed Police Force	2007	Commissar, Lanzhou MR	General	2006	CC Mem.*
Liu Chengjun	1949	Commandant, Acad. of Mil. Sciences	2007	Deputy Commander, Air Force	Lt. General	2004	CC Mem.*

Appendix I (cont.)

Name	Born	Position	Since	Previous Position	Military Rank	Year	17th CC Member
Liu Yuan	1951	Commissar, Acad. of Mil. Sciences	2005	Deputy Commissar, Gen. Logistics Dept.	Lt. General	2000	CC Mem.*
Wang Xilin	1948	Commandant, NDU	2007	Chief-of-Staff, Beijing MR	Lt. General	2007	CC Mem.*
Tong Shipping	1948?	Commissar, NDU	2007	Assistant Director, Gen. Political Dept.	Lt. General	2004	CC Mem.*
Wen Xisen	1945	Commandant, Defense S & T Univ.	1999	Commandant, NDU	Lt. General	2000	None
Xu Yitian	?	Commissar, Defense S & T Univ.	2005	Deputy Commissar, Guangzhou MR	Lt. General	2006	CC Alternate*
Zhang Youxia	1950	Commander, Shenyang MR	2007	Vice Commander, Beijing MR	Lt. General	2007	CC Mem.*
Huang Xianzhong	1947	Commissar, Shenyang MR	2005	Commissar, Defense S & T Univ.	Lt. General	2004	CC Mem.*
Fang Fenghui	1951	Commander, Beijing MR	2007	Chief-of-staff, Guangzhou MR	Lt. General	2005	CC Mem.*
Fu Tinggui	1944	Commissar, Beijing MR	2003	Director, Political Dept. Beijing MR	General	2006	CC Mem.
Wang Guosheng	1947	Commander, Lanzhou MR	2007	Chief-of-staff, Lanzhou MR	Lt. General	2005	CC Mem.*
Li Changcai	1950?	Commissar, Lanzhou MR	2007	Deputy Commissar, Nanjing MR	Lt. General	2006	CC Mem.*
Fan Changlong	1947	Commander, Jinan MR	2004	Assistant Chief-of-Staff of General Staff	Lt. General	2002	CC Mem.*
Liu Dongdong	1945	Commissar, Jinan MR	2002	Commissar, Lanzhou MR	General	2004	CC Mem.
Zhao Keshi	1947	Commander, Nanjing MR	2007	Chief-of-Staff, Nanjing MR	Lt. General	2005	CC Mem.*
Chen Guoling	1950?	Commissar, Nanjing MR	2007	Deputy Commissar, Guangzhou MR	Lt. General	2006	CC Mem.*
Zhang Qinsheng	1948	Commander, Guangzhou MR	2007	Deputy Chief of General Staff	Lt. General	2006	CC Mem.*
Zhang Yang	1951	Commissar, Guangzhou MR	2007	Director, Political Dept., Guangzhou MR	Lt. General	2007	CC Mem.*
Li Shiming	1948	Commander, Chengdu MR	2007	Vice Commander, Chengdu MR	Lt. General	2005	CC Mem.*
Zhang Haiyang	1949	Commissar, Chengdu MR	2005	Deputy Commissar, Beijing MR	Lt. General	2003	CC Mem.*

Appendix 2: Yr. of Joining the PLA for Senior Officers³⁶

Year Joining the PLA	14th CC Officers (1992)		15th CC Officers (1997)		16th CC Officers (2002)		17th CC Officers (2007)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1929-1937	3	7	-	-	-	-	-	-
1938-1944	7	15	3	4	-	-	-	-
1945-1949	21	46	4	6	-	-	-	-
1950-1954	4	9	13	20	3	4	-	-
1955-1965	1	2	44	67	42	63	22	34
1966-1976	-	-	2	3	8	12	33	51
1977-1992	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3
Unknown	10	22	-	-	14	21	8	12
Total	46	100	66	100	67	100	65	100

Appendix 3: Senior Officers Who Studied at the Harbin Institute of Military Engineering (HIME)

Name	Born	Military Rank	Current Position	Years at HIME	Major
Xu Caihou	1943	General	Vice Chairman, CMC	1963-1968	Electrical Engineering
Li Jinai	1942	General	Director, General Political Dept.	1961-1966	Physics
Chi Wanchun	1946	Lt. General	Commissar, General Armament Dept.	1965-1970	Air Force Engineering
Peng Xiaofeng	1945	Lt. General	Commissar, 2 nd Artillery	1963-1968	Missile Engineering
Huang Xianzhong	1947	Lt. General	Commissar, Shenyang MR	1964-1969	Missile Engineering
Li Andong	1947	Lt. General	Deputy Director, General Armament Dept.	1965-1970	Air Force Engineering
Ding Yiping	1951	Vice Adm.	Deputy Chief-of-Staff, Navy	Unknown	Mid-career training

Appendix 4: Senior Military Leaders with Mishu Experience

Name	Position	Previously Served as a Mishu or Office Director for:
Li Jinai	Director, General Political Dept.	Yu Qiuli (former Director, General Political Dept.)
Chang Wanquan	Director, General Armament Dept.	Han Xianchu (former Commander, Lanzhou MR)
Sun Dafa	Commissar, General Logistics Dept.	Li Desheng (former Director, General Political Dept.)
Yu Linxiang	Commissar, Armed Police Force	Name Unknown (former Dir., Political Dept., Nanjing MR)
Fu Tinggui	Commissar, Beijing MR	Name Unknown, (former Commander, Jilin Military District)
Jia Ting'an	Director, CMC General Office	Jiang Zemin (former Chairman, CMC)
Cao Qing	Director, Central Body Guard Bureau	Ye Jianying (former Minister of Defense)
Cai Yingting	Chief-of-Staff, Nanjing MR	Zhang Wannian (former Vice Chairman, CMC)

Notes

* The authors would like to thank Yinsheng Li for his research assistance on this article

¹ See, for e.g., Cody, Edward, "China Parades Next Generation of Leaders," *The Washington Post*, Oct. 22, 2007, p. A10; Kahn, Joseph, "Politburo in China Gets 4 New Members," *The New York Times*, Oct. 22, 2007; and Lam, Willy, "Hu's Impasse at the 17th Party Congress," *China Brief*, Vol. 7, No. 19 (Oct. 17, 2007), pp. 6-7.

² Li, C. and L. White, "The Sixteenth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party: Hu Gets What?" *Asian Survey*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (July/August 2002): 560.

³ For a more detailed study of the military leaders on the 16th CC, see Cheng Li, "The New Military Elite: Generational Profile and Contradictory Trends," in David M. Finkelstein and Kristen Gunness (eds.), *Swimming in a New Sea: Civil-Military Issues in Today's China* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2007), pp. 48-73.

⁴ Only Beijing MR Commissar Fu Tinggui and Jinan MR Commissar Liu Dongdong were members of the previous 16th CC.

⁵ Wu Shuangzhan, commander of Armed Police Force, has the longest tenure, having served in his current position since 1999.

⁶ Examples include former Commissar of the Second Artillery Sui Mingtai, former Commissar of the General Logistics Department Zhang Wentai, former Commander of the Beijing MR Zhu Qi and former Commissar of the Nanjing MR Lei Mingqiu, all of whom were born in 1942.

⁷ Quoted from the section on China in *Shijie junshi nianjian* (*The World Military Yearbook*, 2001). Nov. 18, 2002, see <http://www.qianlong.com>.

⁸ Ibid. See also <http://chinesenewsnet.com>. Aug. 16, 2003.

⁹ Quoted from *Wenhui Daily* (Hong Kong), Aug. 15, 2003, and also see <http://www.sina.com.cn>. Aug. 15, 2003.

¹⁰ Excerpted from *Shijie junshi nianjian 2001* (*World Military Yearbook*, 2001), Nov. 18, 2002, see <http://www.qianlong.com>.

¹¹ Li, C. and L. White, "The Army in the Succession to Deng Xiaoping: Familiar Fealties and Technocratic Trends," *Asian Survey* Vol. 33, No. 8 (August 1993), p. 767.

¹² Ling Haijian. *Zhonggong jundui xinjiangxing* (*The profile of prominent military chiefs in China*). Hong Kong: Taipingyang shiji chubanshe, 1999, p. 367.

¹³ Traditionally, careers in the military have been quite popular among Shandong natives. In China's recent history, many Shandongnese joined the Communist-led New Fourth Army (*xinsijun*) during the Anti-Japanese War, and many of these soldiers later became high-ranking PLA officers after the Communist revolution.

¹⁴ See <http://www.chinesenewsnet.com>. Sept. 6, 2006.

¹⁵ Cheng Li, "The New Military Elite: Generational Profile and Contradictory Trends," in David M. Finkelstein and Kristen Gunness (eds.), *Civil-Military Relations in Today's China: Swimming in a New Sea* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2007), p. 60.

¹⁶ Li, C. and L. White, "The Army in the Succession to Deng Xiaoping: Familiar Fealties and Technocratic Trends," *Asian Survey* Vol. 33, No. 8 (August 1993), p. 773.

¹⁷ Officers in the Second Artillery Corps are included in the Ground Force.

¹⁸ For the notion of "bifurcation" between civilian and PLA elites, between military and political officers, see Shambaugh, David, "China's New High Command," in Michael Marti, ed., *The PLA and Chinese Society in Transition* (Washington DC: National Defense University

Press, 2003).

¹⁹ *Lianhe Zaobao* (United Morning News), Sept. 13, 2007.

²⁰ Quoted from *Lianhe Zaobao*, Sept. 11, 2007.

²¹ *Jiefangjun bao* (PLA Daily), Oct. 11, 2007.

²² See <http://www.chinesenewsnet.com>. Aug. 5, 2007.

²³ For more discussion of the young technocrats in China's defense and space industries, see *Wenhui bao* (Hong Kong), Sept. 24, 2007.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Jiefangjun bao*, Aug. 1, 2003, p. 1.

²⁶ For the large number of princelings in the civilian leadership at present-day China, see Cheng Li, "China's Most Powerful 'Princelings': How Many Will Enter the New Politburo?" *Jamestown Foundation China Brief*, Volume 7, Issue 19 (October 2007), pp. 2-5.

²⁷ See *ibid.*

²⁸ For example, some Chinese analysts observed that senior officers with princeling backgrounds in the Second Artillery, such as Commissar Peng Xiaofeng, were hardly qualified to serve in the positions they were promoted to, see <http://www.chinesenewsnet.com>. Sept. 16, 2006.

²⁹ Whitson, William, "The Field Army in Chinese Communist Military Politics," *China Quarterly*, no. 37 (January/March 1969).

³⁰ Parish, William "Factions in Chinese Military Politics," *China Quarterly*, no. 56 (October/December 1973), pp. 667-99; and Li, C. and L. White, "The Army in the Succession to Deng Xiaoping: Familiar Fealties and Technocratic Trends," *Asian Survey* Vol. 33, No. 8 (August 1993), pp. 771-772. On the evolutionary change of the Field Army systems, also see Cheng Tzu-ming, "Evolution of the People's Liberation Army," *Issues and Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 12 (December 1979). For more recent and comprehensive analysis of the Field Army associations, see the website with a special focus on the history of the Field Army, <http://qing.wmshow.net>. Sept. 3, 2003.

³¹ Li, C. and L. White, "The Army in the Succession to Deng Xiaoping: Familiar Fealties and Technocratic Trends," *Asian Survey* Vol. 33, No. 8 (August 1993), p. 772.

³² The "field army" (*yezhan jun*) system was an organizational structure that emerged within the Red Army during the period of the civil war. Later, after the founding of the People's Republic, the PLA was restructured along geographic lines. Later, the PLA ground forces were reorganized again into "group armies" (*jituan jun*) and "provincial military districts" under the Greater Military Region (*da junqu*) system.

³³ Similarly, the large contingent of officers who advanced their careers through work in the Nanjing MR may also be a result of political networking. Eleven military leaders in the 17th CC come from the Nanjing MR. These include Liang Guanglie, Chen Bingde, Xu Qiliang, Wu Shengli, Zhao Keshi, Deputy Chief of the General Staff Ma Xiaotian, Deputy Director of the General Political Department Liu Yongzhi, Nanjing MR Commissar Chen Guoling, Commandant of the Academy of Military Science Liu Chengjun, and Lanzhou MR Commissar Li Changcai. Additionally, Jing Zhiyuan served for a long time in the No. 52 Artillery Base in Huangshan, Anhui, which belongs to the Nanjing MR.

³⁴ Campbell, Kurt, "US Stalling May Have Ramifications," *The Taipei Times*, Oct. 19, 2007, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2007/10/19/2003383827>, 11-14-2007.

³⁵ Note: * = newly elected at the 17th Party Congress.

³⁶ The data on officers on the 14th CC is derived from Cheng, L. and L. White, "The Army in

the Succession to Deng Xiaoping: Familiar Fealties and Technocratic Trends,” *Asian Survey* Vol. 33, No. 8 (August 1993), p. 765. Data on officers on the 16th CC derived from Cheng Li’s database on all 356 members of the 16th CC. See also Cheng, L. and L. White, “The Sixteenth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party: Hu Gets What?” *Asian Survey* Vol. 43, No. 4 (July/August 2003), pp. 553-597.

China's Reform: Approaching a Dead End*

Liu Junning

Unprogressive Progress

Despite China's great progress in economic development since 1978, its reform program has hit a "wall." If China can succeed in breaking down this wall, then reform can continue to build a full-fledged market economy, undergirded by authentic democracy. However, if one looks back at China's actions since the last 16th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (Party Congress) in 2002, and carefully reads the communiqué adopted at the 17th Party Congress, which is a guide for China's reform for the next five years, there is little sign that the "wall" hindering true reform can be broken. Moreover, reform may even be in retreat.

At the outset of China's modern reform era in the late 1970s, the great task at hand was to kick-start change. It is widely accepted both inside and outside China that the reform program adopted by the Communist Party of China (CPC) is

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a model for progressive, incremental change.¹ In sharp contrast to the shock therapy adopted by Russia, China's progressive reform strategy began with easier measures, leaving difficult issues such as an overhaul of large-scale state-owned enterprises, liberalization of the financial sector and land privatization aside.² In essence, new pressure points for economic growth were sought from outside rather than touching on the critical parts of the established system. This progressive reform program looked to low-hanging fruit including the development of new sectors, such as foreign investment and export-oriented industries.

Proponents of this progressive reform approach argue that relative to the Russian model, which unleashed rapid changes directly aimed at challenging the old system from the get-go, China began its reform under realistic and sustainable conditions. Challenges to the traditional order were circumvented, and rather a new system was built alongside the old, which avoided obstructions and thereby allowed reform to continue smoothly.³ More importantly, in the eyes of the progressive reform camp, this approach is not exercised through a weakening of the state's power. Therefore the state can still lead the ongoing reform. Under such a model, they argue that although the pace of reform may be slow, it nevertheless can proceed steadily.⁴ Progressive reform ensures the re-shaping of the relationship among the state, society and market: it attempts to transition from a planned to a market economy while maintaining overall social stability and without major changes to the political power structure.

China has entered an era of tougher challenges, which "progressive reform" cannot tackle.

The easy parts of progressive reform have largely been completed and these achievements are certainly not trivial. For example, the successful accession into the World Trade Organization has fully integrated China into the world economic system. However, China has entered an era of tougher challenges as it faces far thornier issues, which progressive reform cannot tackle. These include full liberalization of the economy, privatization of key industries and land, and most importantly, constitutional democracy-oriented political system reform. None of these have ever been put on the reform agenda. Because progressive reformers are

unwilling to broach the core elements of the old system, it cannot be fundamentally changed. The result is an endless prolongation rather than a transformation of the system.

Legitimacy of governance brought about by high economic growth forms the main basis for political power. The mantra of “develop the economy” can temporarily and partially ease the crisis of ideological and political legitimacy. But with the gradual transformation to a market economy, the traditional ideology and political system no longer appeal to people.⁵ Once the economy loses momentum, the inherent socio-economic conflicts will manifest themselves, such as that between officialdom and ordinary people. The central government will lack necessary financial resources to mediate these social conflicts. Once a crisis breaks out in China, the legitimacy of the rule of the CPC will collapse.

The only way to push reform forward toward a genuine market economy and democratic politics in China is to break through the “wall” that progressive reform now faces and make substantive changes to the political system and its governance. This means that China must leap from a stage of partial reform to reform of the *whole* system. Such systemic reform however, has not been seriously considered to date. Reform under the 16th and 17th Party Congresses only perpetuates a “mending and patching” of trivial problems. In the 17th Party Congress, the notion of “driving People’s Democracy by promoting intra-Party democracy” was raised.⁶ However, intra-Party democracy can never drive to real liberal democracy. It is just a way to avoid real political reform.

Democracy, Chinese Style

Hu Jintao, Chinese president and general secretary of the CPC, has made clear statements in his report to the 17th Party Congress. “People’s Democracy is the lifeblood of socialism... people must be guaranteed to enjoy democratic rights in a more extensive and practical way.”⁷ In fact, Hu’s report mentioned the word “democracy” a total of 69 times.⁸ The achievements in China’s democratization, which Hu applauded in his report, include those made both at the grassroots lev-

el and within the Party. However, the “democracy” frequently mentioned here is not constitutional democracy, at least as it is understood in the West, but rather “socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics.” In essence, such a “democracy” is authoritarianism in disguise.⁹

Myth 1: Grassroots-level democracy will drive greater political democracy. Hu provided two basic instructions on institutionalizing Chinese democracy: expand the areas of autonomy in decision-making by the public at the grassroots level; and strengthen the social organizations that can help the public to achieve greater political participation and help the government reflect what the public wants when crafting policy. But, democracy is a definition of the overall political system of a nation. If a nation is not democratic in its overall political system, true democracy within its constituent parts cannot possibly exist. Even if the *flavor* of democracy is played up, it cannot change the real nature of the system. Moreover, when there is no freedom of speech or freedom of association, true democratic elections will not be achieved. That is why China’s elections at the grassroots level (villages) are not truly effective and have been ignored by outside observers.¹⁰

Intra-Party democracy cannot lead to real liberal democracy. It just avoids real political reform.

Myth 2: Intra-Party democracy will be a driver for greater democracy. At the 17th Party Congress, the CPC party constitution was modified and new concepts were included. For example, the following was institutionalized: A tenure system is adopted for delegates to Party congresses at all levels;¹¹ Party disciplining of officials must make tours and inspections;¹² the standing committee of the Party is subject to supervision by the Plenary Party Committee.¹³ These measures of strengthening intra-Party democracy actually contribute to the strengthening of “democratic centralism” rather than the building of liberal democracy, as it is understood in the West.

Democratization within political parties is a fundamental component of liberal democracy in the West. The first yardstick to measuring the authenticity

Democratic Centralism

The intra-Party democracy of the CPC is actually democratic centralism, a paradigm that is defined by “centralism” rather than “democracy.” Mao Zedong summarized democratic centralism as “centralism based on democracy, and democracy under centralized guidance.”¹⁴ He laid out four basic principles of the concept: the individual is subordinated to the organization; the minority is subordinated to the majority; the lower level is subordinated to the higher level; and the entire membership is subordinated to the Central Committee.¹⁵ Among the four principles, the most important is that Party members must subordinate their will to that of the Central Committee, which is headed by the supreme leader. Thus the soul of democratic centralism lies in absolute and unconditional obedience.

How to implement democratic centralism? The guidance provided by an article published in *People's Daily* in 2001 states: “The Party needs to lead and support the people to control State power...on the one hand, Party committees at all levels need to play the core leadership role of commanding the overall situation and coordinating the various

parties. On the other hand, they need to strengthen leadership over people's congresses, governments, people's political consultative conferences and people's bodies through scientific, standardized and institutional mechanisms.”¹⁶ In sum, the “correct” implementation of democratic centralism is to strengthen the leadership of the CPC over the people and to govern the whole spectrum of political voices. Under democratic centralism, the leaders will have the final say, while the public, at best, only have the chance of expressing their opinions.

Since the start of reform and opening up, the CPC has abandoned many vitally important principles and aspects of the former system, such as the planned economy, system of public ownership, rural collectivization and so on. Yet, it has held tightly to democratic centralism. Under this system, the supreme leader and leaders of Central Party Committees at all levels take over powers which originally belonged to individual citizens. The role of democratic centralism is to ensure that the ruling Party's position will never be challenged and that the power of the supreme Party leaders will never be restricted.

of such intra-Party democracy in China is whether there are open, healthy and transparent political competitions inside the Party. How are the top leaders of the Party selected? Are they hand-picked by one person or a small group of people? How about the leaders of the Party at the local level? Are they appointed by other Party leaders through a closed committee of people? Without elections through an open, fully competitive and fair process, the so-called “intra-Party democracy” will be undemocratic.

To build intra-Party democracy, the first step is to ensure that the promotion process inside the Party is democratic. A real intra-Party democracy will require power to be authorized from the bottom up, so the supreme leadership of the Party receives their power from the base instead of gaining their authority by remaining on the top of the power pyramid.

In real intra-Party democracy, power is distributive rather than centralized, so there would be no Central Party Committee. The existence of a Central Party Committee indicates that the power structure is top-down and that power is distributed from the heart of supreme leadership to the periphery of the mass. Therefore, a political party system with centralization of power is undemocratic in nature.

From Mao Zedong, to Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin, every generation of top Chinese leaders has emphasized democratic centralism as the fundamental principle for the operation of both the Party and the nation.¹⁷ In the report to 17th Party Congress, Hu Jintao particularly stressed that “all Party members must firmly uphold the centralized and unified leadership of the Party, conscientiously abide by the Party’s political discipline, always be in agreement with the Central Committee (CC) and resolutely safeguard its authority to ensure that its resolutions and decisions are carried out effectively.”¹⁸ Therefore, the intra-Party democracy put forward by the 17th Party Congress did not deviate from the existing principle of democratic centralism. On the contrary, the authority of the CPC was reinforced.

The soul of democratic centralism lies in absolute and unconditional obedience.

On the surface, it is reasonable to view grassroots-level democracy and intra-Party democracy as viable directions for China's political reform. In practice, grassroots-level democracy only provides a small and temporary fix for the old political system. Intra-Party democracy reform is not possible while stringent control within the communist party remains. The mantras of grassroots-level democracy and intra-Party democracy are in fact only rhetorical havens rather than clarion calls for systemic political reform. Those hoping for, even expecting, reform of China's political system through these slogans will be disappointed.

New Theories, Old Problems

Following the waves of political movements prior to 1979, as well as the subsequent market reforms that swept over China, this orthodox communist ideology has lost its appeal. A phenomenon that exemplifies this decline is the transformation of the word "comrade." Before 1979, comrade was almost a holy word, used exclusively between faithful and trusted followers of communism. It is now a moniker for homosexual companions, used flippantly and irreverently. Or, one only has to browse the homepage of *Sina.com*, one of the most popular news website in China, to see how little space is left for communism in Chinese life. Despite these changes, and no matter how fast or expansive the pace of reform, there is no sign that any of China's leaders are willing to give up the orthodox ideology of communism as the fundamental basis for the legitimacy of their governance.

Two new theories have also been at the forefront of discussions at the recent party congresses. Former President Jiang Zemin's "three represents" theory was written into the Party Constitution at the 16th Party Congress and five years later, Hu Jintao's "scientific outlook on development" was added into the Party Constitution.¹⁹ The appearance of these two theories indicates the legitimacy crisis that faces the ideology of orthodox communism.

According to Jiang's "three represents", the Communist Party of China should represent "the development trends of advanced productive forces, the orientations of an advanced culture and the fundamental interests of the vast majority of the Chinese people". This theory is important because it attempts to transform

the image of Communist Party from a vanguard revolutionary party into a ruling party representing the majority of the people, the force behind reforms in the post-revolutionary era. To a certain degree it legitimized the inclusion of *capitalists* into the party. Hu's "scientific outlook on development" presents concepts ranging from sustainable development, social welfare, equity, increased democracy, to the creation of a "harmonious society."

Although the "three represents" theory appears to be a new concept, its core idea is that the CPC has to represent the will of the people in everything and the people cannot represent themselves. The "scientific view of development" and the concept of "harmonious society" are established on the foundation of unswerving subordination to the leadership of the CPC and socialism. Without a fair political system, the "development" can hardly be "scientific" in practice.

Numerous social maladies can be traced back to the flawed political system. Take one example of the implementation of the environmental protection policy. China had a difficult time "striking down" heavily polluting from small paper mills. When the central government sends an inspection team to clean up these paper mills, the local environmental protection agencies, already paid off by these mills, warn them of impending inspection visits so they can suspend discharging pollutants and sewage water until the inspection team leaves.

In the current political system, the promotion of local officials depends on decisions made by the higher-level Party organs rather than elections by local people. Under such a system, local officials will invariably put their own short-term interests over the local community and the long-term environmental protection of the nation. External forces such as non-governmental organizations and the media also lack the power to supervise the Party and the government. Moreover, it is difficult to rely solely on internal Party supervision to pinpoint and punish irresponsible officials that disregard or even contravene central government's policies. Therefore, in China, the issue of environmental protection is essentially a political problem.

New concepts of ideology do not have real meaning for the public when they

fail to lead real political reform. Without a political system to properly manage the ongoing challenges of a market economy and without an ideology that appeals to the general public, the government only has sustained economic growth to consolidate its legitimacy. However, the economy alone cannot underpin political stability, just as a table supported by only one leg will easily collapse.

Economic Wellbeing Not the End Game

Economic growth apparently continues to top the agenda of the Chinese government. Hu Jintao pointed out in his report to the 17th Party Congress that “building a moderately prosperous society” should be the focus of the government’s work over the next five years.²⁰ Hu’s goal is to double China’s GDP per capita within 20 years. However, economic development can only temporarily and partially ease the crisis of ideology and governance legitimacy. The real issue isn’t so much that the goals of achieving a ‘well-off society’ aren’t happening fast enough or that some are reaching that standard of living before others. Rather, that the distribution of wealth is unjust because of the way that power translates into money.

During the past three decades, the gap in wealth has been widening in Chinese society.²¹ Strictly speaking, under the conditions of equal opportunity, it is natural that certain individuals and groups in society have greater wealth and that should not be seen as unfair distribution. However, in today’s China, what people detest most are those new upstarts and corrupted officials who unfairly acquire wealth by using their advantage in privilege and political power. As the economy liberalizes, each time an incremental “reform” measure is introduced, these power brokers and interest groups will take advantage the system’s loophole. Those who have power made a staggering fortune by taking the gains for themselves and handing out government-owned assets. Corruption is not necessarily bald-faced bribes, tax evasion or embezzlement. It is often more subtle, for instance selling official approval documents, stocks in companies or land use rights.²²

Meanwhile, those who have labored hard to create economic fruits have not

been allowed to own them. Millions of ordinary people with an entrepreneurial and pioneering spirit are constrained by the boundaries of the law, cannot succeed. These practices continue while laborers become unemployed, losing the guarantee for their basic right of existence. A large portion of wealth is concentrated in the hands those who have power, or attach themselves to people with power, those who are corrupt and those who embezzle.

The CPC has also realized the social conflict caused by the unfair distribution of wealth. There have been changes in the notion of how wealth shall be distributed. Between 1979 and 2000, the CPC stressed “priority in efficiency with concurrent consideration to fairness.”²³ At the 16th Party Congress, it was emphasized that “priority should be given to efficiency in primary distribution,” and to “fairness in redistribution of wealth.”²⁴ The 17th Party Congress report instead emphasized that “a proper balance should be struck between efficiency and equity in both primary distribution and redistribution.”²⁵

By juxtaposing “efficiency” with “fairness,” the Party seems to be placing the blame for current problems of market economic reform on the priority given to “efficiency.” However, both efficiency and fair distribution are necessary. The two are not contradictory but complementary; with more efficiency, the bigger the pie will be to share between recipients.

The widening gap of wealth in China is not caused by rapid economic growth, but is a result of the refusal to introduce a *fair* market economy without political power dominating the economy. In other words, a growing disparity between rich and poor is due to the incompleteness of the transition from a planned economic system to a market economy, itself a result of the current political system. Because of the lagging of the political reform, the property rights of government-owned assets are not well defined and officials are largely unsupervised, and predatory rent-seeking behavior then occurs when economy liberalizes. Therefore, it is the current political system that is causing the unfair distribution of wealth; and the current political system that allows certain actors to exploit loopholes on an uneven playing field created for their own advantage. It is administrative power, monopoly and vested interests that have hampered the free competition

and fair distribution of wealth. Until that issue is fundamentally addressed, profound problems in the system will not abate. Unfortunately, the state has not taken fundamental steps to change this situation.

History and common knowledge show that break-neck economic growth cannot last forever, nor can all economic crises be eternally avoided.²⁶ Economic stagnation in China is not far off. Under the strategy of progressive reform, economic growth in China has been driven by the government rather than by the private sector as government-led investment has been an important policy to stimulate economic growth. The shortcoming of this development model is that it blocks the private sector from becoming the primary driving force of the economy. Once the government is incapacitated, for example, by a financial crisis, and reaches its limits in terms of propelling economic growth, the private sector may not be mature enough to fill the vacuum. This could lead to long-term slowdown, or

The current political system is the basic cause of the unfair distribution of wealth.

worse, recession. The CPC could quickly lose its legitimacy as a result. Once holes begin to show in the political power, whose legitimacy is based on monolithic economic achievements, the people will doubt the values and procedures upon which that political power was established. Research has

shown that a ruling power without electoral legitimacy is far more vulnerable to sudden and overwhelming social turbulence once economic recession hits. In essence, economic recession is a political hurdle that authoritarian regimes cannot overcome.²⁷

In the 21st century, China faces myriad challenges ranging from legal and political reform, economic capacity, environmental sustainability and a shifting morality. Whether China can successfully cope with such challenges is dependent on whether it can make the smooth transition from progressive reform to systemic reform. When the gradual and incremental reform reaches a dead end, it is just a matter of time before constitutional democracy will enter stage to satisfy the needs of a liberalized market economy. ☪

Notes

* The article is based on interviews with Liu Junning.

¹ Progressive reform has two aspects, which are the gradual reform of speed and incremental reform of volume. In the aspect of speed, progressive reform is slow and gradual. In the aspect of volume, progressive reform began with easier measures, leaving aside difficult issues. See Liu Junning, "Post-reform: From Progressive Reform to System Change," *The China Elections & Governance Website*, <http://www.chinaelections.org/NewsInfo.asp?NewsID=54025>.

² Pei Minxin, "China's Economic Reform Gets More Difficult," *Apple Daily*, Oct. 13, 2004. See <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/programs/china/chinese/Research/InternationalEconomy/EconReform.cfm>.

³ Xu Xianglin, "Wade Across the Stream by Feeling the Way and China's Political Reform Choice," *Tian Jing Social Science*, Issue 3, 2002.

⁴ Fan Gang, *The Analysis of Political Economy to Gradual Reform* (Shanghai, *Shanghai Far East Publishers*, 1996).

⁵ Liu Junning, "China's quest for political reform: intra-Party democracy or constitutional democracy?" *The China Elections & Governance Website*, <http://en.chinaelections.org/newsinfo.asp?newsid=2221>.

⁶ Hu Jintao, "VI. Unswervingly Developing Socialist Democracy" in "Full text of Hu Jintao's report at 17th Party Congress," http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-10/24/content_6938749_5.htm.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Hu Jintao, "The Report to the 17th Congress of the Communist Party of China," *People's Daily*, Oct. 15, 2007, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/104019/104099/6429414.html>.

⁹ The socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics refers to "*Ren Min Min Zu Zhuan Zheng*," which means the People's democratic dictatorship. According to the Chinese Constitution, "The People's Republic of China is a socialist state under the people's democratic dictatorship led by the working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants." "*China's Political Party System*," Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, November 2007, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90785/6303123.html>.

¹⁰ Liu Junning, "How to kick off the democratic road in China?" *TECN website*, <http://www.tecn.cn/data/detail.php?id=2824>.

¹¹ Article 11, CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA, Amended and adopted at the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China on Oct. 21, 2007, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-10/25/content_6944738_2.htm.

¹² Article 43, *ibid*, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-10/25/content_6944738_8.htm.

¹³ Article 27, *ibid*, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-10/25/content_6944738_4.htm.

¹⁴ Mao Zedong, *On the Coalition Government*, published in April 1945.

¹⁵ In 1938, in the 6th Plenary Session of the 6th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Mao Zedong emphasized that "Four Subordinates" as principles of democratic centralism. See Liu Junning, "China's quest for political reform: intra-Party democracy or constitutional democracy?" *The China Elections & Governance Website*, <http://en.chinaelections.org/newsinfo.asp?newsid=2221>.

¹⁶ Zhong Zuwen, "Correctly implement democratic centralism and strive to create an active and vibrant political situation," *People's Daily*, Nov. 1, 2001, p. 1.

¹⁷ Liu Junning, "China's quest for political reform: intra-Party democracy or constitutional

democracy?" *The China Elections & Governance Website*, <http://en.chinaelections.org/newsinfo.asp?newsid=2221>

¹⁸ Hu Jintao, "XII. Comprehensively Carrying Forward the Great New Undertaking to Build the Party in a Spirit of Reform and Innovation" in "Full text of Hu Jintao's report at 17th Party Congress," http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-10/24/content_6938749_5.htm.

¹⁹ CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA, Amended and adopted at the Seventeenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China on Oct. 21, 2007, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-10/25/content_6944738.htm.

²⁰ Hu Jintao, "The Report at the 17th Congress of the Communist Party of China," *People's Daily*, Oct. 15, 2007.

²¹ Liu Junning, "Liberalism and Equality: Reply to Rebukes," *Modern China Studies*, Issue 4, 2000

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Ma Guochuan, "The Review to the Principle of Priority in Efficiency with Concurrent Consideration to Fairness," *China Reform*, Issue 9, 2006.

²⁴ Primary distribution, which is mainly based on the efficiency principle, refers to the distribution inside enterprises, where each factor is distributed on the efficiency it brings during the production and the role it plays in total revenue. In short: high efficiency leads to high returns. Redistribution means that individuals and groups with higher incomes or wealth distribute to those of lower incomes or wealth. Redistribution by government is usually done through transfers, regulation or the provision of public services. Transfers involve the collection of money from people through the tax system. See Wang Dayun and Zhao Jian, "How to understand that priority should be given to efficiency in primary distribution and fairness in redistribution of wealth," *PLA DAILY*, Mar. 27, 2003.

²⁵ Hu Jintao, "VIII. Accelerating Social Development with the Focus on Improving People's Livelihood" in "Full text of Hu Jintao's report at 17th Party Congress," http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-10/24/content_6938749_7.htm.

²⁶ Liu Junning, "Post-reform: From Progressive Reform to System Change," *The China Elections & Governance Website*, <http://www.chinaelections.org/NewsInfo.asp?NewsID=54025>.

²⁷ For instance, the Suharto regime of Indonesia stumbled at this threshold. See *ibid.*

The Panda and the Peacock

Chietigj Bajpae

A Balancing Act

Relations between China and India are approaching a new and complex crossroads. There is now potential for this bilateral relationship to turn for the better, but if not carefully nurtured, could significantly regress. The visit of Sonia Gandhi, the head of India's ruling Congress Party, to China in November, which will be followed by Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's first visit to China and the first joint counterterrorism training between the armies of both states, highlight the continued process of rapprochement between China and India. Nonetheless, sporadic frictions over their long-standing border dispute, ongoing military modernization and competition for resources illustrate that the Sino-Indian relationship is far from trouble-free and continues to oscillate between periods of friendship and rivalry. Furthermore, both countries' relations with third parties have added to the climate of mistrust in Sino-Indian relations. India has warmed to Japan and the United States while China sustains its "all-weather" friendship with Pakistan and Myanmar (Burma) and improving relations with

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Nepal and Bangladesh have added to the climate of mistrust in Sino-Indian relations. The bilateral relationship is likely to remain in a state of flux as both states come to terms with the post-Cold War and post-Sept. 11 international order and their growing stature in that order.

The Sino-Indian relationship will have implications for a growing multitude of international issues including addressing Iran's nuclear ambitions, human rights violations in Sudan and Myanmar, the global nonproliferation regime, maritime security, energy security and the environment. As China and India emerge as the engines of Asia's growth, the bilateral relationship is also of growing importance to regional and global economic stability. As the Sino-Indian relationship becomes increasingly multidimensional, both states will need to develop a multi-pronged approach toward managing their relationship while the international community will need to recognize that a stable and cordial bilateral relationship will demand effective multilateral engagement.

Interdependence Breeds Cooperation

The Sino-Indian relationship has shown significant progress in recent years. While the bilateral relationship has not returned to the "bhai-bhai" ("brother-brother") cordiality of the 1950s, growing economic interdependence and confidence building measures are likely to deter open hostilities over the short to medium term. On the economic front, China has emerged as India's second-largest trading partner after the United States (although India is only China's 10th-largest trading partner). Bilateral trade exceeded US\$25 billion in 2006 and in the first six months of 2007, bilateral trade amounted to \$17.2 billion, a 67 percent increase over the same period in 2006.¹ Joint feasibility research on a bilateral free trade agreement has proceeded since 2005 and both countries aim to bring bilateral trade to \$40 billion by 2010.² Both states have adopted common positions at the G33 bloc at the World Trade Organization on eliminating agricultural subsidies in developed countries, as well as opposing efforts to impose caps on carbon emissions, which both claim would undermine their growth and development initiatives.

India and China's Trade with Selected Countries, 2006 (bill. of US\$)³

	China	India
TOTAL	1,760.69	312.11
South Asia		
India	24.86	
Pakistan	5.30 ⁴	1.67
Bangladesh	3.19 ⁵	1.86
Nepal	0.27 ⁶	1.23
Sri Lanka	1.44 ⁷	2.73
East Asia		
China		25.75
Taiwan	107.84	2.59
Hong Kong	166.17	7.16
Japan	207.36	7.46
Republic of Korea	134.31	7.32
ASEAN	160.84	30.64 ⁸
Australia	32.95	7.93
Other		
United States	262.68	30.60
Russia	33.39	3.31
European Union	272.30	67 ⁹

Growing people-to-people engagement and exchanges of senior officials have also illustrated the cordiality of the bilateral relationship. In 2005, both states engaged in their first bilateral strategic dialogue, which was followed by the signing of the *India-China Strategic and Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Prosperity*. India declared 2006 “The Year of Friendship with China.” People-to-people contacts have also increased with direct flights between both capitals and China’s tourism authorities designating India as an “authorized destination” in 2002 and the “Year of China-India Friendship through Tourism” in 2007. Sonia Gandhi was the first foreign dignitary to meet with China’s leadership in November 2007 following the conclusion of China’s 17th Party Congress. This exchange has also paved the way for Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s planned visit to China in January 2008.

Concerning the border issue, there has been slow but steady progress in shelving the dispute while pursuing confidence-building measures, including mutual

troop reductions, regular meetings of local military commanders, and advanced notification of military exercises. In a joint statement signed in 2003, Beijing recognized Sikkim as a part of India as a quid pro quo for New Delhi's recognition of China's sovereignty, as well as suzerainty, over Tibet.¹⁰ This change of status was recognized through the reopening of the Nathu La Pass, a direct overland trade route linking the formerly disputed territories, in July 2006 after 44 years of closure. Trade across this frontier, however, has been below expectations.¹¹ Discussions are also proceeding on reopening the historic Stilwell Road linking India's Assam state with China's Yunnan province through Myanmar.

In the military sphere, apart from the planned joint counterterrorism training between the armies of both states, which will focus on an "anti-terror scenario in a mountainous region," China's People's Liberation Army Navy held a joint exercise with India in the East China Sea in November 2003 and in the Indian Ocean in December 2005, marking China's first joint naval exercise with India outside its territorial waters. Both states also held joint mountaineering training in August 2004.¹² In May 2006, both states signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on defense cooperation, which institutionalized exchanges between the Defense Ministries and armed forces of the two countries, established an annual defense dialogue, formalized joint military exercises and training programs in search-and-rescue, antipiracy and counterterrorism, and called for study tours by senior and mid-level officials to better understand the foreign, defense and national development policies of both states. These initiatives have permitted both countries to maintain a stable periphery in order to focus on internal development.

Global Ambitions Fuel Competition

Nonetheless, mutual suspicion continues to permeate the Sino-Indian relationship, fueled by their unresolved territorial dispute, military modernization, resource competition and rivalry for regional and global influence.

First and foremost, the legacy of the brief border conflict between China and India in 1962 when Beijing sought to "teach India a lesson" continues to plague

relations.¹³ Despite 11 rounds of negotiations between their special representatives since 2003, China and India have failed to make significant progress on the boundary dispute. A number of recent incidents have highlighted the ongoing friction over the territorial dispute, including India canceling the visit of 107 bureaucrats to China in May 2007. This occurred following China's refusal to accept the visa application of an official from India's Arunachal Pradesh region, and the statement by Chinese officials just prior to Chinese President Hu Jintao's visit to India in November 2006 asserting that the Tawang tract of Arunachal Pradesh is Chinese territory.¹⁴ India's director general of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police has reported over 140 Chinese incursions into the disputed territory in the past year.¹⁵ India has responded by allegedly enhancing its air power on its eastern front with the deployment of two additional squadrons of Su-30 aircraft.¹⁶

The legacy of the brief border conflict in 1962 continues to plague relations.

While both sides have explored the possibility of a territorial swap that recognizes the status quo – India gave up its claim to the Aksai Chin region in exchange for China renouncing its claim over Arunachal Pradesh – in recent years Beijing has adopted an increasingly intractable position on the territorial dispute by renewing its claim to both disputed territories. This has been fueled by the importance of Aksai Chin to China as a link between Tibet and Xinjiang, and the fact that the Tawang tract in Arunachal Pradesh is the birthplace of the sixth Dalai Lama, which strengthens China's claim over Tibet.¹⁷ India, for its part, is unlikely to yield on its claim to Arunachal Pradesh given the importance of the state to stability in India's restive northeast, which is plagued by insurgencies. India's continued support for the Dalai Lama's government-in-exile in Dharamsala has also been a sore point in border negotiations. This was highlighted by the recent controversy in India following the Indian government's reluctance to meet with the Dalai Lama, which some speculated was an attempt to appease both China and its own leftist parties in order to temper their opposition to the U.S.-India nuclear agreement.¹⁸

In the energy sphere, China-India interaction has tended to be competitive

rather than cooperative. Both states have competed for oil assets in Kazakhstan, Ecuador, Angola and Myanmar, and in every case China has prevailed, not only by offering a higher bid than India but also by adopting a more strategic and holistic approach that integrates financial incentives with aid, infrastructure projects, diplomatic incentives and arms packages.¹⁹ While there have been sporadic instances of cooperation between both states in the energy sphere, cooperation by and large has been the exception rather than the rule in Sino-Indian energy interactions. Chinese companies have often found more utility in forming joint ventures with major Western companies where they can get access to Western expertise and technology, rather than in aligning themselves with their Indian peers. China and India's joint bids and development of energy assets have been limited to states that face high levels of political risk such as Iran and Sudan, or are marginal players in terms of oil and gas resources such as Columbia. In these cases, Western oil companies are either unwilling (due to lack of commercial viability or high political risk) or unable (due to government sanctions) to access the resources, leaving India as the only viable partner for China.

These mutual suspicions have also spilled over into the political and economic arenas as seen by China's quiet opposition to India's bid for a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council, which has been fueled by China's desire to maintain its status as the only permanent member of the U.N. Security Council from Asia and the developing world. The timing of Sonia Gandhi's visit to China coincides with the Congress Party-led United Progressive Alliance government's troubles in obtaining support from India's leftist parties led by the Communist Party of India-Maoist for the U.S.-India nuclear agreement. This has raised speculation in India over whether the ruling Congress Party's overtures to China are an attempt to appease India's communists by demonstrating that New Delhi retains its independent foreign policy rather than tilting toward the United States.²⁰ Some have even accused Beijing of pushing India's leftist parties to oppose the nuclear agreement.²¹ While it is unlikely that Beijing retains significant sway over India's communist parties and is no longer prone to supporting communist parties and leftist insurgencies as it did during the height of the Cold War, the very specula-

Sino-Indian Cooperation vs. Competition²²

Competition

Asset	India's bid	China's bid	Winner	Date
Sonangol – 50% stake, offshore block 18 (Angola)	ONGC – \$310 million	Sinopec – \$725 million	China	November 2004
PetroKazakhstan (Kazakhstan)	ONGC-Mittal – \$3.9 billion	CNPC – \$4.18 billion (Initial bid - \$3.6 billion)	China	August 2005
EnCana Corp (Ecuador)	ONGC – \$1.4 billion (Bid Withdrawn)	Andes Petroleum (CNPC, CNOOC) \$1.42 billion	China	September 2005
South Atlantic Petroleum 45% stake (Nigeria)	OVL – \$2 billion (Bid withdrawn)	CNOOC – \$2.3 billion	China	January 2006

Cooperation

Asset	Sino-Indian bid	Date
Greater Nile Oil Project (Sudan)	OVL – 25% (\$750 million), CNPC – 40% (\$441 million)	OVL – March 2003, CNPC – 1996
Petro-Canada 37% (Syria)	\$573 million (OVL-CNPC – Himalaya Energy)	December 2005
Omimex de Colombia Ltd – 50% (Columbia)	\$850 million (OVL-Sinopec)	August 2006
Yadavaran oil field (Iran)	OVL – 29%, Sinopec – 51%	September 2006

CNPC—China National Petroleum Corporation (China)

ONGC—Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (India)

CNOOC—China National Offshore Oil Corporation (China)

OVL—ONGC Videsh Limited (India)

tion that China is influencing India's domestic politics demonstrates the continued mistrust in India toward China.

On the economic front, while bilateral trade has shown significant growth in recent years, it is no larger than China's growing trade with other countries and regions: China accounts for 8 percent of India's total trade volume, while India accounts for only 1 percent of China's trade.²³ Furthermore, India's trade deficit with China continues to widen; from a surplus of \$1.7 billion in 2004 to a deficit of \$4.12 billion in 2006, as well as a deficit of \$3.28 billion in the first six months of 2007, up from a \$2.66 billion deficit in the same period in 2006.²⁴ India also seeks to move the trade relationship toward higher value-added products; India's exports to China are primarily natural resources, with iron ore accounting for half of India's exports to China in the first half of 2007, whereas China's exports to India are primarily manufactured and value-added products.²⁵

India's national security establishment has opposed Chinese investment in strategically important Indian sectors such as ports and telecommunications.²⁶ Security concerns and bureaucratic delays in India have created an imbalance in Sino-Indian investment relations: Indian investment in China exceeds \$130 million and is concentrated in information technology, while Chinese investment in India is close to \$50 million and is concentrated in infrastructure development.²⁷

At Strategic Odds?

In the context of their relationship of mutual mistrust, the rapid military modernization of both states is also cause for concern. China has experienced double-digit increases in its annual military budget over the last decade, including a 17.8 percent increase to \$45 billion for 2007²⁸ while India has stated that it intends to spend over \$30 billion on defense from 2007 to 2012.²⁹

China's launch of a ground-based ballistic missile to destroy one of its satellites on Jan. 11, 2007 is likely to accelerate the space race in Asia, with India and Japan playing catch-up with China in terms of its manned space program and military space capabilities. Notably, China's anti-satellite test poses a po-

tential threat to India's burgeoning satellite-based surveillance and reconnaissance program.³⁰ On Jan. 10, India launched the Cartosat-2 satellite atop a polar satellite launch vehicle and the same month, Indian Air Force Chief Shashi Tyagi announced that India would establish an aerospace defense command, although progress on this appears more rhetoric than reality at this point.³¹ China is also expanding its Compass satellite navigation system, which is to be completed by 2017 and serves as a potential rival to the U.S. Global Positioning System (GPS), Russian Glonass (Global Navigation Satellite System), European Galileo and planned Indian and Japanese systems.³² With respect to their space exploration programs, China began manned space missions in 2003, launched its *Chang'e 1* lunar orbiter in October 2007, plans an unmanned vehicle to the moon by 2010, and reports claim a manned moon mission and space station by 2020; meanwhile India intends to launch its *Chandrayan 1* unmanned lunar orbiter in 2008, have a manned space mission by 2014 and a manned mission to the moon by 2020.³³ While the space programs of both states are tied to genuine scientific and technological progress and commercial satellite launch programs, drumming up patriotism and competing for regional leadership and "great power" status are also central to India and China's space programs.

The rapid military modernization of both states is also a cause for concern.

India is also upgrading its ballistic and cruise missile program, as seen by the Indian army becoming the world's first to be armed with a surface-to-surface supersonic cruise missile following the induction of the joint India-Russia developed *BrahMos* in June.³⁴ The *BrahMos* will form a pivotal deterrent for India, especially in checking the movement of the Chinese warships in the Indian Ocean.³⁵ In April, India also tested its intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM), *Agni III*, which can reach most of China.³⁶ The Indian government is also planning to upgrade its electronic surveillance and monitoring facilities in Mongolia, which allow New Delhi to observe the status of China's missile development and parallels China's alleged monitoring facilities in Myanmar.³⁷

India has also voiced concerns over China's alleged blue water naval ambitions.

While China's naval power goals have been primarily driven by its preparations for a Taiwan scenario, India and other states claim that China has expressed ambitions to develop a blue water naval capability, as manifested in sporadic statements by Chinese military officials to acquire or develop an aircraft carrier.³⁸ This has been driven by Beijing's desire to secure resource imports transiting strategically important waterways; 90 percent of China's oil imports come by sea and 80 percent transit through the Strait of Malacca, which is vulnerable to piracy, terrorist attacks and U.S. patrols.³⁹ China is also attempting to develop alternative overland routes to transport resource imports through expanding and extending the existing Karakoram highway linking Pakistan and China, and developing port facilities at Gwadar in Pakistan's Baluchistan province, as well as in Bangladesh (Chittagong), Sri Lanka (Hambantota) and Myanmar (Sittwe, Coco, Hlanggyi, Khaukphyu, Mergui and Zadetkyi Kyun). These efforts have been viewed by India and other states as part of a "string of pearls" strategy of economic and military encroachment into South and Central Asia.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, India is reportedly developing its first indigenously developed nuclear submarines⁴¹ and has ambitions to develop submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs).⁴² The Indian navy has also established a Far Eastern Naval Command (FENC) off Port Blair on the Andaman Islands, which is at the entrance of the Strait of Malacca and in close proximity to Myanmar's Coco Islands where China allegedly has a signals intelligence (SIGINT) station. Iran and India are also developing the Iranian port at Chabahar as an alternative to the China-Pakistan port at Gwadar to access the resources and markets of Central Asia.

Third Party Complications

An additional element of instability has arisen from both states' relations with third parties, namely China's "all-weather relationship" with Pakistan and Myanmar, and its growing friendship with Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. India also has evolving relations with the United States, Japan, Vietnam and other Asian countries under the guise of its "Look East" policy. In recent years, China has adopted a more balanced approach in its position on India-Pakistan hostilities

as demonstrated by Beijing's neutral stance – relative to Beijing's pro-Pakistan position during the India-Pakistan wars in 1965 and 1971 – during both the Kargil conflict in 1999 and frictions following the attack on the Indian parliament in December 2001. Nonetheless, China continues to employ the “Pakistan card,” – voicing support for Pakistan's nuclear program following the U.S.-India nuclear agreement and supporting Pakistan's bid for an observer seat at the Shanghai Co-operation Organization, while opposing India's bid for observer status.⁴³ India has also voiced concerns over China's encroachment into South Asia; China's free trade agreement with Pakistan went into effect in July of this year and

India's “Look East” policy has allowed it to increase engagement with China's neighbours.

China has also emerged as Bangladesh's leading trade partner and arms supplier. Meanwhile, Beijing's support for the regime of Nepal's King Gyanendra during his suspension of democracy from February 2005 to April 2006 was a source of irritation to India. The support from all of India's neighbors (except Bhutan) to admit China as an observer to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 2005 also drew the quiet consternation of New Delhi.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, under the guise of its “Look East” policy, which India launched in the aftermath of the Cold War and at the start of India's economic liberalization policy, India has increased engagement with China's neighbors, including countries with which China has traditionally had adversarial relations. Notably, India conducted joint naval exercises with Vietnam in 2000, has conducted joint patrols with Indonesia in the Andaman Sea since 2002, and has also been conducting joint naval exercises with Singapore (SIMBEX) since 1993. India's growing naval presence in the South China Sea has been a source of concern to China given its growing resource imports through the Strait of Malacca and limited naval power projection capabilities. For instance, China was notably absent during relief operations following the tsunami in 2004 when India led relief efforts in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea under the aegis of the “Regional Core Group” comprising Australia, India, Japan and the United States.⁴⁵

The evolving “quadrilateral initiative” or “arc of freedom and prosperity” be-

tween India, Japan, Australia and the United States has emerged as a source of concern to Beijing, especially as the “value-oriented diplomacy” of these states contrasts with China’s “value-free” foreign policy with “no strings attached.” China has asked that the quadripartite arrangement be “open and inclusive,” an indication of Beijing’s traditional aversion to the U.S.-led alliance structure in Asia.⁴⁶ In April 2007, a trilateral naval exercise was held between India, Japan and the United States off the Boso peninsula in central Japan, and in September of the same year, the navies of the United States, India, Japan, Australia and Singapore held a joint naval exercise in the Bay of Bengal as part of “Malabar-07-2.” In his speech before a joint session of India’s parliament in August, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe referred to India as part of a group of “like-minded countries” that “share fundamental values such as freedom, democracy and respect for basic human rights as well as strategic interests.” Prime Minister Abe described India and Japan as forming a “strategic global partnership,” although the rhetoric of the India-Japan relationship outweighs reality, given that bilateral engagement in the form of trade, investment and people-to-people exchanges remain low.⁴⁷

On the evolving U.S.-India relationship, the U.S.-India civil nuclear agreement has drawn criticism from Beijing, who described the agreement as creating a “nuclear exception.”⁴⁸ Although in recent months, it has toned down its opposition to the deal by calling for “innovative and forward-looking approaches to civilian nuclear cooperation.”⁴⁹ Beijing’s increasingly conciliatory position on the nuclear deal has been fueled by its recognition of the growing international support for India’s nuclear status. For instance, Australia’s recent decision to reverse its ban on the sale of uranium to India is significant given that Australia possesses 40 percent of the world’s uranium reserves.⁵⁰ India’s growing importance in the international system, as well the potential for collaboration with India in the nuclear power sector and possibly drawing concessions from New Delhi and/or Washington in exchange for its support for the agreement, has also influenced Beijing’s decision to tone down its opposition to India’s nuclear status, at least publicly.

The U.S. commitment to assist India's military modernization and help India emerge as a world power – evinced by the signing of the *New Framework for the U.S.-India Defense Relationship* in 2005 and the *Next Steps in Strategic Partnership* in 2001 – has also emerged as a source of concern to China, especially when juxtaposed against U.S. opposition to China's military modernization efforts. A poignant example of this was U.S. approval of Israel's sale of the Phalcon airborne warning and control system to India in 2003, after the blockage of a similar sale to China in 2000.⁵¹

India's relations with Taiwan have also improved, to the consternation of Beijing. India is unlikely to intervene in cross-strait hostilities as overtly as Japan and the United States have in their 2+2 (U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee) statement in 2005, calling for the "peaceful resolution" of the Taiwan Strait dispute as a "common strategic objective."⁵² India remains a staunch supporter of the "One China" policy and recognizes the People's Republic of China on the mainland over the Republic of China authorities on Taiwan. Nonetheless, India has a vested interest in the peaceful resolution of the dispute given its growing economic interdependence and people-to-people contacts with both sides of the Strait. Additionally, a minority of India's policymaking community has voiced utility in forging closer relations with Taiwan as a quid pro quo for China's close relationship with Pakistan and intransigence on the territorial dispute with India.⁵³ The Taiwanese government, especially under the current pan-Green Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), has also attempted to forge a closer bond with democratic states such as India in order to raise its international profile and balance Beijing's attempts to contain its role on the world stage.⁵⁴ Although the Indian government has refused visits by senior DPP officials to India, Taiwanese presidential candidate and opposition leader Ma Ying-jeou visited India in June and was the first senior Kuomintang Party (KMT) official to do so since Chiang Kai-shek in 1942.⁵⁵ The business community has also taken note of the complementarity of India's software expertise and Taiwan's hardware expertise, as well as India's role as an alternative destination for investment, which is presently concentrated on the mainland.⁵⁶ In 1995, India and Taiwan founded the

India-Taipei Association, India's trade mission in Taiwan, and in February 2006 the two sides established the Taiwan-India Cooperation Council to promote and facilitate Taiwanese investment in India.⁵⁷

To be sure, India's "Look East" policy and quadrilateral engagement with Australia, Japan and the United States have not been specifically aimed at countering China. Furthermore, India is unlikely to join the U.S.-led alliance structure in Asia given New Delhi's legacy of non-alignment, desire to maintain "strategic autonomy" in conducting its foreign policy, and an increasingly non-ideological foreign policy approach that seeks to promote trade and attract foreign investment to meet India's development needs. India is likely to continue a foreign policy of maintaining an equidistant position from all actors in the international system, as demonstrated by India's participation in numerous (sometimes competing) regional forums such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, East Asia Summit, ASEAN Regional Forum and "Quadrilateral Initiative," as well as New Delhi's engagement with all major powers including the United States, China, Russia, Japan and the European Union. Ironically, China's rapprochement with India has been driven by a similar foreign policy approach that seeks to maintain a stable periphery, a cordial relationship with major powers, as well as to reassure the international community of China's "peaceful rise/development" in order to focus on internal development and growth. Nonetheless, India's rapprochement with entities that have traditionally been a source of friction for China, including the United States, Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam and Indonesia has raised concerns in Beijing given the potential for these players to adopt increasingly convergent positions in dealing with China.

The Sino-Indian relationship has also spilled over into other regions such as Africa, Central Asia and the Middle East, where both states support pariah regimes like Myanmar, Iran and Sudan in order to gain access to their resources. For instance, in recent months, as protests have mounted in Myanmar over the rise of commodity prices following the elimination of fuel subsidies, both China and India have bore the brunt of criticism for supporting the military junta. India

was criticized in July following reports over the sale to Myanmar of its Advanced Light Helicopter, which is manufactured with European components.⁵⁸ New Delhi has moved from voicing its opposition to the military junta's crackdown on pro-democracy activists to a more pragmatic policy of engagement with the regime. With this policy, it seeks to balance China's influence, to obtain the support of Yangon (Rangoon) in countering insurgent groups in India's northeast, as well as to gain access to Myanmar's energy resources and Southeast Asia's markets. Meanwhile, Beijing supported Yangon at the U.N. Security Council in January 2007 with Russia and China's joint veto on a U.S.-sponsored resolution condemning Myanmar's human rights record, which played a pivotal role in Myanmar's decision to construct a natural gas pipeline to China rather than India.⁵⁹ In the presence of growing international pressure, both Beijing and New Delhi have adjusted their policy toward Yangon. Notably, in an about-turn on its traditional policy of non-interference, Beijing has reportedly been putting pressure on the military junta to accelerate its transition to democracy while mediating a meeting between the United States and Myanmar in Beijing in June.⁶⁰

Healthy Sino-Indian relations is central to Asian growth and stability.

A similar situation has been seen in Iran and Sudan, where India and China are both competing and cooperating on exploration and production of energy resources while propping up unsavoury regimes.⁶¹ India has been under pressure from the United States to abandon the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India, or "peace pipeline," transporting natural gas from Iran's South Pars field. China has also been under pressure as a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council to adopt a tougher position on curbing Iran's nuclear ambitions and human rights violations in the Darfur region of Sudan. Under pressure from the international community, Beijing has agreed to a more interventionist approach in Sudan with the appointment of China's first special envoy to Africa, agreeing to the deployment of U.N. and African Union peacekeepers, as well as sending a contingent of

Chinese peacekeepers in October 2007.⁶²

Bilateral Relations: Cornerstone for Stability

China's relations with the United States and Japan have been the subject of significant attention in recent years. Nonetheless, China's relationship with India is of equal or greater importance to the stability and prosperity of the international system given that these two powers constitute two of the world's oldest civilizations, one-third of the world's population, a growing middle class, drivers of global economic growth and resource consumption, expanding militaries and ambitions for regional and global leadership.

Maintaining a stable bilateral relationship is all the more important given its implications for numerous international issues ranging from the missile-control and nonproliferation regime, to maritime and energy security, the environment and instituting reforms in unstable and authoritarian regimes such as Iran, Myanmar, Pakistan and Sudan. As China and India emerge as the engines of Asia's growth, the bilateral relationship is also of growing importance to regional and global economic stability. The *Asian Development Bank Outlook 2007* raised its growth forecast for Asia (excluding Japan) to 8.3 percent for 2007 and 8.2 percent for 2008. Excluding India and China, Asia's growth forecast drops to 5.7 percent and 5.8 percent, respectively.⁶³

Given the importance of the Sino-Indian relationship for maintaining stability in the international system, managing the bilateral relationship will require a multi-pronged approach and effective multilateral engagement. Internationalizing many of their domestic and bilateral concerns could assist in finding a sustainable solution. For instance, admitting China and India to the International Energy Agency would provide both states with a platform to address their concerns over energy security. Similarly, maritime security could be addressed by expanding such initiatives as the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Anti-Piracy in Asia, the Proliferation Security Initiative, the Regional Maritime Security Initiative and the Container Security Initiative into more permanent, inclusive forums such as the Global Maritime Partnership Initiative (i.e. Thousand-Ship

Navy proposal). Tying the U.S.-India nuclear agreement to New Delhi playing a more proactive role in strengthening the global nonproliferation regime could also assist in preventing an arms race in Asia. International pressure on China and India to emerge as “responsible stakeholders” in the international system could assist in addressing Beijing and New Delhi’s relations with pariah regimes and promoting environmentally sustainable growth and development in both states.

There also exists significant potential to deepen bilateral dialogue. For instance, although China and India have a ministerial-level Joint Economic Group in place, the last time it met was in 2006 after a six-year gap. Upgrading bilateral dialogue on economic issues to the same level as the Strategic Economic Dialogue between China and United States would help to alleviate frictions over the growing imbalance of the economic relationship. The creation of a Chamber of Commerce in China for Indian industry on par with the American Chamber of Commerce in China would also be helpful.

Short-Term Hope, Long-Term Uncertainty

In recent years the Sino-Indian rivalry has been subordinated to their increasingly pragmatic foreign policy approach, which is manifested in their growing economic interdependence. This is in stark contrast to their ideological foreign policy during the Cold War embedded in Nehruvian non-alignment and Maoist vision of a revolutionary world struggle.

Nonetheless, there are several competing strains in the foreign policy of both states that point to both a convergence and divergence in the bilateral relationship. China seeks a stable relationship with India as part of its goal of maintaining a stable periphery and international environment – or “harmonious world” – in order to focus on internal development and growth. At the same time, Beijing is unlikely to make territorial concessions, as regaining lost territories remains a vital part of the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party’s rule, especially in the case of Taiwan. The territorial dispute with India is also linked to preserving stability in China’s restive Tibet Autonomous Region.

Meanwhile, India is looking to maintain “strategic autonomy” in its foreign policy by pursuing a balanced and “non-aligned” foreign policy with numerous states including China. As such, India is unlikely to join the U.S.-based alliance structure in Asia. As part of its “Look East” policy, New Delhi is also looking to continue its process of rapprochement with China, including integration with China’s economy, cooperation on shared security concerns, growing people-to-people contact and dialogue through bilateral and multilateral forums. However, there is no denying that in recent years there has been a tilt in Indian foreign policy toward the United States. This was highlighted most recently at the third trilateral meeting of foreign ministers from Russia, China and India, where India was the odd one out given China and Russia’s opposition to U.S. plans for ballistic missile defense, Japan’s remilitarization and the trilateral strategic dialogue between the United States, Japan and Australia.⁶⁴

The Sino-Indian relationship is likely to continue on a trajectory of slow but steady rapprochement in the political, economic and security spheres. During this “period of strategic opportunity,” neither side has a desire to rock the boat in the bilateral relationship, as both states focus on internal development. However, mutual mistrust will remain for the longer term and a sudden shift in the international environment or a crisis in the bilateral relationship could put severe strain on the relationship. For instance, hostilities in the Sino-U.S. relationship would force India to choose sides. Similarly, a skirmish along the Sino-Indian border could escalate, especially if either or both governments attempt to draw attention away from internal crises or lose control of growing nationalist fervor. In the end, the quest by both states to emerge as great powers with a leadership role in the international system will keep the bilateral relationship prone to mutual hostility and potential conflict. The potential for future friction will be greater than cooperation unless the two states change their strategic mindset and develop irreversible strategic and economic connections and/or parallel interests. ☪

Notes

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Letter to the Editor

A response to
Zhang Hui's "Revisiting North Korea's Nuclear Test,"
in *China Security* Vol. 3 No. 3 (Summer 2007)

T By Quincy W. Castro
he nuclear test conducted by North Korea last year continues to generate speculation and debate across wide circles of scholars, practitioners and media pundits. With many important questions still unanswered, Zhang Hui's, "Revisiting North Korea's Nuclear Test," is a welcome summary of the facts surrounding the events of Oct. 9, 2006 and does a great deal to explain many obscure details. However, Hui's analysis of the DPRK's test may guide readers unfamiliar with the technical issues being discussed to a more specific conclusion than a broader consideration of the evidence merits. The test's small yield raised a number of questions, and there are two specific points which would have benefited from additional examination.

First, it is possible that incentives existed for the DPRK to use deceit in disclosing the design yield of its nuclear device.¹ Pyongyang has historically displayed considerable skill in using ballistic missile tests and military exercises to improve its perceived negotiating position or to obtain concessions from other nations.² In the months preceding the DPRK's test the progress of the Six Party Talks, sporadic at best, had been the focus of intense media speculation and governmental attention both in the region and in the United States. While not the driving factor behind the decision to test, the announcement of a successful nuclear detonation also provided Pyongyang with an important domestic opportunity to stress the DPRK's, "indigenous wisdom," and the role of the Kim regime

in protecting the nation from an ever present external threat.³ It therefore seems necessary to consider the test as something more than a technical exercise. The widespread visibility and symbolism of such an action must surely have weighed heavily in Pyongyang. In such circumstances an intentional misstatement of the test's intended yield could help ensure that such political effects were maximized and the risk of embarrassment made manageable. A hypothetical example of a failure management strategy could look something like the following: Pyongyang wants, for technical and political reasons, to test a nuclear device, but lacks a high degree of confidence in its design and is constrained in the amount of fissile material it is willing to expend through additional tests. It therefore discloses to a friendly state, not the actual design yield of its device, but the lowest yield its engineers say is possible. This calculated disclosure gives the testing state a hedge, since any seemingly possible result will meet the publicly disclosed criterion for success. A yield exceeding the claimed design yield will, in the minds

of the test's planners, only further exhibit the state's scientific excellence and the *juche* spirit. In such a scenario, lying can be an effective strategy to maximize the utility of an expensive, uncertain test.

Second, Zhang's article seems to direct readers towards a fairly narrow interpretation of the test results: that the 4kt intended yield is evidence of a high degree of confidence on the part of the DPRK in their warhead designs, and demonstrates a more advanced push for a miniaturized warhead. Yet it must be noted that, in an implosion device like the one referenced in Zhang's article, a reduction in yield does not directly translate into a reduction in weight, and such a low design yield is by no means a prerequisite for a deliverable weapon. The fissile material North Korea is suspected of using for its test, plutonium-239, has a bare sphere critical mass of 11kg. The weapon dropped on Nagasaki weighed 4630kg and contained 6.2kg of plutonium, but required 2400kg of conventional explosives to compress that plutonium into a supercritical mass.⁴ The vast majority of variation in mass between warhead designs

comes primarily from optimization of the other components. Advances in conventional high explosives and electronics technology over the last 50 years have lowered the threshold in this regard, and it has been noted that a nascent nuclear weapons state may well be capable of a first-generation nuclear weapon weighing less than 500kg, within the known throw weight of the DPRK's short and medium range ballistic missiles.⁵

In the absence of evidence over what type of design the DPRK used for its test and more accurate information on the materials used, scholars must rely on the data at hand to explain the implications of the test to policymakers. Yet it seems problematic to only pursue a line of explanation which implicitly assumes an intended 4kt yield. The DPRK is not an inherently malevolent entity, nor an irrational actor. Like all states, Pyongyang seeks to use the instruments available to it to improve its security, and the timing, execution and possible use of deceit in its nuclear test can all be viewed as an extension of such aims. It is important that the discussion of

North Korea's nuclear capabilities account for unexpected, surprising or incongruent data when attempting to make predictive assertions, lest a rush to judgment misinform or be taken out of context. ☹

Notes

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Zhang Hui Responds

I By Zhang Hui
In response to Quincy W. Castro's letter to the editor (regarding "Revisiting North Korea's Nuclear Test" Summer 2007), my paper focused mainly on a technical analysis of the North Korean nuclear test. The assessment of whether or not the test was a failure was clearly predicated on a significant condition: that is, if Pyongyang had planned for a yield of 4 kt (as it stated to Beijing prior to the event) it would have been neither a failure nor a fizzle. It was not exploring whether the design yield of 4 kt was true or not true, regarding which any conclusion would be highly speculative and perhaps impossible for an outsider to know. While the issue of whether North Korea's statement to Beijing was true or not is left unanswered, a technical analysis is still imperative since many scholars have interpreted the test as a failure or "fizzle" without specifying conditions. In reality, an

assessment of failure or success of the North Korean test depends on the design yield of the tested device.

In addition, my paper does address the issue of whether the North Korean regime may have lied regarding the design yield (footnote 15). For example, if Pyongyang lacked the confidence of a higher test yield from a larger design yield, it may have understated the design yield so that a lower explosive yield would still be seen as successful. However, this would have been a gamble for North Korea and unlikely because the lie would have been revealed under several scenarios including an explosive yield near or greater than 4 kt. The balance of the evidence suggests it would have been unlikely for Pyongyang to run such a risk. Admittedly, the possibility Pyongyang did lie cannot be excluded, but without eliminating the statement was accurate, the paper shows, as one possible scenario, that the test was not a

fizzle or failure.

Castro also argues with the paper's assertions about North Korea's potential ability to produce smaller warheads. He states, "...a reduction in yield does not directly translate into a reduction in weight, and such a low design yield is by no means a prerequisite for a deliverable weapon."

First of all, the paper is intended to provide an interpretation of why North Korea would wish to design and test a low-yield nuclear device (once again, I conditioned the discussion on if the design yield was indeed 4 kt). Other interpretations are also plausible, such as safety issues, as covered in the paper.

I agree with Quincy's comments on the relationship between the yield and warhead weight. The paper does in fact talk about this relationship (footnote 21) where it was noted that there is not an explicit relationship between either warhead weight or size and the warhead yield. However, it is also true that past nuclear tests by other nuclear states show a rough trend that lower-yield tests could be aimed at pursuing lighter warheads. The paper merely suggests that there

is a possibility that this trend could fit the North Korean test situation. To some, this may be somewhat of a worst-case scenario, but it is a possibility nonetheless – though not a definitive conclusion.

On a technical point, Castro stated that, "the fissile material North Korea is suspected of using for its test, plutonium-239, has a bare sphere critical mass of 11 kg." However, the plutonium used in North Korea's first test could be much less than 11 kg. Siegfried Hecker, an expert of nuclear weapons, agrees: "they [North Korea] most likely used approximately 6 kg for their first test."*

Notes

* See Hecker, Siegfried, Report on North Korean Nuclear Program, Center for International Security and Cooperation, Stanford University, Nov. 15, 2006. <http://www.keia.org/3-Programs/HeckerReport.pdf>.)

Situation Report

China's Nuclear Future

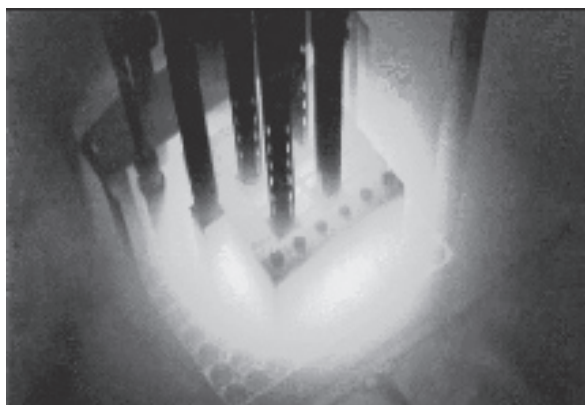
In response to the growing consequences of reliance on coal for electricity, China is embarking on an ambitious course to expand its nuclear capabilities. By the year 2050, experts predict that China may build as many as 300 new reactors, likely giving it the largest nuclear power network in the world. In concert with its expanding nuclear programs, China is pushing ahead with groundbreaking new technologies which promise to make nuclear energy cheaper, safer and more flexible.

A Global Issue

As China's economic growth is expanding at nearly 10 percent annually, its thirst for electricity is increasing at an even greater rate. With the world's third largest proven coal reserves, the most expedient solution has been to build more coal fire power plants – and it has done so on a staggering scale. China currently relies on coal for roughly 80 percent of its electricity needs, and on average, builds one new coal power plant per week. Of course the convenience of coal has come at a hefty price: the tripling of carbon dioxide emissions since 1990 and a 25 percent increase in the world's methyl-mercury pollution, a highly toxic by-product of coal burning.

Even more alarming is how China's need for electricity is projected to expand in the future. China's current electricity demand is estimated to be growing at a stunning 15 percent and, in the long run, growth is expected continue at 4.3 percent over the next 15 years – triple the rate of western countries. Due to concern for its deteriorating environmental conditions, as well as mounting international pressure, China is making a definitive move away from coal power.

While there are a number of alternative cleaner energy options available to China, nuclear power will play a central role in country's future electricity supply. China currently operates only ten nuclear power plants, and they account for a mere 3 percent of its total electrical output. This is set to drastically change. According to a November announcement by the China National Nuclear Corporation, China will invest 400 billion RMB in 16 new nuclear plants to double its nuclear capacity by the year 2020. In reality, however, China's nuclear plans are even more ambitious than those numbers reveal. As part of the 11th Five-Year Plan, 49 future sites were identified and some analysts are predicting that China will build 300 new reactors by mid-century. By comparison,



the United States currently operates just over 100 nuclear plants.

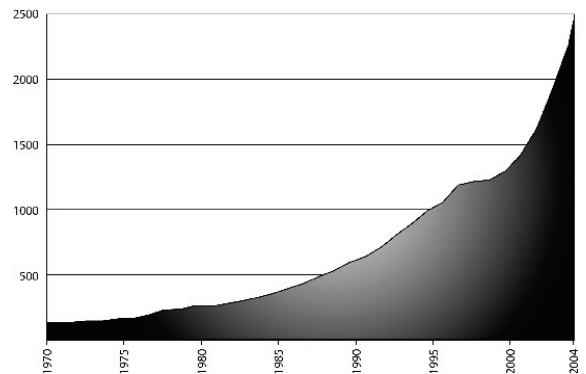
Given China's size and potential for growth, its recent embrace of nuclear technology has global significance. In the near term, China's goals will be met using older nuclear technology, but the country's scientists and researchers are also pushing forward with groundbreaking "fourth generation" solutions, which promise to reshape the global nuclear industry.

China Revives "Pebble Bed" Technology

At the forefront of China's drive for innovation in nuclear power is the pebble bed modular reactor (PBMR). Where traditional nuclear power is infamously expensive and plagued by safety concerns, PBMR technology is relatively affordable, simple and considerably safer than its predecessors. Instead of a water-cooled reactor filled with uranium rods, PBMRs use a system of ceramic pebbles made of pyrolytic graphite-encased uranium cooled by helium gas. Due to the specific mix of uranium and graphite, the fuel pebbles cannot reach melting temperature even in the case of complete coolant loss. The result is a system that is virtually immune to meltdown, the critical safety concern in traditional reactor designs that felled plants such as the one at Chernobyl.

PBMR technology is in fact not new; the first reactor dates back to a German design constructed in 1960. Despite the early promise of the PBMR system, a number of factors conspired to ensure that it was largely abandoned for a half century. The initial PBMR design, which was dependent on highly enriched fuel, was less popular than "breeder reactors" which could perpetually regenerate their own fission materials. At the time, PBMR technology was poorly suited to naval applications, and in key nuclear powers such as the United States and

CO₂ Emissions from Coal-generated Electrical and Thermal Energy in China



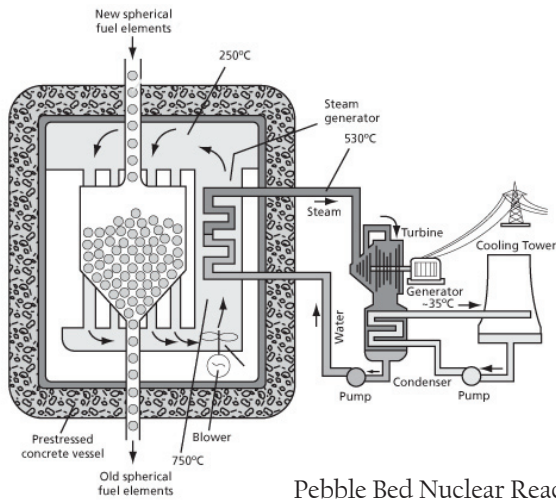
Source: International Energy Agency

the Soviet Union, the navies commanded a lion's share of the nuclear research budget. In addition, anti-nuclear movements in the West put a stop to many of the next generation technologies that were under development.

Today PBMR technology is being resurrected and retooled by researchers at the Institute of Nuclear Engineering and Technology at Tsinghua University. In 2000, Tsinghua brought a 10 megawatt test reactor online, which remains the only operational PBMR in the world. With the test reactor a success, construction is soon scheduled to begin on a full-scale 190 megawatt reactor at Wehei in Shandong province, where a plant is scheduled to be operational by 2011. Aside from general power production, Tsinghua University is also researching the application of PBMRs in the electricity-intensive process of seawater desalinization – an important development in a country facing serious water shortages.

Safer, Cheaper and Faster

Aside from the inherent safety of PBMRs, there are a number of other practical considerations that make the technology an appealing energy source. The simplicity of the PBMR design gives it an economic edge over conventional reactors. The key safety feature in a traditional nuclear power plant is the circulating water



Pebble Bed Nuclear Reactor

Source: www.euronuclear.org/info/encyclopedia/

that cools the reaction vessel. Since the coolant is all that stands between normal operation and a potential meltdown, extensive and expensive redundancy is required. Also, since water contains impurities, the cooling system is prone to corrosion and requires frequent inspection and maintenance. As a result, the construction and maintenance costs of the reactor coolant system make up a large part of the plant's expense.

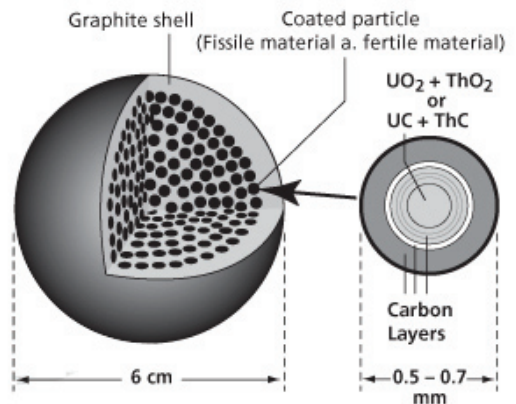
In contrast, pebble bed reactors do not require complex failsafe systems because their safety system design is passive. Instead of using water to cool the reactor core, PBMRs employ a bed of graphite-encased uranium pellets cooled by a noncorrosive gas such as helium. Since the coolant is an inert, non-flammable gas, there is no risk of steam explosions or corrosion. With fewer components to inspect and maintain, PBMRs are significantly cheaper to build and maintain and require a smaller workforce to operate.

PBMRs also have a much more efficient fuel cycle. Whereas traditional reactors must be taken offline every 18 to 24 months for a 30 to 45 day refueling period, PBMRs can be fueled on the fly, with no interruption in power generation. Waste disposal is also simpler. When the fuel "pebble" is spent, it is immediately ready for storage, unlike the fuel rods used in traditional

reactors, which first must be held in cooling pools for years. The spherical pebble is also meant to serve as a storage container, simplifying the handling and disposal process.

However, the greatest advantage of PBMR technology is the ability to configure it modularly. This eliminates the need to construct a new reactor from scratch every time more power is needed, and the need to plan for demand fifty years in the future. Rather, a small reactor park can be constructed and new units can be added according to demand. This plug-and-play capability has the potential to transform the entire nuclear industry. Today, a traditional water-cooled reactor takes between 5 and 15 years to produce its first watt of electricity. A PBMR could theoretically go from the drawing board to ribbon cutting in less than 36 months. With the reactors designed to be small and simple, nuclear technology could for the first time in history benefit from an economy of scale. Regulatory approval would also be made simpler since designs would not vary from reactor to reactor as they do today.

PBMRs also address two of the lurking problems facing the nuclear power industry: decommissioning costs and fear of proliferation. When first-generation reactors are taken out of service, the expense often reaches 10 percent of the original construction cost or about \$250 million on average. By contrast, PBMR

Source: www.euronuclear.org/info/encyclopedia/

decommissioning costs are projected to be under \$200 million. Proliferation of nuclear materials is a serious issue and has been an impediment to the spread of nuclear technology in the past. However, PBMRs are highly resistant to proliferation because the fuel pebbles are consumed to the point that only a residual mix of plutonium isotopes remain, making reprocessing highly technical and impractical.

Potential Setbacks

While China's goals for nuclear power are impressive, there are also pressing questions about its technological ability to fulfill its objectives. First, China still lacks much of the indigenous expertise required to guide its planned nuclear expansion. According to the Commission on Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense, 13,000 new graduates in nuclear science will be required to adequately staff China's nuclear research and power production facilities. Although nearly 360,000 scientists and engineers graduate from Chinese universities every year, few of them have a background in nuclear science. To meet its growing demands, China will have to enhance its indigenous knowledge base, as well as turn to foreign expertise for guidance.

While some question the wisdom of China's new push for nuclear power, others are asking whether it is enough. Even if China achieves its 2020 nuclear goals, it is unlikely to dramatically impact its emission levels. Including the 16 planned reactors, China's nuclear power output will only climb to around 4 percent of total electrical production. The problem is further compounded by the continued expansion of coal-fire power plants. Even as the central government seeks to mitigate the use of coal for electricity, local governments are often building illegal plants to meet their industrial needs. There is also further question as to what

China's exact power demand is. At present, the power distributions system is extremely inefficient with excess electricity mostly going to waste. China could undoubtedly reduce the need for future power plants simply by investing in a better electrical infrastructure.

No form of nuclear power holds the perfect solution to China's energy demand. Foremost is the nettlesome issue of nuclear waste, which in China's case will be no small problem. When all the nuclear plants currently on order are completed, China will be producing roughly 1,000 metric tons of nuclear waste per year. At this rate, merely storing the waste – which will remain radioactive for several thousand years – is not a tenable solution. To address this concern, China is investing in reprocessing and recycling technologies that will limit the amount of spent fuel that will have to be buried. Still, large amounts of radioactive waste will have to be handled, and given China's controversial public safety record, many skeptics see this as recipe for disaster. This criticism may be unfair however, since China has a relatively good safety record with both the World Association of Nuclear Operators and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

As the world faces the growing threat of climate change, drastic changes in energy supply are needed. Nuclear power is not ideal and there are other potential electricity sources that carry less risk. However, while other ideal clean energy alternatives lay on the horizon, they are not yet able to carry China's ever-growing energy demands. For now, it appears that a new renaissance of nuclear power is beginning and China is poised to play a leading role.

The Situation Report is a series of studies on the future of China's energy security and environment and was prepared by Matthew Durnin, a freelance journalist and assistant editor of China Security.

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