

**DEVELOPMENTS IN CHINA'S MILITARY FORCE
PROJECTION AND EXPEDITIONARY CAPABILITIES**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
U.S.-CHINA ECONOMIC AND SECURITY REVIEW COMMISSION

**ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS
SECOND SESSION**

THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 2016

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COMMISSION

WASHINGTON: 2016

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The Commission’s full charter is available at www.uscc.gov.

February 23, 2016

The Honorable Orrin Hatch
President Pro Tempore of the Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510
The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515

DEAR SENATOR HATCH AND SPEAKER RYAN:

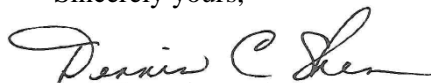
We are pleased to notify you of the Commission's January 21, 2016 public hearing on "Developments in China's Military Force Projection and Expeditionary Capabilities." The Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act (amended by Pub. L. No. 113-291) provides the basis for this hearing.


At the hearing, Commissioners received testimony from the following witnesses: Dr. Oriana Skylar Mastro, Assistant Professor of Security Studies, Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University; Mr. Timothy Heath, Senior International Defense Research Analyst, RAND Corporation; Dr. David Finkelstein, Vice President and Director of CNA China Studies Division, CNA Corporation; Mr. Mark Cozad, Senior International Defense Policy Analyst, RAND Corporation; Dr. Christopher Yung, Donald Bren Chair of Non-Western Strategic Thought and Director of East Asian Studies, Marine Corps University; Mrs. Kristen Gunness, Chief Executive Officer, Vantage Point Asia LLC, and Adjunct Senior International Policy Analyst, RAND Corporation; Dr. Thomas Bickford, Senior Research Scientist, CNA Corporation; and Rear Admiral Michael McDevitt, U.S. Navy (Ret.), Senior Fellow, CNA Corporation. The hearing examined Chinese security challenges, missions, and new operational developments associated with the military's goal of honing force projection and expeditionary capabilities, and its implications for the United States and U.S. allies and partners in the Asia Pacific.

We note that prepared statements for the hearing, the hearing transcript, and supporting documents submitted by the witnesses will soon be available on the Commission's website at www.USCC.gov. Members and the staff of the Commission are available to provide more detailed briefings. We hope these materials will be helpful to the Congress as it continues its assessment of U.S.-China relations and their impact on U.S. security.

The Commission will examine in greater depth these issues, and the other issues enumerated in its statutory mandate, in its 2016 Annual Report that will be submitted to Congress in November 2016. Should you have any questions regarding this hearing or any other issue related to China, please do not hesitate to have your staff contact our Congressional Liaison, Anthony DeMarino, at (202) 624-1496 or via email at ADeMarino@uscc.gov.

Sincerely yours,


Hon. Dennis C. Shea
Chairman


Carolyn Bartholomew
Vice Chairman

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**DEVELOPMENTS IN CHINA'S MILITARY FORCE PROJECTION AND
EXPEDITIONARY CAPABILITIES**

THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 2016

U.S.-CHINA ECONOMIC AND SECURITY REVIEW COMMISSION

Washington, D.C.

The Commission met in Room 106 of Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington, DC at 9:00 a.m. Commissioners Jeffrey L. Fiedler and Larry M. Wortzel (Hearing Co-Chairs), presiding.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER LARRY M. WORTZEL
HEARING CO-CHAIR**

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: Good morning. Welcome. I want to thank all our panelists, first of all, for getting here and for the effort that you all put into the testimonies. It's not an easy time to begin to prognosticate about what the PLA is going to look like because things are changing very quickly.

This is the Commission's first hearing of 2016, and before I start, I'd like to acknowledge this year's Commission leadership. Dennis Shea, over there to my right, a Republican, is the Chairman for 2016, and Carolyn Bartholomew, a Democrat, is Vice Chairman. We rotate every year with a Republican and Democratic co-chair, and I'm very pleased to be able to work with Jeff Fiedler, who was appointed by Minority Leader Pelosi.

For the past several years, the People's Liberation Army has carried out a series of military exercises that were designed to improve a range of capabilities, employ advanced intelligence and reconnaissance systems, and refine command and control. And I have to say that's what attracted my interest to the subject. But meanwhile, the Communist Party Central Military Commission and the Politburo Standing Committee is changing how the PLA is structured and developing capabilities to project military power and change command and control.

So what we want to be able to do at this hearing is to assess some of these developments as we can catch them and to explore and outline future directions of Chinese military expeditionary capabilities and how they would affect the United States.

Xi has characterized this as changes necessary to create a "strong Army for a strong country." But it really looks like a huge political change in the Party and the military as well.

I want to thank our staff, especially Kristien Bergerson, for his work on the hearing, and I turn to Commissioner Fiedler for his opening statement.

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER LARRY M. WORTZEL
HEARING CO-CHAIR**

**Hearing on Developments in China's Military Force Projection and Expeditionary
Capabilities**

Opening Statement of Commissioner Larry Wortzel

January 21, 2016

Washington, DC

Good morning and welcome. I want to thank our panelists for the effort they have put into their excellent testimonies. This is the Commission's first hearing of 2016. Before we begin I would like to acknowledge this year's leadership. For 2016, the chairman of the Commission is Dennis Shea, a Republican. Carolyn Bartholomew, a Democrat, is the vice chairman. Each hearing is co-chaired by a Republican and Democrat as well. I am delighted to be able to work with Jeffrey Fiedler, appointed to the Commission by Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi.

For the past several years the Chinese People's Liberation Army has carried out a series of military exercises designed to improve capabilities, employ advanced intelligence and reconnaissance systems, and refine command and control. At the same time, acting under guidance from the Communist Party's Central Military Commission and its Chairman, Chinese President Xi Jinping, the PLA is developing capabilities to project power and to modernize command and control. The Central Military Commission membership has changed, the way intelligence and logistics for the PLA has been revised, and the military regions have been reorganized. The objective of this hearing is to assess some of the developments in China's force projection capability and to explore future directions of Chinese military expeditionary capabilities.

Xi Jinping has characterized these changes as necessary to create a "strong Army for a strong country." We hope today to at least sketch out how this is playing out, how these developments may affect China's future military posture, and the potential effect of these developments on the United States.

I want to thank our staff, especially Kristien Bergerson, for his work on the hearing. I turn to Commissioner Fiedler for his opening statement.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER JEFFREY L. FIEDLER
HEARING CO-CHAIR**

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Thank you. Good morning. I'll begin by welcoming you as well. As always, it's a pleasure to work with Larry, an expert on many aspects of the Chinese military himself.

The Commission's 2015 Annual Report to Congress and the U.S. Department of Defense's Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic both highlight China's efforts to develop an expeditionary capability. This is being developed as part of the PLA's military modernization program and likely will provide China the capability to project a joint expeditionary force into and beyond the Second Island Chain.

As China looks to resolve what Beijing believes to be sovereignty challenges, safeguard overseas interests, and protect its citizens abroad, the PLA may occupy the same operational space as U.S. forces and the forces of U.S. allies and partners.

Given the potential for miscalculation involving China's increasingly aggressive military posture, it is important that members of Congress and the public have a better understanding of China's real ability to project force farther from its own shores.

Therefore, the intent of this hearing today is to gain a better understanding of their emerging expeditionary capability and its implications for the United States.

Before we hear testimony from the first panel, I would like to thank Senator Harry Reid and his staff for arranging the room for today and, likewise, thank the Senate Recording Studio for their continued support and for ensuring the hearing will be webcast on our website, www.uscc.gov.

And before Larry introduces the first panel, I'd like to defer to our Chairman, Dennis Shea, for a moment.

CHAIRMAN SHEA: Thanks, Jeff. Just for a brief moment, I want to welcome our newest member, Senator Byron Dorgan. It's great to have you on board. We're delighted, and we just don't want any ex-senator caucus forming in the Commission.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: There will be three now. We have three now.

CHAIRMAN SHEA: There will be no divisions. Right. [Laughter.]

CHAIRMAN SHEA: Welcome.

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER JEFFREY L. FIEDLER
HEARING CO-CHAIR**

**Hearing on Developments in China's Military Force Projection and Expeditionary
Capabilities
Opening Statement of Commissioner Jeffrey Fiedler**

January 21, 2016

Washington, DC

Good morning. I will begin by welcoming and thanking our witnesses who have joined us here today. As always it is a pleasure to work with my co-chair Commissioner Larry Wortzel, an expert on many aspects of the Chinese military.

The Commission's *2015 Annual Reports to Congress* and the U.S. Department of Defense *2015 Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China* both highlight China's efforts to develop an expeditionary capability. This is being developed as part of the PLA's military modernization program and likely will provide China the capability to project a joint expeditionary force into and beyond the Second Island Chain.

As China looks to resolve what Beijing believes to be sovereignty challenges, safeguard overseas interests, and protect its citizens abroad, the PLA may occupy the same operational space as U.S. forces and the forces of U.S. allies and partners. Given the potential for miscalculation involving China's increasingly aggressive military posture, it is important that members of Congress and the public have a better understanding of China's real ability to project force farther from its own shores. Therefore, the intent of the hearing today is to gain a better understanding of this emerging expeditionary force projection capability and its implications for the United States.

Before we hear the testimony from first panel, I would like to thank Senator Harry Reid and his staff for arranging the venue for today's hearing. I likewise wish to thank the Senate Recording Studio for their continued support and for ensuring the hearing will be webcast on our website, www.uscc.gov.

PANEL I INTRODUCTION BY COMMISSIONER LARRY M. WORTZEL

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: I guess I'm ready. This first panel is going to focus on the driving factors for the People's Liberation Army's interests in developing force projection and expeditionary capabilities. We're going to examine security challenges, missions, and the emerging joint command structure that will have implications for the development of this capability.

The first speaker will be Dr. Oriana Skylar Mastro, Assistant Professor of Security Studies at the Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. Her research focuses on Chinese military and security policy, Asia-Pacific security issues, war termination, and coercive diplomacy. You got to get the war starting first, Oriana.

[Laughter.]

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: She's also an officer in the U.S. Air Force and is a reserve air attache.

Next will be Tim Heath. Tim is a Senior International Defense Research Analyst at the Rand Corporation and a member of the Pardee RAND Graduate School faculty. Before joining RAND, he served as a Senior Analyst for the U.S. Pacific Command China Strategic Focus Group, and has a lot of experience doing analysis at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of the U.S. military and government.

And, finally, Dr. Dave Finkelstein, Vice President of the Center for Naval Analysis, CNA Corporation, and director of CNA's China Program. Dave is very active in academic and policy organizations. He's on the Advisory Board of Issues & Studies, and the China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly, and he's a member of the National Committee for U.S.-China Relations, and he regularly lectures around the government, at the War College, and at JFK School of Government at Harvard.

We try and limit the remarks to seven minutes, and after that we tend to go through a fairly long series of questions and answers around from commissioners. You should have a timer out there.

All right. Oriana. Thank you.

OPENING STATEMENT OF DR. ORIANA SKYLAR MASTRO
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF SECURITY STUDIES
EDMUND A. WALSH SCHOOL OF FOREIGN SERVICE, GEORGETOWN
UNIVERSITY

DR. MASTRO: Thank you to the co-chairs, Commissioners Jeffrey Fiedler and Dr. Larry Wortzel, the members of the Commission, and staff. I greatly appreciate the opportunity to testify today and for all the work that you do in disseminating critical knowledge about the security and economic developments involved with China's rise.

The views expressed here today are my own and do not represent any of the institutions or organizations for which I work.

By all objective measures, Beijing's security environment has worsened in recent years. Even so, the Communist Party's goals and objectives have remained relatively the same - to maintain power - and to do so, they feel the need to promote domestic stability, protect sovereignty and territorial integrity.

I would argue this a new development. If you look at Chinese official statements, white papers and semi-official writings, they suggest that China increasingly sees U.S. military presence as a destabilizing factor in the region and a primary hindrance to their ability to rise to what Xi Jinping considers to be China's rightful place as the regional dominant power.

All these factors ensure that China will continue to focus on domestic and regional issues. However, commercial, economic, and political developments are pushing China more and more to give greater consideration to global threats and opportunities. Approximately 20,000 Chinese companies have a presence in more than 180 countries, and this is creating a constant demand for government protection of those assets.

While still a fledgling phenomenon, there's a slew of examples of instances in which these companies have been at threat or at risk, their assets or even the people that work there. Statements made by Chinese political and military leaders suggest and acknowledge that they have a need to support and protect their overseas interests. They need stable access to natural resources, and they need to ensure that their exploding foreign investments are safe. In 2013, for the first time, the Defense White Paper, therefore, had a section on protecting overseas' interests.

Add to this picture the new development of the One Belt, One Road initiative, a multifaceted national policy meant to spur Chinese economic growth by connecting China to Africa, the Middle East and Europe.

While many Chinese statements will focus on the infrastructure construction and economic opportunities and regional organizations involved with this, some other, perhaps less authoritative Chinese statements will attach a geostrategic interpretation to the plan. Either way, I think we can all agree that what this initiative will do is put more Chinese people in danger and at risk in volatile locations.

The focus for the central driver for overseas interests of late is the demand signal coming from Chinese citizens themselves. An increasing number of Chinese citizens are going abroad with many migrating to politically unstable countries as a part of an exported labor force or for the prospect of financial gain. Also, tourism is on the rise. In 2014, Chinese nationals recorded 98 million trips overseas. By 2020, people estimate that approximately 150 million Chinese citizens will be traveling and living abroad.

Chinese embassies report that they have upwards of a hundred incidents a day regarding Chinese citizens in danger overseas. More and more, Chinese citizens are discontent with

Beijing's policies of how to handle this issue. Just in fall 2015, we had a major uptick in violence. In most cases, Chinese citizens find themselves at the wrong place at the wrong time, with Chinese nationals being injured in the Mali hostage hotel siege and also in the Paris situation.

A few days later, ISIS actually announced it had kidnapped and executed a Chinese national, and these incidents are causing a lot of commentators to wonder if China is going to be drawn into conflict overseas.

It did, however, cause the Foreign Ministry to promise to the people- while they didn't make any statements about specifics of being involved - they did make the promise that in light of new circumstances, they will come up with new proposals to ensure the security of Chinese citizens.

Obviously, the government is concerned about the domestic political reaction to these incidents. The government shut down all discussions on social media, curtailing reporting by news outlets and blocking searches after the ISIS hostage situation. They blocked searches for the name of the hostage as well as terms like "Islamic State," "hostage," and "Muslim." The blogs that were allowed to be left online focused on how China should prioritize stability and economic development, and how the loss of one life is not worth getting 1.3 billion lives involved in a conflict.

There is another website that posts some of the Weibo posts that were taken down, and most of these are actually openly calling for Chinese military action to retaliate against ISIS. Undoubtedly, this shows that a segment of the Chinese population support a more proactive approach. I wouldn't say that this alone would push China in that direction. It provides them with the domestic political support that they might need or they might want to move forward with a global expeditionary force.

In terms of the models that they're looking at, the exact shape and capabilities of a future force remain uncertain and contingent on a number of factors. Chinese writings can give us some insight, but the situation is actually still very sensitive because of some ideological constraints.

China continues to promote the idea that it would be a different type of great power, and that certain concepts, such as alliances or overseas bases, are hegemonic behaviors that it does not aspire to. But Chinese writings also recognize that if you want to be able to protect your overseas interests, you need to be able to have some sort of access point.

Chinese thinkers, of course, are ruling out a U.S. basing model, but other models could include what we consider a more "places, not bases" type of situation in which they have dual use commercial civilian and military logistics facilities abroad.

To conclude, I want to talk for a few seconds about the implications for U.S. policy. It's completely possible that if China develops global expeditionary capabilities, this would be to the benefit of the United States and the world. Beijing could take on greater international responsibility to promote peace in conflict areas as well as be part of multilateral coalitions. However, I think this outcome is unlikely.

The abandonment of the nonintervention principle is likely to put China in a position in which we want a more hands-off approach. Our interests in many cases could be completely opposed, and we might face the problem of managing a rival action; or they could be aligned, and then we have to deal with coordinating action with the PLA, which could lead to them learning some operational lessons that we don't want them to learn.

Also, an ineffective PLA could make matters worse on the ground all around the world,

complicating U.S. foreign policy and security efforts.

In the end, it looks like this would be difficult for the United States to manage. It could create problems with balance of power in the region, and even though I don't think China has global ambition right now, with certain capabilities, it's completely possible that they would change the way they think about prioritizing their own interests.

I look forward to your questions and to talk more about recommendations in the Q and A.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. ORIANA SKYLAR MASTRO
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Prepared Statement of
 Dr. Oriana Skylar Mastro¹
 Assistant Professor of Security Studies
 Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University

Testimony before The U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission Hearing on
 Developments in China's Military Force Projection and Expeditionary Capabilities
 January 21, 2015

Thank you Co-Chairs Commissioners Jeffrey L. Fiedler and Larry M. Wortzel, members of the Commission, and staff. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today and for all the work you do to disseminate knowledge about the critical economic and security impacts of China's rise.

I. Beijing's Security Environment

The Chinese Communist Party's primary objective is maintaining power - domestic stability and protecting sovereignty and territorial integrity are perceived to be fundamental to that objective. Official Chinese sources began to use the term 'core interest' (*hexin liyi*) in 2003-2004 to describe issue areas of great importance to China over which it will not compromise. China has referred to U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, foreign leaders' meeting with the Dalai Lama, and other countries' activities related to the South and East China Sea as harming China's core interests.² While not couched as a 'core interest', I would argue that Chinese official statements, white papers, and semi-official writings suggest China increasingly sees U.S. military presence as a destabilizing factor in the region that threatens China's ability to return to its rightful place of regional preeminence. As a regional power, China is expected to be capable of deterring attacks, threats, and other actions deemed contrary to interests; resolve disputes over territory and resources according to its preferences; and persuade or coerce others to accede to its wishes on a range of issues.

Commercial, economic and political reasons are pushing China to give greater consideration to global threats and opportunities. Approximately 20,000 Chinese companies have a presence in more than 180 countries and regions, creating a constant demand for government protection of these assets.³ Furthermore, Chinese overseas investment is growing. At \$60 billion, China's annual OFDI in 2011 was 20 times the 2005 amount.⁴ As Chinese investments increase, threats to those assets will increase in tandem. This is particularly the case in politically unstable countries where nationalization or seizure is always a possibility, or in countries that have ongoing territorial conflicts where anti-China protests have often resulted in damage to Chinese-owned property. While still a fledgling

¹ The author would like to thank John Chen and Lynn Lee for their expert research assistance.

² Michael D. Swaine, "China's Assertive Behavior – Part One: On 'Core Interests'" *China Leadership Monitor*, Winter 2011: Issue 34. February 22, 2011.

³ Keira Lu Huang, "Not Enough' Consular Officers to Serve Chinese Nationals, Foreign Ministry Says," *South China Morning Post*, May 19, 2014.

⁴ Daniel H. Rosen, "The Rise in Chinese Overseas Investment and What It Means for American Businesses," *China Business Review*, July 1, 2012.

phenomenon, there are recent examples of instances that could drive China to develop limited expeditionary capabilities to augment its response options.⁵

Statements made by Chinese political and military leadership acknowledge that China's need for stable access to natural resources in addition to exploding foreign investment have expanded its interests beyond the region, while China's capabilities lag behind. Wang Yi in his first speech as China's Foreign Minister outlined trends and principles in foreign policy, highlighting the need to align its foreign policy with China's expanding global interests.⁶ China's 2013 Defense White Paper, noted, "security risks to China's overseas interests are on the increase," and included, for the first time, a section on protecting Chinese overseas interests.⁷ In recent months, Xi himself has publicly stressed the critical importance of a strong military to a successful foreign policy and dismissed the option of passivity.⁸

The One Belt, One Road initiative, a multi-faceted national policy meant to spur Chinese economic growth by linking China to Africa, the Middle East and Europe through overland and maritime routes, will only increase China's exposure to the dangers of the world.⁹ The plan's emphasis on infrastructure construction, the creation of new regional institutions, and economic diplomacy has attracted considerable attention both inside and outside China. Though the initiative has become an important component of Xi Jinping's foreign and economic policy, confusion over its implementation and bureaucratic lag have thus far restrained concrete progress. Rhetorical emphasis on infrastructure construction, diplomatic efforts, and the economic benefits of free trade amongst connected countries along the Belt and Road cast the plan as an essential component of Chinese economic reform and development in its western regions.¹⁰ Less authoritative Chinese sources attach a geostrategic interpretation to the plan, describing it as a "response to the US rebalance to Asia, Japan's accelerated steps towards normalization, India's rapid economic growth, and a heightened wariness toward a stronger China amongst neighboring Asian countries."¹¹ Regardless of its impetus, its implementation will no doubt put even more Chinese workers in harm's way. In other words, I think the correct analogy is not that this initiative is a Chinese Trojan horse, a duplicitous strategy to provide cover for hegemonic ambition, but instead a Chinese tripwire – likely to create a greater demand signal for more contingency operations – perhaps inadvertently, but not unforeseeably.

The PLA is eager to collect its portion of the political and fiscal patronage that accompanies the One Belt, One Road initiative, and has largely agreed that the PLA should be responsible for protecting Chinese interests along the One Belt and One Road. One former US official says he was told by senior generals in the PLA that the One Belt, One Road Strategy would have a security component,¹² despite the relative absence of this assertion in authoritative government documents.¹³

⁵ Oriana Skylar Mastro. "China's Military is About to Go Global." *The National Interest*, December 18, 2014.

⁶ Kathrin Hille, "China Commits Combat Troops to Mali," *Financial Times*, June 27, 2014.

⁷ Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, "The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces: I. New Situation, New Challenges, New Missions," *Xinhua News Agency*, April 16, 2013.

⁸ Anonymous, "Xi Jinping: kan dao zhongguo luo hou ai da de bei can shi liao jiu tong che fei fu [Xi Jinping: Pain Surges from the Bottom of My Heart When I See the Bitter Historical Documents of a Backward and Weak China]," *China.com*, June 22 2014.

⁹ Andrew Browne, "Beijing Fears Looking Impotent in the Face of Terror," *Wall Street Journal*, November 23, 2015.

¹⁰ Michael D. Swaine, "Chinese Views and Commentary on the "One Belt, One Road" Initiative." *China Leadership Monitor*, Summer 2015: Issue 47. July 14, 2015. p. 1.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹² Charles Clover and Lucy Hornby. "China's Great Game: Road to A New Empire." *Financial Times*. October 12, 2015.

¹³ Swaine, "Chinese Views and Commentary on the "One Belt, One Road" Initiative," p. 17.

Observers note that projects in unstable areas may require China to abandon its long-standing policy of avoiding security entanglements abroad,¹⁴ and many PLA strategic thinkers work under the assumption that the PLA “should have a role in guaranteeing the protection of the One Belt, One Road.”¹⁵

In the rest of my testimony, I will focus heavily on the drivers, strategic thinking and implications of a global expeditionary PLA. This is not to suggest that global factors are overtaking regional or domestic ones. The new anti-terrorism law passed on December 27, 2015 is a case in point. Instead of creating a legal foundation for overseas operations, it strengthened the government’s hand vis-à-vis dissidents and expanded the government’s authority to regulate the information communications technology (ICT) sector for state security purposes.¹⁶ But as long as China continues its double-digit annual increases in defense spending, and GDP growth continues even at a more conservative pace, China should be able to simultaneously develop traditional war fighting capabilities to address regional challenges, as well as global expeditionary capabilities to confront threats farther from home. Flare-ups or resolutions of persistent regional issues may delay or accelerate this future scenario, but they are unlikely to halt the development of greater PLA expeditionary capabilities.

II. The Central Driver? Overseas Interests and Chinese Citizens

An increasing number of Chinese citizens are going abroad, with many migrating to politically unstable countries as part of an exported labor force or in prospect of financial gain. In the twelve months leading up to May 2014, Chinese nationals recorded 98 million overseas trips - a number that has increased by an average rate of over 10 million a year for the last four years. By 2020, approximately 150 million Chinese citizens will be traveling and living abroad.¹⁷

Domestic public support for the development of expeditionary capabilities is coalescing as more and more Chinese nationals find themselves in situations of danger due to a combination of misfortune and political instability in the host nation. According to the Chinese government’s foreign ministry, its embassies and consulates deal with an average of one hundred incidents a day regarding overseas Chinese nationals in danger.¹⁸ Netizens have begun to complain that the government relies too heavily on enhancing citizen awareness of dangers and diplomatic mechanisms for citizen protection, rather than using military force.¹⁹ A prominent Chinese public intellectual noted in the aftermath of the flight MH370 tragedy that “China’s capacity to engage in security operations outside its national boundary still lags far behind” developed countries and “China has all the reason and right to turn the crisis and challenge into an opportunity to build up its security forces’ capacity to protect overseas interests.”²⁰

More and more, Chinese nationals are being deliberately targeted because of perpetrators’ discontents with Beijing’s policies. In a July 2014 video IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi listed China

¹⁴ Clover and Hornby. “China’s Great Game: Road to A New Empire.”

¹⁵ Andrea Ghiselli, “The Belt, the Road, and the PLA.” *China Brief*, Vol. 15 No. 20. October 19, 2015.

¹⁶ Chris Buckley, “China Passes Antiterrorism Law That Critics Fear May Overreach.” *The New York Times*, December 27, 2015.

¹⁷ Lu Huang, “‘Not Enough’ Consular Officers to Serve Chinese Nationals, Foreign Ministry Says.”

¹⁸ “Multiple-pronged Approach Suggested to Boost Safety of Chinese Nationals Overseas,” *Xinhua*, August 12, 2013.

¹⁹ Jingyuan, Zhu. “Why Are Chinese Workers Often Under Attack?” [Xinwen guan cha: zhongguo gongren wei he pin zaoxi] *Shanghai Evening Post*, February 1, 2012.

²⁰ Chen Xiangyang, “Seize the Opportunity to Build Up China’s Capacity to Protect Overseas Interests,” *China-US Focus*, March 21, 2014.

as a country where “Muslim rights are forcibly seized.”²¹ In September 2014, Philippine suspects were arrested in Manila for planning attacks against the Chinese embassy and Chinese workers. The Spratley Island sovereignty dispute allegedly motivated the perpetrators along with resentment over what they considered to be the “monopolistic policies” of Filipino-Chinese businessmen. That same month, a gunman injured a Chinese national and another was kidnapped.²² In July 2015, Beijing was compelled to issue a travel warning after Asian tourists were harassed during anti-China protests in Istanbul sparked by anger over Beijing’s treatment of Uighurs in Xinjiang.²³

Fall 2015 saw an uptick in violence that created great concern in the Chinese government about appearing impotent in its ability and willingness to react to global threats. A Chinese national was injured when gunmen and suicide bombers attacked a number of popular locations in Paris on November 13. A few days later ISIS announced it had kidnapped and executed Chinese national Fan Jinghui. These incidents caused commentators to speculate whether China would be drawn into the Middle East conflict against ISIS.²⁴ While Xi condemned the Paris attack, Chinese officials urged international cooperation against terrorism but continued to be reluctant to offer support.²⁵ The next week, seven Chinese nationals were among the 170 hostages taken in Mali with three Chinese rail executives killed in the hotel siege. Xi promised domestic audiences that China would strengthen international collaboration “to resolutely fight violent terrorist activities that hurt innocent lives” and the Foreign Ministry promised “in light of the new circumstances” to “come up with new proposals to ensure the security of Chinese citizens and institutions overseas.”²⁶

The Chinese government was obviously concerned about the public reaction to Fan’s execution and China’s relatively minimal response. President Xi and the Foreign Ministry made statements condemning terrorism, promising justice and reiterating China’s commitment to protecting its citizens abroad, most likely in an effort to placate domestic audiences.²⁷ The foreign ministry spokesman also claimed that “relevant departments of the Chinese government activated emergency response mechanisms upon learning the kidnapping and made all-out efforts to rescue him,”²⁸ though no public details have been released to provide substance to the statement. One article in the South China Morning Post argues that China was negotiating for Fan’s release, but French and the Russian airstrikes disrupted contacts, resulting in Fan’s death.²⁹ But no official statements have been made to this effect, nor have there been additional reporting to corroborate this story.

Congruently, the government shut down discussions on social media, curtail reporting by news outlets, and blocking searches for his name, as well as the terms “Islamic State,” “hostage,” and “Muslim.”³⁰ Most of the posts currently on Weibo are official news reports with a few uncensored posts that support China's nonintervention principle and defend the government's actions regarding

²¹ Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian, “China Censors Online Outcry After ISIS Execution.” *Foreign Policy*, November 18, 2015.

²² Shannon Tiezzi. “China Warns Citizens to Stay Away From Philippines.” *The Diplomat*, September 17, 2014.

²³ Ivan Watson and Steven Jiang. “Beijing Issues Travel Warning After Turkey Protests Target Chinese.” *CNN*, July 8, 2015.

²⁴ Shannon Tiezzi. “ISIS: Chinese Hostage Executed.” *The Diplomat*, November 19, 2015.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Browne, “Beijing Fears Looking Impotent in the Face of Terror.”

²⁷ Foreign Ministry of China, “2015 Nian 11 yue 19 ri waijiaobu fayanren Hong Lei zhuchi lixing jizhahui ” [Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hong Lei Holds Regular Press Conference on November 19, 2015], Foreign Ministry of China, November 19, 2015; “Xi Jinping biaooshi qianglie qianze” ” [Xi Jinping Expresses Strong Condemnation], *Renmin Ribao*, November 20, 2015.

²⁸ Shannon Tiezzi. “Chinese Citizens Among 170 Hostages Taken in Mali Hotel.” *The Diplomat*, November 20, 2015

²⁹ “Guanmeifang zhuanjia: zhongfang cengzhi Fan Jinghui yue zai anbaer, yingjiu bei e fa xingdong da luan” [Government media expert: China Knew that Fan Jinghui Was Around Anbar. Rescue Mission Was Interrupted by Russian and French activities], *South China Morning Post*, November 20, 2015.

³⁰ Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian, “China Censors Online Outcry After ISIS Execution.” *Foreign Policy*, November 18, 2015.

the hostage incident.³¹ The bloggers whose posts remain visible on social media argue that China should prioritize stability and economic development, that the loss of one life is not worth getting 1.3 billion lives involved in a war, and that the U.S. and Russia are encouraging China to take part in their trouble in the Middle East.³² But a Hong Kong site, Free Weibo, which stores censored content, shows netizens openly calling for military action to retaliate against ISIS and highlighting concerns about Uighurs becoming extremists and being trained by ISIS to commit domestic terrorism.³³

Undoubtedly, a segment of the Chinese public supports more proactive military approach. In one *Huanqiu Shibao* 2009 poll, 89.6% of 18,873 respondents answered ‘yes’ to the question of whether China should establish overseas military bases.³⁴ There was an outcry amongst the Chinese public about Fan’s execution and Beijing’s inability to respond strongly to it. Beijing’s rhetoric was seen in stark contrast to the French declaration of war on ISIS and Russian and U.S. military action against the Islamic State.³⁵ But many censored posts opposed military retaliation, warning China not to get caught up in the troubles of the world. Besides, as many Chinese experts argue that China does not have capabilities to fight terrorists in the Middle East,³⁶ the Chinese government is likely to continue to encourage multilateral counter-terrorism organized under the UN³⁷ and favor plans that do not directly involve the PLA, such as cutting off ISIS’ financial sources.³⁸

Even with its expanding overseas interests, China will continue to be cautious and reluctant to involve itself in international conflict outside the framework of UN PKOs. Even though China is unlikely to swing to the opposite extreme, unilaterally using force abroad to enhance protection of its commercial interests and overseas citizens, this does not mean significant changes are not underway. Indeed, China has already been pushed by real time events to allow for overseas operations. China sent its first overseas deployment of combat troops in a peacekeeping role to Mali in late 2013. The Gulf of Aden anti-piracy operations, the first of its kind for China, have been a springboard for China to expand considerably its maritime security operations, from evacuating its citizens from Libya and Yemen to escorting Syrian chemical weapons to their destruction and participating in the search for Malaysia Airlines Flight 370.³⁹ In the Yemen operation conducted in late March and early April 2015, Chinese navy evacuated 570 Chinese citizens and 225 foreign nationals from the volatile country.⁴⁰ All official statements and news articles praised the operation

³¹ "#Zhongguo rendun bei IS shahai," [Chinese Hostage Killed by IS], last accessed on Jan. 14, 2016,

http://www.weibo.com/p/100808b58d65f6131100b6811b644ed92ce9c2?k=中国人质被IS杀害&from=501&from=huati_topic

³² "#Zhongguo rendun bei IS shahai," [Chinese Hostage Killed by IS] last accessed on Jan. 14, 2016,

http://www.weibo.com/p/100808b58d65f6131100b6811b644ed92ce9c2?k=中国人质被IS杀害&from=501&from=huati_topic

³³ "#Yisilanguo" [Islamic State] last accessed on Jan. 14, 2016, <https://freeweibo.com/weibo/伊斯兰国>

³⁴ For more on the domestic public’s view, see Christopher D. Yung and Ross Rustici. *"Not An Idea We Have to Shun": Chinese Overseas Basing Requirements in the 21st Century*. China Strategic Perspectives, Vol. 7. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2014. p. 53.

³⁵ Browne, “Beijing Fears Looking Impotent in the Face of Terror.”

³⁶ "Guanmeifang zhuanjia: zhongfang cengzhi Fan Jinghui yue zai anbaer, yingjiu bei e fa xingdong da luan" [Government media expert: China Knew that Fan Jinghui Was Around Anbar. Rescue Mission Was Interrupted by Russian and French activities], *South China Morning Post*, November 20, 2015.

³⁷ Foreign Ministry of China. "2015 Nian 12 yue 3 ri waijiaobu fayaren Hua Chunying zhuchi lixing jizhehui" [Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chun Ying Holds Regular Press Conference on December 3, 2015], Foreign Ministry of China, December 3, 2015.

³⁸ Foreign Ministry of China. "2015 Nian 12 yue 3 ri waijiaobu fayaren Hua Chunying zhuchi lixing jizhehui."

³⁹ **Andrew S. Erickson and Austin M. Strange**, *"Six Years at Sea... and Counting: Gulf of Aden Anti-Piracy and China's Maritime Commons Presence"* Washington, DC: Jamestown Foundation, 2015.

⁴⁰ Eddie Linczer. "Yemen Evacuation Demonstrates China's Growing Far-Seas Naval Capabilities. *American Enterprise Institute*, April 3, 2015.

for successfully protecting Chinese citizens overseas, the caliber of the military operation, China's good diplomatic relations with Yemen that facilitated the evacuation, and China's commitment to humanitarian assistance.⁴¹

It has not been lost on the Chinese leadership that these types of operations can help substantiate the Party's line that a stronger China militarily would contribute to global peace and stability. A Chinese military with the ability to project power globally, even if only for a short period of time in relatively permissive environments, could contribute more to peacekeeping missions and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) operations. A proclaimed desire to contribute more to the global good could provide a legitimate and nonthreatening rationale for the development of power projection capabilities.

III. Chinese Thinking on the Development of Expeditionary Capabilities

China has already demonstrated a projected willingness to engage to a degree in overseas operations. In a May white paper, China said its army would "adapt itself to tasks in different regions, develop the capacity of its combat forces for different purposes, and construct a combat force structure for joint operations." This official strategy document proclaimed that the PLA Navy (PLAN) would gradually add "open seas protection" to its current focus "offshore waters defense." Similarly, the Chinese Air Force will boost its capabilities for strategic early warning, air strike, air and missile defense, information countermeasures, airborne operations, strategic projection and comprehensive support.⁴²

But the exact shape and capabilities of a future global expeditionary PLA remains uncertain, and contingent on regional developments, domestic political factors, and the international security environment. Given the likely mission of protecting Chinese citizens and Chinese property and assets, the PLA will need to be able to conduct noncombatant evacuation operations, humanitarian assistance/disaster relief, counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, training and building partner capacity, special operations ashore, riverine operations, military criminal investigation functions, physical security/force protection, presence operations and military diplomacy.⁴³

Chinese writings can give us some insight into thinking about the development of expeditionary capabilities, but content is quite limited given the relatively new and sensitive nature of the issue. China has had a historical aversion to alliances and overseas basing; China argues that its rejection of such 'hegemonic' behaviors is critical evidence that it will be a different, more peaceful, great power. China's policy of not interfering in the domestic affairs of other countries also continues to be an influential principle, in part because of the ongoing need to protect itself from international criticism, separatist movements, and calls for democracy or greater protection of human rights.⁴⁴ Pressures for continuity, such as the belief that interference is ineffective, the desire to promote China's leadership in the developing world, and the deep-rooted desire to be a different type of great power than the United States or former colonial powers, affect calculations of costs, benefits, and

⁴¹ Zhao Cheng, "Yemen cheqiao jianzheng daguo nengli yu dandang" "[Evacuation of Chinese in Yemen Testifies to the Capabilities and Duties of a Powerful State], *Renin Ribao*, April 10, 2015.

⁴² The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, "China's Military Strategy 2014" May 2015.

⁴³ Yung et al, *Not An Idea We Have to Shun*, p. 53

⁴⁴ Oriana Skylar Mastro, "Noninterference in Contemporary Chinese Foreign Policy: Fact or Fiction?" in Donovan Chau and Thomas Kane (eds), *China and International Security: History, Strategy, and 21st Century Policy*, Vol. 2. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2014. pp. 95-114.

appropriate responses to its expanding overseas interests.

Therefore, it comes as no surprise that in this early stage of consideration, Chinese writings often fail to address global power projection directly and have yet to settle on effective and positive models for China to emulate. Though in some cases, writers will gently suggest the need for overseas basing to be able to project power outside its immediate region.⁴⁵ The discussions that do emerge focus on naval strategies, suggesting that at this stage the Chinese are largely focused on projecting naval power, and less on the necessities for projecting ground and air power.⁴⁶ It seems that instead of forging the path, frameworks are being created to understand actions and narrow the gap between policy and practice.

But faced with an operational imperative, thinking may shift - just as it did with peacekeeping operations in the 1990s. Xi Jinping has already made a number of unexpected and significant organizational reforms to enhance the professionalization of the force, reduce corruption, and create a command structure more conducive to joint operations.⁴⁷ Admittedly, China is unlikely to seek military alliances or to establish permanent boots-on-the-ground military bases overseas over the next decade, and perhaps ever. Chinese thinkers consider the US basing model to be ideological anathema and strategically imprudent. But restrictions on Chinese military presence overseas are loosening with much debate about establishing areas from which to stage operations. For this, a few principles are emerging - China's purpose for the base would need to be in line with host country's interests and neighboring countries preference and the base must set up to protect overseas rights and interests, and cannot be used to attack other countries.⁴⁸ Also, China's overseas access policies no doubt take into account a desire to minimize 'China Threat Theory' or concerns nations have with how China may use its newfound military power in the future.⁴⁹ To manage risk and its image, Chinese thinkers still refer to noninterference, suggesting that Beijing exploit international institutions such as the UN, SCO or ASEAN regional forum to protect its overseas interests or build a better multilateral framework for such protections.⁵⁰ If Chinese overseas missions expand to include NEOs, HADR, and protection of citizens, "the PLA over the long run might attempt to establish permanent basic access to a facility with communications, housing for sailors, medical facilities, rudimentary ship and equipment repair, and replenishment and resupply functions"⁵¹ along the lines of the U.S. concept of 'places not bases.' But given current trends, one model may adopt according to an NDU study is the dual use logistics facility model, which would involve "a mixture of access to overseas commercial facilities and a limited number of military bases."⁵² One area of concern is that China may be building up a network of commercial ports, a string of pearls, such as those in Gwadar, Pakistan or Hambantota, Sri Lanka - which they can surreptitiously convert to use for military operations at a later date. I agreed with the NDU study that current PLA operational patterns current lend little support to this thesis - regardless, China would have to make significant

⁴⁵ Ma Jianguang, Li Youren "Buzhen dizhonghai, eluosi poju xin silu" [Embattled Mediterranean, Russia's new thought to break the dilemma] *PLA Daily*, March 27, 2015. p.7.

⁴⁶ Luo Zheng, "Zhongguo haijun tuijin zhanlve zhuanxing" [The Change of China's Navy Strategies], *PLA Daily*, May 27, 2015.

⁴⁷ "Military Reform: Xi's New Model Army," *The Economist*, January 16, 2016.

⁴⁸ Shen Dingli, "Don't Shun the Idea of Setting Up Overseas Military Bases," *China.org*, January 28, 2010, available at www.china.org.cn/opinion/2010-01/28/content_19324522.htm

⁴⁹ Feng Chunmei "Junshi zhuanjia jiedu zhongguo junshi zhanlve" [Military Experts Explain Chinese Military Strategy] *People's Daily*, May 27, 2015, p.4.

⁵⁰ Wang Falong, "Zhongguo haiwai liyi wei hu lujing yanjiu" [Approaches of Safeguarding China's Overseas Interests] *guoji zhanwang*, May 2014; Su Changhe, "Lun zhongguo haiwai liyi" [On China's Overseas Interest] *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* August 2009.

⁵¹ Yung et al, *Not An Idea We Have to Shun*, p. 42.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

changes to those ports to make them fit for military operations, and therefore there will be clear indicators if China moves in that direction.

While a far cry from the US global basing model, permanent Chinese access and corresponding increase in Chinese military presence outside its immediate region would be a huge leap, not only in capabilities, but also in Chinese thinking. But China is also no stranger to throwing principles out the window when they are obsolete and undergoing tough reforms. In November 2015, after decades-long debate, the Party is going against entrenched PLA interests and attempting to move through a reform to its military regional (MR) system. While successful implementation is far from certain, these changes would enhance PLA mobility and facilitate joint operations by weakening the army's dominance of the PLA - both necessary for effective power projection. The shift from seven military regions to four strategic zones is partly inspired by China's contemporary need for a strong blue-water navy to protect China's maritime lifelines and its expanding overseas interests, and the previous command structure centered on land forces could not meet those needs.⁵³ It is only a matter of time before the same logic is applied to Chinese foreign policy principles, creating more flexibility for Beijing to establish strategic partnerships and access points.

IV: Implications for U.S. Interests

If trends in Chinese overseas access arrangements are any indication, this may already be underway. In November, Beijing reached an agreement with Djibouti to establish a naval logistics hub there, which would be China's first overseas outpost.⁵⁴ The same month, a Chinese company linked to the PLA acquired a 99-yr lease of part of Darwin port in Australia.⁵⁵ Malaysia also agreed to allow Chinese navy to use a port strategically located close to the Spratly Islands – allegedly to strengthen defense ties between the two sides and signal neutrality over the ongoing power competition between China and the United States.⁵⁶

The bottom line is the development of Chinese expeditionary capabilities could potentially threaten regional stability and peace. At the very least, a more active and globally present PLA will complicate U.S. foreign policy and elevate risk for U.S. operations overseas. It is possible that a capable global PLA would shape Chinese interests in a positive direction, with Beijing taking on greater international responsibility to promote peace in conflict-prone areas. But given the current focus on domestic stability and regional security issues and maritime disputes, and China's historical tendency to define international interests in narrow domestic terms, it's unlikely.

China's Increasingly Interventionist Policies

Once the PLA has the capabilities to intervene abroad, and ideological barriers to global operations have been loosened, the Chinese leadership may become more interventionist. To date, China has been more willing to deviate from its policy of noninterference in other countries' internal affairs if China were doing so in a multilateral and permissive environment. A more assertive China may be a

⁵³ Minnie Chan, "China Hits the Launch Button for Massive PLA Shake-Up to Create a Modern, Nimble Force." *South China Morning Post*, November 25, 2015.

⁵⁴ Jane Perlez and Chris Buckley. "China Retools Its Military with a First Overseas Outpost in Djibouti." *The New York Times*, November 26, 2015.

⁵⁵ Michael Forsythe. "Australia Defends Port Lease to Chinese Company with Military Ties." *The New York Times*, November 14, 2015.

⁵⁶ Teoh, Shannon. "Malaysia to Allow PLA Navy Use of Strategic Port." *The Straits Times*, November 22, 2015.

positive development for the United States - a global expeditionary PLA could also create a more assertive China that is positioned to provide international public goods, further enmeshing Beijing into the current world order, and reducing the incentives for it to use force to resolve disputes.

One possible future scenario is that China relaxes its noninterference principle as its global interests expand and overlap with those of the United States, leading to coordination between the two countries on global issues. But there are three reasons to question the feasibility of this ideal outcome. First, as the North Korean nuclear issue has demonstrated, even when Chinese and American interests overlap, divergence in their preferred tactics can inhibit progress on the issue at hand. Second, China defines its core interests narrowly in domestic terms while the U.S. is more likely to view issues from the perspective of maintaining the current global order. The United States has historically attempted to influence the outside world to ensure its safety, but Chinese leaders believe that strengthening the country internally enhances its national security. This difference in strategic thinking can lead to different preference rankings for the types of international issues that need to be addressed, and which aspect of an issue is the most disconcerting. For example, China prioritizes stability in the DPRK over denuclearization, while the United States considers denuclearization to be of greater importance.

Lastly, abandonment of the nonintervention principle to facilitate its new global expeditionary mission would mean the potential for Chinese interference in issues in which the United States may prefer China's traditional hands-off approach.⁵⁷ China's interests are unlikely to align perfectly with those of the United States – and adding China's military presence to the myriad of complex factors U.S. policy must take into account in the midst of a conflict may make it more difficult for the United States to accomplish its foreign policy goals. Since the end of the Cold War, the US has been accustomed to acting as the leader of coalitions in interventions; Syria shows the complications that arise when the US has to manage another power's simultaneous and uncoordinated intervention, which is designed to achieve goals other than what the US seeks. Interests could even be diametrically opposed - the United States might face the problem of managing rival and hostile actions, even if only thru proxy actors, like in the case of an apt analogy is Iranian activity throughout the Middle East.

An effective PLA could make matters worse on the ground, which would also be detrimental to the United States. More frequent PLA expeditionary operations means the U.S. military will be operating even more frequently in close proximity with the PLA. This could increase competitive dynamics between the two countries, increase concerns about operational security, or even increase the possibility of accidents. Just as increased Chinese assertiveness has affected U.S. alliances regionally, a globally Chinese military presence could affect U.S. alliance and partner management in other areas of the world, complicating already difficult relationships with countries such as Saudi Arabia or Pakistan. In cases where China operates in combination with other militaries, including that of the United States, there remain concerns that China is gaining critical operational experience and foreign know-how that it could apply to contentious regional issues to gain an upper hand.

Regional Balance of Military Power

Even if China develops a more robust global expeditionary capability, regional contingencies will still

⁵⁷ For more on the evolution and drivers of China's noninterference principle, see Mastro, "Noninterference in Contemporary Chinese Foreign Policy: Fact or Fiction?"

be the focus of Chinese war planning. However, the breadth of capabilities the PLA will acquire to conduct expeditionary operations could endow it with other options it presently lacks regionally, and therefore may tempt China to expand the scope of those operations over time. The capabilities required for HADR, PKOs, NEOs, and personnel recovery missions are dual-use - that is, they will also strengthen China's traditional war fighting capabilities. Augmented sea and airlift, advanced SOF capabilities, a greater number of surface vessels and aircraft, and most significant, operational experience for its forces, could encourage China to expand the scope of its interests and willingness to use force to protect those interests. China could become more forceful, confident in its ability to achieve its objectives by force alone, with the backing of its people.

Even if this future scenario spurs a growth in traditional power projection capabilities or increased use of force abroad, the implications for the United States and its regional allies and partners are uncertain. China's increased military role in global affairs and enhanced expeditionary capabilities could create a balancing backlash among its Asian neighbors and contribute to instability in the region, as incentives for preventive war increase with the rapid shifts in regional balance of power. China could become confident in its ability to achieve its objectives by brute force alone, especially with domestic support. Or more confident in its military capabilities, Chinese policy may mature, becoming less sensitive and reactive to perceived slights to its core interests.

Creation of Global Ambition

While the Chinese leadership may only plan on building expeditionary forces to address non-traditional threats, the increased capabilities may shape Chinese interests and preferred methods of achieving traditional security objectives. Chinese strategists and netizens have already launched a debate about whether China should aspire to become a global military power. Currently, those debates are couched in discussions about how China should approach its territorial disputes, especially in the East and South China Seas.⁵⁸ But influential thinkers such as Col. Liu Mingfu, a former professor at the PLA National Defense University and author of *China Dream*, believe that China should aim to surpass the U.S. as the world's top military power.⁵⁹ Additionally, in a March 2010 newspaper poll, 80% of respondents responded positively to the question "Do you think China should strive to be the world's strongest country militarily?" However, less than half of respondents approved of a policy to publicly announce such an objective.⁶⁰ While there is little evidence of China's desire to displace the United States as the world's superpower, Beijing's global ambitions could snowball as if China indeed became more involved militarily all around the world.

V. Recommendations to Congress

The greatest question for Congress is how to encourage China to promote greater transparency as the PLA develops expeditionary capabilities. I would argue that transparency in the military realm is best understood as consisting of two separate dimensions: intent transparency, regarding strategic plans and preferences; and capability transparency, regarding the factors that comprise military

⁵⁸ For example, one TV show discusses whether the aircraft carrier would be useful in dealing with the Japanese in the island dispute: <http://v.ifeng.com/mil/mainland/201210/fdf13f3a-8f39-4168-bdbc-2ef0067db861.shtml>. "Will Carrier Help Resolve Chinese Maritime Disputes? [Hangmu fuyi shifou you zhu yu jiejie zhongguo haishi zhengduan?]," *v.ifeng.com* video, October 20, 2012.

⁵⁹ For an interview with Col Liu on the topic, see Cheng Gang, "PLA Colonel Advocates for China to Become World's Top Military Power [Jiefangjun dajiang zhuzhang zhongguo zhengzuo shijie diyi junshi qianguo] *Global Times*, March 2nd, 2010.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

power. In these terms, most US analyses of China's military transparency are actually critical about its lack of *capability* transparency, rather than its *intent* transparency; while Beijing claims to be transparent because it offers a degree of *intent* transparency.

A broad sweep of Chinese articles show that Chinese thinkers recognize there are tradeoffs associated with transparency and secrecy - transparency can improve trust and reduce accidents. But this openness can also bring danger, national disaster and can even threaten a country's existence.⁶¹ As the PLA Secrecy Committee (*jiefangjun baomi weiyuanhui*) affirms, external criticism will not drive China's position on military transparency; the military situation will determine what to reveal, when and to whom.⁶² The minimal prerequisites for capability transparency are that the United States will not endanger China's security or attempt to reduce its combat effectiveness.⁶³

At the same time, leading Chinese academics, military strategists, and state-sponsored media providers demonstrate a deep recognition and understanding that this choice leads to heightened anxiety about Chinese intentions, hurts its image, and provokes misunderstandings and miscalculations.⁶⁴ Consequently, many hope China can partly achieve the benefits of military transparency through corresponding increases in intent transparency.⁶⁵ To that end, China has incrementally expanded its military exchanges and participation in joint exercises, established crisis hotlines, routinized public announcements of strategic intentions, boosted involvement in multilateral frameworks, expanded military exchanges and has begun issuing notifications of its military activities and exercises.⁶⁶

This suggests the current US policy of pressuring China to be more transparent about its military affairs has severe limitations. China has made some improvements in its military transparency due to US pressure, but mostly in the low risk realm of intent transparency by releasing white papers or expanding military exchanges. While such progress should be lauded and further promoted, China will only embrace capability transparency when its leadership is confident its ability to fight is so great that the United States would be sufficiently deterred from action in any future contingency. This does not mean the United States should stop shaming Beijing on this score – maintaining the talking points about the need for greater transparency about its military budget, personnel management and training, military hardware RD&A and order of battle may have public diplomacy benefits. Also, such complaints may be a way to express concern about Chinese military

⁶¹ Select examples include: Wu Xiaoming and Xu Weidi, "Junshi touming yu anquan huxin" [Military Transparency and Mutual Trust in the Security Realm], *Xiandai guoji guanxi* [Contemporary International Relations], No. 12 (2005), pp. 49-56; Luo Yuan, "Zhongguo junshi 'yangguanghua'" [The Sunnyization of Chinese Military Affairs], *Guancha* [Outlook], No. 37 (2007), pp. 42-43.

⁶² Xu Chen, "Baofang jiehe tuchu zhongdian: 2013 nian guofang baipishu toushe jundui baomi gongzuo xin dongxiang" [2013 Defense White Paper Reflects New Trends of Military Secret Service], *Baomi gongzuo*, No. 4 (2013).

⁶³ Luo, "Zhongguo junshi 'yangguanghua,'" Xu Chen, "Baofang jiehe tuchu zhongdian."

⁶⁴ Chen Zhou, *Junshi Touming Lun*, pp. 101, 137, 310; Su Yincheng, "Zhongguo jundui: geng kaifang, geng touming, geng zixin" [Chinese Military: More Open, More Transparent, More Confident], *Qishi lilun wang*, October 24, 2012; Yan Yongchun, "Huxin rang shijie geng anquan - 'junshi touming lun' pingjie" [Mutual-trust Makes the World More Secure - A Review on 'The Theory of Military Transparency'], *Junying wenhua tiandi*, No. 4 (2013), pp. 43-44.

⁶⁵ Guo Rui, "Xifang guojia zhuliu meiti 'Zhongguo guofang touming du' baodao yanjiu" [A Study on Western Mainstream Media's Reports on 'China's National Defense Transparency'], *Dangdai Yatai* (Journal of Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies), No. 2 (2012), p. 47; Wang and Wang, "Lengzhan hou Zhongmei junshi," p. 92; For more on the difference between intent transparency and military (capabilities) transparency, see Wu and Xu, "Junshi touming yu anquan huxin."

⁶⁶ Xu Hui and Han Xiaofeng, "Meiguo junshi touming zhengce jiqi dui Zhongguo de yingxiang" [The Impact of American Military Transparency Policy on China], *Waijiao Pinglun* (Foreign Affairs Review), No. 2, (2014), pp. 91-92; Chen Ce, "Renmin Ribao: Zhongguo junshi toumingdu dabu maijin, xiang shijie zhan heping chengyi" [People's Daily: Great Leaps in Chinese Military Transparency, A Peaceful Gesture to the World], *Xinhua*, July 5, 2011; Chen Zhou, "Junkeyuan zhuanjia: Zhongguo junshi touming zhiduhua jianshe chengxiao xianzhu" [Expert at the Academy of Military Science: Great Success has Been Achieved in Institutionalization of Military Transparency], *Zhongxin wang* [China News], January 17, 2012; Sun Xianghua, "Zhongguo xin waijiao: yige lingdaoli de jieshi moxing" [China's New Diplomacy: an Explanatory Model of Leadership], *Waijiao Pinglun* (Foreign Affairs Review), No. 2 (2010), p. 110.

modernization without portraying US strategy as one of containment. But the current focus in US-China military exchanges on increasing Chinese military transparency and building strategic trust is misplaced, causing key military figures and academics to be overly confident in the potential impact of dialogue.⁶⁷ Moreover, concessions should not be made with hopes of inspiring reciprocity, a practice often used in agenda setting for high-level military exchanges with the Chinese. Instead, the goal of military-to-military relations should be to enhance predictability, to understand each other's standard operating procedures and expand routine communication to manage the risk of accidents associated with frequent operational encounters.

However, if the United States maintains its talking points on military transparency in spite of the limitations, which may be politically necessary, interlocutors should at least distinguish between capability transparency and intent transparency to put more direct pressure on China to reveal specific elements of military power. Chinese thinkers demonstrate a belief that China can build strategic trust, control and manage risk, avoid miscalculation and reduce suspicions sufficiently by continuing bilateral activities such as exchange visits, high-level meetings, strategic consultations as well as ship visits and joint exercises without the risks associated with embracing greater transparency about capabilities.⁶⁸ This increase in intent transparency is a positive step, but does little to inform the United States about the nature, purpose and trajectory of Chinese military capabilities – the fundamental aim of the transparency push. If the United States continues to emphasize transparency in its messaging without the distinction, it may grant political rewards to China disproportional to the actual concessions made, which could further weaken the impact of US political pressure.

⁶⁷ Mike Mullen, "A Step Toward Trust with China," *The New York Times*, July 26, 2011. For the objectives of military relations with China, see Shirley Kan, "U.S.-China Military Contacts: Issues for Congress," *Congressional Research Service*, Washington D.C., November 20, 2013.

⁶⁸ This position is found in dozens of writings. Some examples include Qiu Yuanping, "Zhongguo de heping fazhan yu gonggong waijiao" [China's Peaceful Development and Public Diplomacy], *Guoji Wenti Yanjiu* (Journal of International Studies, No. 6 (2010), pp. 1-3; Yang Kai, "Zhongmei junshi jiaoliu," pp. 60-62; Zhang Ping, "'Zhongguo waijiao de xinqidian' gaoduan luntan zongshu" [A Summary of High-end Forum 'A New Beginning of Chinese Diplomacy'], *Waijiao Pinglun* (Foreign Affairs Review), No. 3 (2014), p. 156.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF MR. TIMOTHY HEATH
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CORPORATION**

MR. HEATH: Thank you, and good morning, Chairmen Fiedler and Wortzel, members of the Commission and staff. Thank you for granting me the honor and privilege to speak here today to you.

In my opening remarks, I will discuss some of the important changes in China's security policy and military strategy that underpin the PLA's increasing focus on expeditionary activity.

Since around 2010, China's security policy has evolved from a focus on homeland defense to one that I believe is best characterized as "peaceful expansion." Designed to facilitate the country's sustained rise as the second largest economy in the world, this security policy seeks to shape a favorable, stable, peaceful international environment in which China plays a leading role in Asia and in which countries lack the ability or motivation to militarily challenge China over its core national interests.

This security policy also seeks to extend security for citizens and economic interests abroad.

China has revised its military strategy to support the change in security policy. One of the most distinctive features has been a greater emphasis on expeditionary activity. This change can be observed in official documents like the Defense White Paper. As with the preceding versions, the 2015 Military Strategy white paper affirmed that the PLA's role in supporting national strategy remains defined by the "historic missions of the armed forces" announced by then President Hu Jintao in late 2004.

However, the 2015 Military Strategy white paper noted that changes in requirements related to the shifting security policy had raised new demands for the military's strategy tasks of which it named eight. Half of these require some sort of expeditionary capability.

These include the task of "safeguarding China's security and developmental interests in new domains," which includes the task of protecting interests in the open oceans as well as in cyber and outer space; the task of "safeguarding the security of China's overseas interests," which directs the PLA to protect assets that may be in other countries; the task of "participating in regional and international security cooperation and maintaining regional and world peace," which directs the military to take part in multilateral efforts to promote international stability; and the task of "performing such responsibilities as emergency rescue and disaster relief, rights and interests protection, escort duties, and support for national and economic development." This last task requires the military to prepare for humanitarian and security-related duties both foreign and domestic.

The increasing focus on expeditionary activity means that the Chinese military will continue to seek to increase both cooperation and competition with the United States at the same time. Chinese interests and cooperation stems from the sense that many transnational threats, such as terrorism, piracy, natural disasters, international stability and others, are best managed multilaterally.

It also reflects Beijing's recognition of the limits of its expeditionary capabilities. By contrast, China's determination to compete with the United States stems principally from its desire to establish itself as the leading power in Asia. The paradoxical nature of China's security policy and military strategy carries important implications for the United States.

In the near term, through 2020, much of the PLA's expeditionary activity provides

opportunities for cooperation against shared threats and concerns. China seeks stability in Africa, the Middle East and other parts of the world to protect its considerable economic interests. As a result, Beijing has shown a growing willingness to involve itself in mediating disputes in Afghanistan, Sudan, and other countries. China also remains the largest contributor of troops to United Nations peacekeeping operations. In many of these cases, the United States will have growing opportunities to work with China on shared threats and concerns.

Indeed, the two countries have already been cooperating off the Horn of Africa to combat piracy since 2009. At the same time, the reality of an intensifying competition with the United States, principally in Asia, means that the United States will need to continue to invest in capabilities and ensure preparations to defend its interests in Asia and assist its allies in resisting Chinese coercion.

But the scale and scope of global threats, the need for stability in relations between the world's two largest economies, and constraints in resources both in China, the United States and its allies means that U.S. decision-makers will need to increasingly balance longstanding competition with cooperation both in Asia and globally to defend the full range of U.S. national interests and uphold U.S. global leadership.

The long-term implications, through 2030, will depend on how much progress China makes in developing expeditionary capabilities and on the dynamics of U.S.-China relations. Over the next few decades, China will seek to deploy aircraft carrier and other naval task forces, strategic airlift, special operations units, counterterrorism teams, and strategic bombers or fighter aircraft.

It will likely seek a handful of naval and possibly airfield military facilities in other countries, most likely in Africa and the Middle East, to support the deployment of these forces.

A PLA that has increased its capability to project power and operate confidently around the world will depend much less on the United States to address transnational threats. How much this development poses a threat will depend on the nature of the relationship between the two countries. A relationship characterized more by cooperation could allow China to contribute needed resources against costly and destabilizing threats. Conversely, an intensifying rivalry between our two countries would raise the risk of militarized crisis in many parts of the world, which, in turn, would elevate the risk of systemic conflict.

I would like to close with some recommendations. First, because expeditionary Chinese capabilities currently pose less of a threat to U.S. interests outside Asia, the United States should generally support increased Chinese contributions against shared threats such as humanitarian disaster, terrorism, piracy and natural, other natural disasters.

Similarly, so long as they do not damage the interests of the United States and its allies, an increase in basing arrangements for Chinese forces to enable such contributions, such as the recently announced establishment of a supply point in Djibouti, should not be opposed.

While seeking to promote cooperation, however, the United States should continue investing in capabilities to defend its interests worldwide. These investments should include both political efforts to shore up influence in important regions such as Southeast Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East and eastern Africa, as well as military efforts to project power to defend any threatened interests.

The United States should also step up engagement with any country that offers to host Chinese military forces.

Pending any questions, that concludes my presentation.

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF MR. TIMOTHY HEATH
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Developments in China's Military Force Projection and Expeditionary Capabilities

Timothy R. Heath

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Timothy R. Heath¹
The RAND Corporation

Developments in China's Military Force Projection and Expeditionary Capabilities²

Before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission

January 21, 2016

Today, I will talk about the range of missions for which China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) is preparing, with a focus on those of an expeditionary nature. I would like to proceed by first reviewing recent changes to China's security policy and military strategy, which I believe are among the most important in decades. I will explain how this has raised demands for a greater expeditionary focus in the military's modernization efforts and planning. I will survey the most likely missions and tasks for which the PLA can be expected to prepare. I will close by outlining some implications for the United States.

Evolving Security Policy: The Shift Toward Peaceful Expansion

China's national defense policy consists of an official vision of security and the associated directives issued by the central leadership to address threats to the nation's core interests and to the pursuit of national revitalization. Because China has yet to openly publish an official document outlining its national security strategy, the most authoritative sources on China's security policy remain speeches by President Xi Jinping on military- and security-related matters and the biannually published defense white papers. Chinese military leaders and scholars provide insightful expositions of the official vision of security and of key directives in official newspapers and journals such as *People's Daily (renmin ribao)*, *China Military Science (zhongguo junshi kexue)*, and the *People's Liberation Army Daily (jiefangjun bao)* and in books published by PLA academies.

These sources explain that while China nominally adheres to a "defensive" policy, the focus has shifted since around 2010 from one of homeland defense to one that I believe is best characterized as "peaceful expansion." Like its predecessors, China's most recent defense white paper, published in 2015 to highlight its evolving military strategy, upheld the "defensive nature" of the country's national defense policy and stated China will "never seek hegemony or expansion." However, it also

¹ The opinions and conclusions expressed in this testimony are the author's alone and should not be interpreted as representing those of RAND or any of the sponsors of its research. This product is part of the RAND Corporation testimony series. RAND testimonies record testimony presented by RAND associates to federal, state, or local legislative committees; government-appointed commissions and panels; and private review and oversight bodies. The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization providing objective analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world. RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors.

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acknowledged that China's evolving situation has set "new requirements" for the military to help build a "favorable strategic posture" and "guarantee the country's peaceful development." It highlighted in particular the need to better protect the country's "growing strategic interests." To shape the international order, the paper outlined requirements to "actively expand military and security cooperation" and "promote the establishment of a regional framework for security and cooperation."³ These directives evoke an ambition to build a stable, peaceful Asian security environment in which China plays a leading role and in which countries lack the ability or motivation to militarily challenge China over its "core" interests.

Several features of the security policy shift are worth noting. First, the vision of security has expanded to include virtually all policy domains and to include the open ocean, space, and cyberspace. Second, the intermingling of military and non-military actors and policy concerns has elevated the need for centralized civilian decisionmaking. Third, the inherent tension with the United States raised by the policy shift has increased the importance for crisis management and deterrence.

Expansion in security meaning and domains. The recent adoption of an "overall" or "holistic" security concept exemplifies the expanding scope of the country's security policy. According to the military strategy paper, the new concept combines both domestic and international security; security for the homeland with security for overseas citizens, enterprises, and other interests; and the interests related to the nation's survival with those needed for its development. Security now encompasses 11 fields: political, territorial, military, economic, cultural, social, scientific and technological, informational, ecological, financial, and nuclear domains.⁴ Moreover, security is required for the interests that have expanded into the open ocean, outer space, and cyberspace.

Increased need for centralized control. The changing view of security has somewhat blurred the lines between civilian and military tasks and actors. To support the broader security requirements, the military must carry out both war and non-war missions. As the military steps up its involvement in non-war activities, non-military assets have become more involved in actions formerly reserved for the military. This can be seen in the maritime domain, where the Chinese Coast Guard, created from disparate maritime agencies in 2014 in part to defend Chinese maritime territory, has formed into a paramilitary service.⁵ The increasing complexity of security, and of military-civilian coordination, has raised the demand for centralized security-related decisionmaking. The creation of the National Security Commission and issuance of a National Security Strategy in 2013 underscores the importance with which Chinese leaders regard the calibration of policy to balance competing security objectives and

³ "Full Text: China's Military Strategy," *Xinhua*, May 26, 2015.

⁴ "Xi Jinping Speaks at Politburo Study Session on Security," *Xinhua*, April 15, 2014.

⁵ Ryan Martinson, "The Militarization of China's Coast Guard," *The Diplomat*, November 21, 2014.

control risk.⁶

Increased need for crisis management and deterrence. The shift toward peaceful expansion inherently raises tensions with the United States and its allies because the expansion is premised, to some extent, on the contraction of influence by the United States and its allies. Military officials judge that this has elevated the likelihood of tensions with the United States. Sun Jianguo, PLA Deputy Chief of the General Staff, explained that “without struggle, it will be impossible for the United States to respect our core interests.”⁷ This, in turn, elevates the importance of finding ways to manage bilateral relations to reduce the risk of conflict, manage crisis, and deter adversaries. In 2013, President Xi Jinping urged the United States to adopt a “new type of great power relationship” premised largely on U.S. strategic concessions as a way to reduce the risk of conflict.⁸ Chinese willingness to establish rules for use of a military hotline, and to conclude confidence-building measures governing maritime and air-to-air military encounters similarly reflect an underlying anxiety about the potential for militarized crises.⁹ The elevation of the strategic missile force in status similarly signals, in part, the growing importance placed on strategic deterrence to influence the response of the United States and its allies to China’s peaceful expansion.¹⁰

It may be tempting to attribute the dramatic changes in China’s policies to Xi Jinping’s personal preferences, since they have largely coincided with his ascent. But while Xi has undoubtedly played an important role in directing the policies, the principal drivers of the policy changes—in many cases, the most significant since the start of reform and opening up—lies with the changing requirements for national development within favorable domestic and international conditions of the first two decades of the 21st century labeled as the “period of strategic opportunity” by Chinese authorities. Focused on ensuring the nation’s revival as a great power and the continued elevation in the standard of living for the people, Beijing regards the second decade of the period of strategic opportunity (which also coincides roughly with Xi’s ascent) as one that will require a more active, assertive set of policies.¹¹

Despite the importance of the shift toward a defense policy of peaceful expansion, however, its limited, largely opportunistic nature deserves emphasis. China’s pursuit of peaceful expansion does not seek to invade and subjugate people in the manner of classic imperialists. Nor has China signaled a desire

⁶ Zhao Kejin, “China’s National Security Commission,” Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy, July 14, 2015. As of January 13, 2016:

<http://carnegietsinghua.org/2015/07/09/china-s-national-security-commission/id7i>

⁷ Sun Jianguo, *Seeking Truth* [Qiushi], March 1, 2015. As of January 13, 2016: http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/qs/2015-02/28/c_1114428331.htm

⁸ Jane Perlez, “China’s ‘New Type’ of Ties Fails to Persuade Obama,” *New York Times*, November 9, 2014.

⁹ Phil Stewart, “U.S., China Agree on Rules for Air-to-Air Military Encounters,” *Reuters*, September 25, 2015.

¹⁰ Ministry of National Defense of the People’s Republic of China, “China Establishes Rocket Force and Strategic Support Force,” web page, January 1, 2016. As of January 13, 2016: <http://eng.mod.gov.cn/ArmedForces/second.htm>

¹¹ Timothy Heath, “Xi’s Bold Foreign Policy Agenda: Beijing’s Pursuit of Global Influence and the Growing Risk of Sino-U.S. Rivalry,” *China Brief*, Vol. 15, No. 6, March 19, 2015.

to contest U.S. global leadership—such an ambition is infeasible in any case. Beijing’s aim is to reshape elements of the regional and international order and to expand control over core national interests in the least-destabilizing manner possible, while ensuring preparation for contingencies. These new requirements have driven important changes to military strategy and to the military’s missions and tasks, including the growing focus on expeditionary activities.

Military Strategy and the Expeditionary PLA

China’s military strategy provides general guidance for the construction and employment of military force. The military strategy consists of a number of directives that blend judgments about the nature of warfare and threat assessments with key strategic concepts and precepts drawn from the party’s military thought. The military strategy also incorporates direction regarding national strategic objectives and defense policy from higher-level sources, such as Party Congress reports and military directives issued by the General Secretary, which is why it is often described as the “concentrated embodiment of the military policy of the party and the state.”¹² To gain insight into the PLA’s increasing expeditionary focus, it is thus helpful to review aspects of the military strategy, in particular the designation of threats, missions, and tasks; guidance on the construction of military forces; and guidance regarding the employment of military force.

Threats. China’s military leadership has traditionally designated “main and secondary strategic directions” to orient the military’s preparations for conflict. In the past, *strategic directions* referred principally to major threats to the nation’s survival or unity. In the 1970s, for example, military authorities regarded the potential for large-scale Soviet invasion from the north as the “main strategic direction,” and directed the building of large ground armies and refinement of “people’s war” tactics accordingly.¹³ However, the shift in defense policy toward peaceful expansion has dramatically changed the meaning of “threat.” Military leaders now view threats in terms of dangers posed to the country’s sustained development and to the realization of national revitalization. The definition of threat in these terms explains the military strategy white paper’s otherwise puzzling claim (in light of China’s strength and security) that “national security issues facing China encompass far more subjects, extend over a greater range, and cover a longer time span *than any time in the country’s history* [emphasis added].” The main strategic direction should thus be regarded more as the “first among equals” among a broad menu of threats for which the PLA must prepare, rather than the near-exclusive driver of military strategy. Although official statements on the issue remain scarce, one may deduce from

¹² Luo Zhen, “An Interpretation of the New National Defense White Paper: Interview with Chen Zhou,” *PLA Daily*, May 27, 2015, p. 5.

¹³ David M. Finkelstein, “China’s National Military Strategy: An Overview of the ‘Military Strategic Guidelines,’” in Andrew Scobell and Roy Kamphausen, eds., *Right Sizing the People’s Liberation Army: Exploring the Contours of China’s Military*, Carlisle, Penn.: U.S. Army War College, 2007, pp. 69–140.

military writings that the main strategic direction continues to emanate from the maritime regions. An article by one PLA expert in 2009 identified the maritime southeast area as “still the main direction.”¹⁴ The threat from this direction stems from potential Taiwan separatism, but also from possible clashes and crises related to maritime disputes, including Vietnam and the Philippines. The expert regarded Japan as a secondary direction, due to the festering dispute over the Senkaku Islands and other issues. Potential intervention by the United States on behalf of its allies also underscored the importance of the maritime direction.

The military strategy white paper lends support to this interpretation. In its review of threats, the paper principally focused on dangers emanating from China’s maritime direction, namely the U.S. rebalance to Asia, Taiwan, Japan, and disputes with neighbors over “China’s maritime rights and interests.” The paper also stated that preparations for military struggles now “highlight maritime military struggle.” Underscoring this point, it prioritized the development of a “modern maritime military force structure” capable of “safeguarding” China’s “national sovereignty and maritime rights and interests.”¹⁵ But the maritime region is not the only source of threats. Instability in the western regions poses the danger of separatism and terrorism. The diverse array of threats to economic interests abroad, including international instability, piracy, natural disasters, and international terrorism, also pose major threats to which the military must be ready to respond. Threats also appear in the cyber and space domains. China thus faces “various threats and challenges in *all* its strategic directions and security domains,” as the military strategy white paper noted. *Missions and tasks*. The military’s principal missions aim to address this broad array of threats. The military strategy white paper affirmed that the PLA’s strategic role remains defined by the “historic missions of the armed forces” announced by Hu Jintao, which called on the military to “safeguard the party’s consolidation of its governing status; safeguard the period of strategic opportunity; safeguard national interests; promote world peace and common development.” Promulgation of the historic missions in 2004 coincided with the PLA’s increasing expeditionary focus. In particular, the historic missions’ directives to “safeguard national interests,” including overseas interests, and “promote world peace and common development” represented a dramatic change in mission for the military. The change added impetus to early expeditionary efforts, such as the deployment of anti-piracy naval forces to the Horn of Africa in 2009.

Over time, the trend toward a greater expeditionary focus has clarified. The military strategy white paper outlined a number of strategic tasks that provide more detail about the types of responsibilities that the military has assumed. It named eight tasks, half of which require some sort of expeditionary capability. These include (1) “safeguarding China’s security and interests in new domains,” which

¹⁴ Fan Zhenjiang, “A Study of Strategic Military Guidance in the New Period of the New Century,” *China Military Science*, March 2009, pp. 36–44.

¹⁵ “Full Text: China’s Military Strategy,” *Xinhua*, May 26, 2015

includes the task of protecting interests in the open oceans as well as in cyber and outer space; (2) “safeguarding the security of China’s overseas interests,” which directs the military to protect assets that may be in other countries; (3) “participating in regional and international security cooperation and maintain regional and world peace,” which directs participation in multi-lateral efforts to promote international stability; and (4) “performing such tasks as emergency rescue and disaster relief, rights and interests protection, guard duties, and support for national and economic development,” which requires the military to prepare for humanitarian missions both domestic and foreign.¹⁶

Guidance on the construction of military forces. While upholding the 2004 judgment about the most likely type of conflict, the military also seeks to develop capabilities to carry out the missions and tasks given to it over the intervening years. Modernization efforts emphasize qualities of power projection, rapid movement of troops, employment of networks of weapons and sensors, and joint operations. The white paper briefly described changes expected of the services accordingly. It stated that the army will “reorient from theater defense to trans-theater mobility” and “elevate its capabilities for precise, multi-dimensional, trans-theater, multi-function, and sustainable ops.” The PLA Navy will “shift its focus from offshore waters defense to the combination of offshore waters defense and ‘distant sea protection’ and build a combined, multi-function, and efficient maritime combat structure.” The PLA Air Force will shift from “territorial air defense to both defense and offensive and build an air-space defense force structure that can meet the requirements for informationalized operations.” The PLA’s strategic missile force will strengthen its capabilities for strategic deterrence and nuclear counterattack as well as medium and long-range conventional precision strikes.¹⁷ More recently, authorities announced the elevation of the strategic missile force, designated the “Rocket Force,” to a status coequal to that of the other services. Authorities also announced the formation of a “Strategic Support Force” responsible for managing defense assets in space and cyberspace, reflecting China’s growing emphasis on securing its interests in those domains and the PLA’s judgment that the struggle for information dominance will be central in future wars.¹⁸

Guidance on the employment of military force. Guidance on how to use military power to achieve the political and strategic goals outlined by central leaders lies at the heart of China’s military strategy. The PLA articulates this guidance through an authoritative set of precepts, maxims, and guiding principles informed by key strategic concepts, the most important of which is that of “active defense.” Indeed, the military strategy white paper called the “strategic concept of active defense” the “essence of the party’s

¹⁶ Four other tasks mentioned in the paper focus on traditional homeland defense: (1) “deal with a wide range of emergencies and military threats and effectively safeguard the sovereignty and security of China’s territorial land, air, and sea”; (2) “resolutely safeguard the unification of the motherland”; (3) “maintain strategic deterrence and carry out nuclear counterattack”; and (4) “strengthen efforts in operations against infiltration, separatism, and terrorism to maintain political security and social stability.”

¹⁷ “Full Text: China’s Military Strategy,” *Xinhua*, May 26, 2015.

¹⁸ Ministry of National Defense of the People’s Republic of China, “China Establishes Rocket Force and Strategic Support Force,” web page, January 1, 2016.

military thought.” The paper defined *active defense* as the “unity between strategic defense and operational and tactical offense,” although it also includes numerous related and subordinate precepts and principles. The Central Military Commission (CMC) codifies the guidance in the form of the “military strategic guidelines of active defense.”

China has traditionally updated its military strategic guidelines following major changes in national strategic objectives, and/or changes in judgments regarding the nature of warfare and the country’s security situation. The military strategy white paper noted that the last major change happened in 2004, when the guideline was modified principally to focus on “local war under conditions of informationization” as the most likely type of conflict. The paper acknowledged, however, that the “national security and development strategies” and new “tasks” of the military had raised requirements to “enrich” the concept of active defense and “enhance” the military strategic guidelines accordingly.

Because the principal reason for the issuance of military strategic guidelines lies in ensuring the military operates in a manner that directly supports the central leadership’s strategic objectives, one should expect changes in the guidelines to closely mirror the spirit and intent of the shift toward “peaceful expansion” in the national defense policy. The military strategy white paper validates this expectation. Changes in military guidance emphasize qualities of strategic foresight, coordination with non-military efforts to enhance security, and the military’s role in peacetime shaping, crisis management, deterrence, and expeditionary activity. The white paper explained that the military strategic guidelines highlight “strategic vision” and direct the military to be “more forward looking.” The guidelines underscore the importance of “subordination to and service of national strategic objectives” and direct the military to “closely coordinate political, military, economic, and diplomatic work.” Reflecting the shifting focus of military activity, guidance “balances” traditional precepts with new ones designed to support peaceful expansion. The military strategy white paper noted guidance “balances war preparation and war prevention, stability maintenance and rights protection, warfighting and deterrence, operations in wartime and the employment of military force in peacetime.” Underscoring the importance of expeditionary activity, it directed the military to “strengthen international security cooperation in areas crucially related to China’s overseas interest to ensure the security of its interests” and called on the military to “deal with threats” in the cyber and space domains “in a manner that maintains the common security of the world.”¹⁹

Implementation: Potential Contingencies

The changes in national defense policy and military strategy suggest that the military’s responsibilities

¹⁹ “Full Text: China’s Military Strategy,” *Xinhua*, May 26, 2015.

have expanded from an exclusive focus on homeland defense to include both homeland defense duties and expeditionary duties. In addition, for each security concern, responsibilities have expanded beyond a near-exclusive focus on preparation for conflict contingencies to include a broad range of tasks spanning peacetime, crisis, and conflict. The broader range of responsibilities can be illustrated by considering potential PLA missions regarding specific threat and issue areas.

United States. U.S. intervention in any contingency remains the single most important threat to the realization of China's objectives. Peacetime efforts to dissuade U.S. intervention include the development of anti-access/area denial (A2AD) capabilities, as well as military diplomacy and strategic deterrence in all domains. At the same time, the military seeks cooperation with the United States to address international concerns such as counterpiracy, international peacekeeping, and humanitarian assistance. Planning and preparation for crises and major conflict scenarios against the United States remain principally linked to intervention in disputes involving China and key U.S. allies and partners.

Taiwan. Beijing's policy toward Taiwan has upheld the "peaceful development" of cross-Strait ties premised on incremental progress toward unification. The PLA's peacetime mission thus remains focused on deterrence of "separatist" activity as part of a broader strategy to deepen Taiwan's dependence and integration through economic and other means. For crisis situations, leaders have likely prepared military options to punish and coerce, including possibly cyber attacks and missile strikes. The PLA's combat mission principally remains that of "preventing independence," which could involve courses of action ranging from a joint firepower strike or a joint blockade. As with most other conflict scenarios, the Chinese military must anticipate and plan for the possibility of U.S. intervention.

South China Sea. Chinese interests in these waters span security and economic concerns. The South China Sea serves as a vital strategic region in which nuclear ballistic submarines can be expected to operate. The waters hold rich fishing grounds and potentially lucrative mineral deposits. Moreover, over 85 percent of the country's oil imports passed through the South China

Sea and the Malacca Straits.²⁰ The establishment of artificial islands expands the military's ability to support the Chinese Coast Guard's efforts to consolidate control over the claimed "nine-dashed line" that covers most of the South China Sea. Naval aircraft and ships can provide patrols and enhance situational awareness through surveillance and reconnaissance. In a crisis, the military assets provide options to control escalation. For combat contingencies, the military is likely preparing options to retake island features that may have been seized by a rival claimant. However, the unfavorable geography and distances involved make outright aggression very risky, especially in light of potential U.S.

²⁰ Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2015*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, April 7, 2015.

involvement.

East China Sea. Located near the Chunxiao gas fields, the Senkaku Islands sit astride a vital strategic passageway to the Pacific Ocean. In peacetime, the PLA Navy and Air Force continue to provide deterrence and augment efforts by Chinese Coast Guard boats to sustain a regular presence near the features. The strength of Japanese forces and depth of inter-state hostility make crises especially dangerous. As a consequence, both countries have sought to improve the ability to manage crises. Combat contingencies likely focus on the denial of control of the islands or retaking the islands if seized by Japan.²¹

India. Peacetime military activities have included incremental measures to bolster ties with the Indian military. At the same time, the PLA continues to occasionally assert its presence through incursions.²² The main missions regarding the Indian border consist of high-altitude contingencies to retake areas that may have been seized by India. However, China's increasing maritime presence in the Indian Ocean is opening new areas of friction in the bilateral relationship. In the future, China may need to plan for possibilities of naval conflict against Indian forces.

Overland trade routes. The announcement of the "Silk Road" initiative in 2014 has coincided with growing Chinese economic and political interests in Central Asia. China has invested billions of dollars in the energy sector; contracts with Kazakhstan alone total \$30 billion.²³ The main threat posed concerns terrorism and political instability in bordering central Asian countries. The PLA has sought to deepen military relations with partner countries through exercises under the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Contingencies could include bilateral or multilateral counterterrorism operations against cross-border groups.²⁴

Maritime trade routes. The Maritime Silk Road envisions an expansion of infrastructure development throughout the Southeast Asian region, Indian Ocean, and through the Red Sea to the Middle East. China's dependence on sea lines of communication (SLOCs) have grown in recent years. Threats include piracy, insurgency, and terrorism, as well as threats to the SLOCs by rival powers. Missions to counter these threats include traditional anti-ship/air/submarine warfare, aircraft carrier operations, counterpiracy, at-sea replenishment, and counter-mine operations. To facilitate execution of such missions, China has begun to seek supply points abroad to provision deployed forces. In 2015, Chinese authorities confirmed that arrangements had been made for a military base in Djibouti,

²¹ "China, Japan Resume Talks on Emergency Hotline After Long Hiatus," *Asahi Shimbun*, January 13, 2015.

²² Jason Burke, "India-China Border Standoff Highlights Tensions Before Xi Visit," *The Guardian*, September 15, 2014.

²³ Usen Suleimen, "Energy Cooperation Between Kazakhstan and China," *Astana Times*, January 15, 2014.

²⁴ Chen Xianyang, "Prepare for Security Risks in Building Silk Road Economic Belt, Maritime Silk Road," *Outlook* [Liaowang], April 14, 2014.

Africa.²⁵

Overseas resources and personnel. China reportedly has over 5.5 million citizens working abroad and nearly 60 million travelers annually. As China expands its business presence abroad, terrorists and other violent groups have kidnapped and killed a growing number of its citizens. In 2015, Islamic State militants murdered a Chinese citizen in Syria, and an al Qaeda affiliate killed three railway workers in Mali, among other deaths.²⁶ China has increased evacuations of citizens facing such dangers. In 2011 alone, China evacuated 48,000 of its citizens from Egypt, Libya, and Japan.²⁷ Chinese government forces have also sought to increase security through participation in UN peacekeeping operations. In 2012, China deployed combat troops as part of UN peacekeeping operations in Africa.²⁸ However, this limited presence addresses the needs of but a small number of Chinese firms. As a consequence, many companies have turned to private companies to provide guards and security forces.²⁹ To protect lives and assets, the military has stepped up its focus on noncombatant evacuation operations, counterterrorism, and humanitarian aid/disaster relief.

Potential Drivers and Constraints on Future Expeditionary Missions

Today, China's expeditionary military capability remains limited, despite a considerable expansion in the country's economic and strategic interests abroad. However, the PLA can be expected to increase modernization efforts and operations to improve its ability to protect the country's overseas interests. China could accelerate or restrict the development of expeditionary military capabilities for a number of reasons, however.

Potential drivers of accelerated investment in expeditionary capability. The most important driver for a dramatically increased investment in expeditionary capability would be Beijing's perception that interests abroad had grown dangerously vulnerable. The United States could play a large role in this judgment. If U.S.-China relations deteriorated due to a deeply antagonistic rivalry, an expansion in Chinese efforts to protect overseas interests would likely reflect one part of a broader effort to improve national security, including deeper investments in counter-intervention capabilities. Conversely, a loss of confidence in the willingness or ability of the United States to lead multilateral efforts to address

²⁵ David Brewster, "China's First Overseas Military Base in Djibouti Likely to Be a Taste of Things to Come," *Lowy Interpreter*, December 2, 2015. As of January 14, 2016: <http://www.lowyinterpreter.org/post/2015/12/02/Chinas-first-overseas-military-base-in-Djibouti-likely-to-be-a-taste-of-things-to-come.aspx>

²⁶ Ting Shi, "China Pulled Further into Syrian Crisis," *Bloomberg*, November 15, 2015.

²⁷ Mathieu Duchâtel and Bates Gill, "Overseas Citizen Protection: A Growing Challenge for China," *SIPRI Newsletter*, February 2012. As of January 14, 2016: www.sipri.org/media/newsletter/essay/february12

²⁸ Daniel Hartnett, "China's First Deployment of Combat Troops a UN Peacekeeping Mission—South Sudan," U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, March 13, 2012. As of January 14, 2016: http://origin.www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/MEMO-PLA-PKO_final.pdf

²⁹ Andrew Erickson and Gabe Collins, "Enter China's Security Firms," *The Diplomat*, February 21, 2012.

various threats to Chinese economic interests abroad could motivate Beijing to accelerate investments in expeditionary capabilities. For example, a major reduction in U.S. presence in the Middle East, perhaps due to a declining dependence on that region's petroleum, for example, could incentivize China to seek additional military bases and presence in that region.

Another driver could be a dramatic increase in threats from terrorists or insurgent forces in countries featuring Chinese personnel or important economic assets. In the event of a major terrorist episode in Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, or Central Asia, for example, the Chinese government could expand efforts to intervene more directly with limited special operation activities or retaliatory drone strikes, although Beijing would seek to depict such activity as at the "invitation" of the host country.

Another potential driver might be the opening of promising, but vulnerable, economic and strategic interests. Global warming has reportedly resulted in the reduction of 40 percent of the summer ice cap in the Arctic region, raising the possibility of a northern shipping lane that could cut shipping times to European markets by 30 percent.³⁰ PLA Navy vessels could escort merchant ships to ensure safe passage. In September 2015, five Chinese military ships appeared in the Bering Strait.³¹

Constraints. While Beijing appears intent on increasing investments in expeditionary capabilities, developments constrain its ability to do so. Severe budget shortfalls could restrict the deployment of expensive capital assets, such as aircraft carriers. A major increase in domestic instability driven by a decline in the nation's growth prospects could restrain the growth of expeditionary activity as military resources are diverted to ensure social stability. A major deterioration in relations with Russia or India could drive China to commit more resources to guard its long land and maritime border, reducing the availability of resources to support distant, expeditionary activities.

Implications for U.S. Interests

The increasing expeditionary focus of PLA modernization and activity reflects but one aspect of the country's shift in defense policy toward peaceful expansion. The change in policy ties together China's interest in expanding cooperation with U.S. forces on some transnational threats with efforts to erode U.S. military credibility in Asia. This carries several important implications for the United States and its allies for both the near and longer terms.

In the near term (through 2020), China's defense of its overseas interests provides opportunities for

³⁰ Robin McKie, "China's Voyage of Discovery to Cross the Less Frozen North," *The Guardian*, August 18, 2013.

³¹ W. J. Hennigan, "Pentagon Spots Chinese Military Ships Off Alaska Coast," *Los Angeles Times*, September 2, 2015.

cooperation against shared threats and concerns. China seeks stability in Africa and other parts of the world to protect its considerable economic interests. As a result, Beijing has shown a growing willingness to involve itself in mediating disputes in Afghanistan, Sudan, and other countries.³² China also remains the largest contributor of troops to UN peacekeeping operations. The United States should encourage these developments and seek opportunities to work with China on shared goals of promoting international stability, responding to humanitarian disasters, and countering transnational threats such as terrorism.

At the same time, the reality of an intensifying competition with the United States, especially in Asia, means that China will seek to use knowledge and skills gained from cooperation to erode U.S. military credibility in Asia and coerce U.S. allies and partners over maritime sovereignty and other issues. And as Chinese investments in power-projection capabilities and in basing access agreements increases the permanence of its military power in areas of strategic concern for the United States, U.S. policy will have to balance an encouragement of Chinese contributions with attention to the sensitivities of U.S. security partners.

The long-term (through 2030) implications will depend on how much progress China makes in developing expeditionary capabilities, and on the dynamics of U.S.-China relations. Over the next few decades, China could employ aircraft carrier and other naval task forces, long-range strategic airlift, special operations units, and aerial-refueled strategic bombers or fighter aircraft. It may support such platforms from a handful of naval and airfield military facilities abroad, most likely in Africa and the Middle East. A PLA that has increased its capability to project power and operate confidently around the world will depend less on the United States to address transnational threats. How much this development posed a threat to U.S. interests would depend on the intensity of strategic competition between the two countries. A relationship characterized by strong cooperation could allow China to contribute needed resources against costly and destabilizing transnational threats. Conversely, an intensifying rivalry would raise the risk of a militarized crisis between Chinese and U.S. and partner states in many parts of the world, raising the risk of systemic conflict.

Recommendations

Below are recommendations for the United States to respond to the evolving set of Chinese expeditionary missions.

1. Because Chinese forces pose so little a threat to U.S. forces outside Asia, the United States should generally encourage increased Chinese contributions against shared threats. So

³² “China Mediates Peace Talks on South Sudan,” *Voice of America*, January 12, 2015. Link:

long as they do not inherently aggravate tensions or pose a threat to other countries, an increase in basing arrangements for Chinese forces to enable such contributions should not be opposed. Simultaneously, the United States should reinforce its own interests by increasing engagement with countries hosting Chinese military forces.

2. While seeking to promote cooperation, the United States should continue investing in capabilities to defend its interests worldwide. These investments include both political efforts to shore-up influence in such important regions as Southeast Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, and eastern Africa, and military efforts to project power to defend any threatened interests. The United States should also step-up engagement with any country that offers to host Chinese military forces.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF DR. DAVID FINKELSTEIN
VICE PRESIDENT AND DIRECTOR OF CNA CHINA STUDIES DIVISION, CNA
CORPORATION**

DR. FINKELSTEIN: Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to be here today. Let me state that my views represent only my own and do not represent those of CNA or any of its sponsors, but I would point out to the Commission that five of your eight panelists today are either current or former CNA analysts, a testament to the China program we've developed over the years.

As we meet here today, the PLA is undergoing a historic reorganization, and any discussion of the PLA's future as a joint expeditionary force must take this reorganization into account. Consequently, I'd like to spend my few minutes just to give you a broad overview of what's been going on and why.

To begin, less than one month ago, the PLA launched into its most sweeping reorganization since the 1950s when Russian advisors created a military based on the Soviet system. When this process is completed, key elements of the line-and-block chart of the PLA as we have known them for decades will either be changed or gone, but more important than the new wiring diagrams will be the redefinition of the roles, missions, authorities, and relationships between the Central Military Commission, the services, and the new joint warfighting commands because ultimately this enterprise is being undertaken to make the PLA, in their own objective, a more capable joint warfighting force.

And as you read the literature and follow this, you come to find that there are three dimensions of this reorganization. The first is political. Politically the reorganization is being touted as a means to enhance CCP control over the military, and purportedly this will happen by reconcentrating authority over the PLA in the Central Military Commission, which, of course, is a Central Committee organ, and in so doing, the CMC will absorb some of the key functions of the former four General Departments, which have been disbanded, and by creating new oversight organs directly under the CMC.

There is clearly a political dimension at work below the surface in this reorganization that is not well understood, certainly not well understood by myself. But there is no question that one objective of this reorganization is to make sure that there is never any daylight between the Party and the PLA--so a political dimension.

Next, there's an institutional dimension. The PLA is addressing long-time, what they would call, "systemic contradictions" that they believe are inhibiting the generation of combat power and professionalism, to include addressing the systemic causes of the rampant corruption they've been exposing over the last few years.

And on this account, the PLA plans to make adjustments or major changes to an amazingly long list of policies, procedures, and processes by which the PLA manages and governs itself and administers itself, from the management of human capital to changes in the R&D system, the logistics system, budgeting, auditing, the military justice system. The list goes on and on. It is an extremely ambitious reform agenda and one that also cuts to the corporate culture of the PLA. So I think this is important also.

But the third dimension, the one we should be very much focused on, is the operational dimension. As mentioned earlier, the PLA intends to come out of this reorganization a more capable joint warfighting organization. The essence of the operational dimension is the streamlining of command and control relationships in order to better prosecute modern

information-intensive joint campaigns.

After working assiduously since the mid-1990s to develop the capacity to prosecute joint operations, it is likely that the PLA just could not find a way to effectively superimpose joint warfighting command and control architectures over the seven legacy military regions, which had many other missions besides warfighting.

Consequently, the military regions are in the process of being disestablished, and in their place will be created standing joint war zones or "theaters of operation," depending upon how you choose to translate the Chinese term. And henceforth, warfighting command and control will go from the new war zones directly to the Central Military Commission through its newly established Joint General Staff Department.

So this arrangement is being referred to as the, quote, "two-level joint operations command system." And so just to review some of the other key dimensions of this reorganization: the disestablishment of the old Second Artillery and the creation of a new independent service, the PLA Rocket Force, which will have responsibility for nuclear and conventional missiles; next, the creation of a Strategic Support Force--that's their term--a strategic support force, which they've been very vague about in authoritative media but which will likely have control over all of the PLA's high-tech assets, electronic warfare, cyberspace, outer space. I say likely--again, there's not a lot of authoritative information out there.

I mentioned the dissolution of the four General Departments and the creation of a headquarters of the Army for the first time. And of course, the roles of the services themselves are going to be relegated to manning, equipping, training, and modernizing their respective forces. Basically, they will be force providers. Where have they seen that before?

So some concluding thoughts. Those are the basics. First, 2020 is when the PLA would like to have everything in place. But 2020 will not necessarily be the terminal point for the Chinese joint force. It may actually be the beginning because, as the U.S. has learned, jointness is a process, not an end point, but nevertheless, assuming all works as it should, the PLA after this, in theory, will likely be better positioned to prosecute joint campaigns if for no other reason than they will have streamlined command and control and jettisoned what was an outdated legacy structure.

Next, a reorganization as deep as this one is certain to create a period of turmoil, uncertainty and disruption, certainly at the higher reaches of the system, and of course the anti-corruption campaign continues. But one has to assume that the timing of this enterprise was connected to some risk assessment that determined that the PLA could undergo such an extended period of institutional turmoil and still be capable of dealing with any external military challenges. Whether that assessment on their part is correct is an open question.

Third, we are at the beginning of what will be a very long process. There is still much about this reorganization that is unknown, unclear, unannounced, or not fully understood. This reorganization should be thought of as a rolling process that will continue over the next few years. It is far from over.

Fourth, the PLA has stated that success will be measured in terms of increased operational capacity. That should be our metric as well. But how to measure it will be the tough analytic challenge facing many of us.

Fifth, Xi Jinping is proving to be the most engaged CMC chairman since Deng Xiaoping, and it appears that he intends to make the PLA both more "red," closer to the Party, and also more expert, better warfighters, and they see no contradiction in that.

By providing the political muscle necessary to overcome resistance to change within the

force, Xi Jinping has actually handed the PLA what I like to refer to as its "Goldwater-Nichols moment," likely to the applause of the military professionals, who have long known that change was necessary but didn't have the political means to force it down the throats of those who opposed it.

And, of course, from an operational perspective, I believe that the changes being enacted by the PLA through this reorganization will prove as important as the weapons and technologies they have been fielding over the years. To a certain extent, the reorganization is really a case of the software side of the PLA catching up with the hardware side of the PLA, and over time they will realize their potential.

And finally, a recommendation. I'd like to recommend that this Commission be an advocate for ensuring that resources be made available to the community of specialists who focus on Chinese military affairs, especially our specialists inside the government. Our government analysts need all the help they can get because we're going to have to spend a lot of time trying to understand how this reorganization is unfolding, whether or not it's being successful, and if it is being successful, what the implications of it are.

But without resources needed to follow and analyze these affairs, both from government, the private and public sector, I think we're going to be at a distinct disadvantage.

Thank you, and I apologize for going over.

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. DAVID FINKELSTEIN
VICE PRESIDENT AND DIRECTOR OF CNA CHINA STUDIES DIVISION, CNA
CORPORATION**

Date of Hearing: January 21, 2016

Panelist: Dr. David M. Finkelstein

Title: Vice President, CNA & Director, CNA China Studies Division

Hearing: "Developments in China's Military Force Projection & Expeditionary Capabilities"

Testimony before the U.S.-China Security Review Commission

I. Introduction

Good morning and many thanks for inviting me to participate in these important proceedings.

Let me state up front that my views are my own, and do not represent those of CNA or any of its sponsors.

Let me also point out that five of the eight specialists presenting at today's hearing are either current or former CNA analysts, a testimony to the deep China expertise CNA has developed over the years.

It is a remarkable time to be a student of Chinese military affairs and the People's Liberation Army, or PLA. It is a time of significant transformation for the Chinese armed forces. Three transformations in particular are noteworthy.

First, we are witnessing the continuing transformation of the PLA from its historical role as a purely homeland defense force into a military that is being asked to take on new expeditionary missions, which is the focus of this hearing.

This, of course, is exemplified by the PLA Navy's ongoing anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden, the recent announcement that a naval facility will be established in Djibouti, the December 2015 Counter-Terrorism Law which provides a legal basis for the PLA to engage in counter-terrorism operations outside China, ongoing UN-sponsored peace keeping operations (PKOs), and non-combatant evacuation operations (Libya in 2011 and Yemen in 2015).

Second, the PLA is in the initial stages of transforming from a military traditionally dominated by the army and focused on ground force operations to one that aspires to become more balanced between the services, more joint in its operations, more oriented on the maritime and aerospace battlespace domains, and equally attentive to the other services: the PLA Navy, PLA Air Force, and the recently established PLA Rocket Force.

Third, the Chinese military is undergoing a profound organizational transformation. Any discussion of the PLA's future as a joint force must take this reorganization, and its

accompanying reforms, into account. This is because one of its key objectives is to enhance joint warfighting capabilities. Consequently, the remainder of this paper addresses the reorganization of the PLA.

II. The Significance of the Reorganization

The Chinese armed forces have begun to execute what is already shaping up to be its most sweeping and fundamental reorganization since the 1950s, when Russian advisors helped Beijing to create a post-Civil War military modeled on the Soviet system.

Past re-organizations of the PLA have been about downsizing the force (such as in 1985, 1997, and 2003¹), or about creating new tactical-level units (such as group armies, *jituanjun* — 集团军 — in the 1980s), or adding new national-level headquarters to the legacy organizational framework (as in 1998, when a General Armaments Department was created). The current reorganization is significantly different. When it is completed, the line-and-block chart of the PLA from the national-level down to the theater-level as known for decades will be obsolete, because it is the key elements of the legacy organizational framework itself that are the objects of change.

More important than the new wiring diagrams will be the redefinition of the roles, missions, authorities, and relationships of (and between) the Central Military Commission, the Services, and the new joint warfighting commands. According to the PLA, the most important outcome of this effort will be instituting significant changes to command-and-control relationships for joint warfighting operations, and how the non-combat support functions that manage, train, equip, and modernize the PLA will be organized, led, and refocused on supporting operations. The very authoritative *Central Military Commission Opinion on Deepening Reform of National Defense and the Armed Forces* (published on 1 January 2016, hereafter *CMC Opinion*) underscores the point above.² In the words of a recent *PLA Daily* commentator article, “the utmost priority (of this reorganization) is the reform of the military leadership and command system” to include the creation of a new “joint operations command system.”³

III. Placing the Reorganization in a Larger Context

The reorganization of the PLA, and the myriad systemic reforms intended to accompany it, is not taking place in a vacuum. It should be viewed as part of the larger national and Party reform agenda Xi Jinping rolled out at the Third Plenum of the 18th Central Committee in November 2013.

¹ 1 million troops in 1985, 500,000 in 1997; 200,000 in 2003; and now another 300,000 announced in September 2015.

² “Central Military Commission's Opinions on Deepening Reforms of National Defense and Armed Forces”, Xinhua, 1 January 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2016-01/01/c_1117646695.htm.

³ Wu Ming, “Remolding Our Military’s Leadership and Command Structure is a Necessary Choice for a Strong and Revitalized Military,” (*chong su wo jun lingdao zhihui tizhi shi qiang jun xing jun de biran xuanze* 重塑我军领导指挥体制是强军兴军的必然选择) *PLA Daily (Jiefangjun Bao)*, 30 November 2015, http://jz.chinamil.com.cn/n2014/tp/content_6791140.htm. I am indebted to Alan Burns, of CNA’s China Studies Division, for his careful translation of this important PLA Daily commentary.

From recent official releases about the reorganization, as well as the Party and PLA press since the Third Plenum, it is clear that the reorganization and reform of the PLA is being driven by three imperatives, all of which are considered to be vital and mutually-supporting by top Party and PLA leaders. These imperatives are political, institutional, and operational.

IV. The Political Imperative

Politically, the reorganization is being touted as a means to “perfect” and “enhance” CCP control over the military.

A *leitmotif* in the very public but internally-directed political campaign associated with the reorganization is that it will result in the enhancement of Central Committee control over military affairs. Purportedly, it will do so by re-concentrating power and authority over the armed forces in the Central Military Commission (a Central Committee organ), specifically placing ultimate command authority in the person of the CMC Chairman, currently Xi Jinping. This is being referred to as the “CMC Chairman Responsibility System” (*junwei zhuxi fuze zhi*; 军委主席负责制).⁴ Of the six “basic principles” laid out in the *CMC Opinion* for carrying out the reorganization, the very first principle is that the process will “adhere to the correct political direction.”

It is necessary to consolidate and perfect the basic principles and system of the Party's absolute leadership over the military, maintain the nature and purposes of the people's military, carry forward our military's glorious traditions and excellent work style, comprehensively implement the Central Military Commission chairmanship responsibility system, *and ensure that the supreme leadership right and command right of the military are concentrated in the CPC Central Committee and in the Central Military Commission.* (Emphasis added.)⁵

On the surface of it, asserting the primacy of the CCP over the military should not be surprising. However, as the reorganization process has unfolded, there are glimpses in the PLA press of possible concerns on this account. For example, one attention-grabbing commentary in the official newspaper of the PLA General Political Department (*PLA Daily*) suggested that some of the authorities of the CMC had devolved down to the four general departments over the years. As a result, a layer of authority had developed between the Central Committee's CMC and the operating forces, and that this needed to be corrected. Moreover, and equally eye-catching, the same article employed an historical-literary allusion to the Western Zhou Dynasty (11th Century, B.C.) to suggest that the seven Military Regions exhibited semi-autonomous prerogatives.⁶ Additionally, since the November 2014 “All-Army Political Work

⁴ “China Releases Guideline on Military Reform”, Xinhua, 1 January 2016, news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-01/01/c_134970353.htm. According to Xinhua, the Guideline states that the “CCP's absolute leadership of the armed forces” must be “consolidated and perfected.”

⁵ “Central Military Commission's Opinions on Deepening Reforms of National Defense and Armed Forces,” 2016.

⁶ Wu Ming, “Remolding Our Military's Leadership and Command Structure is a Necessary Choice for a Strong and Revitalized Military,” 2016. On the military regions, the commentary stated the “large military regions will also no longer have feudal

Conference” (chaired by Xi Jinping in Gutian), there has been a steady drumbeat in the PLA press of reaffirmation of CCP control of the military beyond the customary. So, there is clearly a political dimension, a Party-PLA relations dimension, at work in this reorganization that is not well understood, at least certainly not well understood by this author.

What *is* clear, and has been since the Third Plenum and reinforced in the *CMC Opinion*, is that Party control of the PLA is viewed as a pre-requisite for pushing through this reorganization and reform because so many institutional and personal interests throughout the military are going to be adversely affected. Party discipline will be required to make and execute tough choices.

V. The Institutional Imperative

Institutionally, the reorganization is intended to enhance the professionalism of the force, overcome the “organizational and institutional contradictions” inhibiting the generation of combat power and force modernization, as well as address the systemic causes of corruption in the military.

If the only focus of this enterprise were major adjustments to command-and-control relationships, that, in itself, would be considered historic as well as ambitious. There is, however, much more the PLA aspires to accomplish by 2020. This involves making adjustments to, or instituting major changes to, a very long list of the policies, processes, and procedures by which the military manages its resources and personnel and how the PLA conducts oversight of its own activities. To do so will also require many organizational adjustments. In short, there will also be significant institutional changes to accompany the political and operational dimensions of this endeavor.

The section of the *CMC Opinion* entitled “General Objectives and Main Tasks of Reform” goes through a long list of major focus areas where adjustments will be made. While general statements of intent are offered, details remain absent. Nevertheless, reading through *the CMC Opinion* reveals the breadth of issues that will be addressed.⁷ Sample focus areas for change, reform, or adjustments will include:

- The organizations, roles and missions of the CMC and the Services
- The logistics system
- The PLA armaments, equipment development, and R&D communities

powers over their domain” (大军区也不再是权力很大的“一方诸侯”). As explained during the research for this paper, in popular Chinese culture, the term *yifang zhuhou* (一方诸侯) originates from the Western Zhou Dynasty, a reference to the emperor's siblings, relatives, nobles and other key personages. These individuals had high autonomy over their lands, including military rights, not unlike a small nation, but they also had to report to the emperor and pay taxes and support military expenses on a regular basis. Today, the term is used to describe someone with great influence or power over a certain area. I am indebted to James Bellacqua of CNA for assisting with this explication.

⁷ “Central Military Commission’s Opinions on Deepening Reforms of National Defense and Armed Forces,” 2016. The bulleted list provided is not entirely literal. It condenses and combines some focus areas and uses U.S. military terminology in some cases where the meaning of the Chinese phrase might not be readily apparent to non-specialists.

- The size of the armed forces and the balance between the services
- The ratios of officer, non-commissioned officer, and enlisted personnel
- The locations and compositions of PLA force deployments within China
- The management of human resources, especially officer management
- Professional military education (PME) and training and the PME establishment
- The conscript system, non-commissioned officer corps, and civilian personnel
- Budget, procurement, and service member pay and benefits reform
- PLA and civilian R&D sector synergies (“Civil-Military Integration”)
- The reform and reorganization of the paramilitary People’s Armed Police
- The military justice system
- The PLA audit system
- The use of laws and regulations to guide behavior and establish policy

Worthy of note, the reorganization also intends to address a self-described lack of checks and balances on the exercise of authority in the PLA, as well as correct the current absence of independent oversight. The PLA’s own media has cited the absence of independent oversight as a major systemic shortcoming that has resulted in rampant corruption across the officer corps and within its upper reaches, as evidenced by high profile cases made public over the past couple of years.⁸ And, as we know, the eradication of corruption is a high-order issue for Xi Jinping in the Party as well as in the PLA.

How much of the announced institutional reform agenda will require brand new initiatives, and how many will merely require adjustments to ongoing programs, remains to be seen. The PLA is not starting from ground zero. In many cases, some of the focus areas identified in the *CMC Opinion* have been the objects of reform efforts for decades.⁹ Either way, this is an extremely ambitious agenda.

⁸ Wu Ming, “Remolding Our Military’s Leadership and Command Structure is a Necessary Choice for a Strong and Revitalized Military,” 2016.

⁹ For background on institutional reform initiatives that began in the late 1990s, see David M. Finkelstein, Maryanne Kivlehan-Wise, et. al., *Institutional Reforms of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army: Overview and Challenges*. Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analyses, May 2002, CRM D0005777.A1/Final.

VI. The Operational Imperative

The PLA intends to come out of this major reorganization and reform effort a more capable warfighting organization; especially a more capable joint warfighting organization.

The core of the operational imperative for the reorganization is the need to streamline and clarify command-and-control authorities and responsibilities in order to better prosecute modern, information-intensive joint campaigns — especially in the maritime-aerospace battlespace domains, which are the domains in which PLA strategists believe China’s most pressing operational contingencies reside.

The depth and breadth of the current enterprise, and the apparent need to make radical organizational changes, can be interpreted as tacit acknowledgment on the part of Chinese military professionals that the legacy organizational structure of the PLA and its attendant command-and-control arrangements were deemed ill-suited to the conduct of 21st century warfare. After working assiduously since the mid-1990s to develop the capacity to prosecute joint operations, it is likely that the PLA just could not effectively superimpose ad-hoc joint war-fighting command-and-control architectures onto the Military Regions — entities that were joint in name only and that mostly dealt with peacetime administrative, training, and support issues.

Consequently, the seven Military Regions are going to be disestablished (If they have not been already). They will reportedly be replaced by standing joint commands — “War Zones” (or “Theaters of Operation”, depending upon how one chooses to translate the Chinese term *zhan qu*, 战区) that will report directly to the CMC. The four General Departments will be disbanded, and warfighting command-and-control will go from the joint war zones directly to the CMC. This arrangement is being referred to as a “two-level joint operations command system” (*liang ji lian he zuo zhan zhi hui ti zhi*; 两级联合作战指挥体制).¹⁰

Therefore, through this reorganization, three major objectives will be pursued: (1) deepening CCP Central Committee control over the military via a strengthened CMC with ultimate operational and managerial oversight of the PLA, (2) professionalizing and cleaning-up the force through institutional and systemic changes, and (3) making the PLA a more effective joint warfighting organization by pushing through difficult, but necessary, organizational changes that include new joint warfighting command-and-control relationships.

VII. Major Features of the Reorganization: Still a Lot of Unknowns

This section identifies and comments upon a couple of the key features of the reorganization as of this writing (14 January 2016). It is by no means inclusive of all that

¹⁰ “Central Military Commission’s Opinions on Deepening Reforms of National Defense and Armed Forces,” 2016.

is underway.

A Reconstituted and Empowered Central Military Commission (CMC)

The CMC has been reconstituted organizationally and, as mentioned earlier, purportedly invested with enhanced roles and authorities for providing oversight of, and coordination among, the various parts of the PLA, including operational command-and-control via the newly-established CMC Joint Staff Department.¹¹ Reading the PRC media, one discerns two reasons for restructuring the CMC: (1) to “perfect” control of the CCP over military affairs via the CMC, and (2) to streamline chains-of-command, staffs, and authorities and better coordinate the various lines of effort across the military establishment.

Ostensibly, the CCP Central Committee will deepen its control over military affairs through the newly-empowered CMC and the “CMC chairman responsibility system” (*junwei zhuxi fuze zhi*; 军委主席负责制). In this new set-up, according to the PLA, the leadership of the armed forces will be “in the hands of the CCP Central Committee and the CMC.” The *CMC Opinion* states (without much background or explanation) that the CMC “takes charge of the overall administration” not only of the PLA, but of the militia and reserve forces, and the People’s Armed Police.¹² It is not yet clear what is meant by the “CMC chairman responsibility system” or how this is very different from previous arrangements as far as CCP control of the PLA is concerned. More apparent are the changes to the CMC’s role, its new organizational arrangements, and the basic division of labor between the CMC and other major PLA organs.

On the latter issue (the division of labor between the CMC and other PLA organs), the ubiquitous phrase in the Party and PLA press is that the “Central Military Commission performs general management, theaters are mainly in charge of operations, and military branches are mainly in charge of force building” (*junwei guan zong, zhanqu zhu zhan, junzhong zhu jian*; 军委管总、战区主战、军种主建).¹³

There is no doubt at this point that the CMC will be exercising more direct control and supervision over all of the PLA’s major lines of effort: operational command-and-control, management and administrative functions, force modernization, and institutional oversight.¹⁴ This is a result of the disestablishment of the former four general departments (the General Staff Department, GSD; General Political Department, GPD; General Logistics Department, GLD; and General Armaments Department, GAD) and

¹¹ For an official listing of the new CMC departments, commissions, and offices, and brief explanations of their functions in Chinese, see the MND press conference hosted at http://news.mod.gov.cn/headlines/2016-01/11/content_4636184_2.htm. For English, see, “MND holds press conference on CMC organ reshuffle”, *China Military Online*, January 12 2016, English.china.mil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2016-01/12/content_6854444.htm.

¹² “Central Military Commission’s Opinions on Deepening Reforms of National Defense and Armed Forces,” 2016.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ In the CMC Opinion, four chains of command are referenced: “command” (*zhihui*; 指挥, meaning warfighting and operations), “building” (*jianshe*; 建设, meaning force modernization and professionalization, as in *jundui jianshe*; 军队建设), “management” (*guanli*; 管理), and, “supervision” or oversight (*jiandu*; 监督). The objective is to separate the four chains and make lines of responsibility clearer. According to various PLA media reporting, under the traditional system of four General Departments, there was a good deal of overlap in these lines of effort which were dispersed across various organizations without central control.

the subsuming of many of their functions directly into the new CMC organization (see Table 1 below).

As the *CMC Opinion* put it, "...the CMC organs will be transformed from a 'PLA General Headquarters [Department] system' to a 'multi-departmental system' and from... 'highly concentrated power in the leading organs of the PLA General Headquarters' to (power) being highly concentrated in the CMC's general organs with checks on power." In a speech on 11 January 2016 to leaders of the departments of the newly-constituted CMC, Xi Jinping reportedly drove home this point of CMC primacy by characterizing the CMC as exercising "concentrated (alt. centralized) and unified leadership" (*jizhong tongyi lingdao*; 集中统一领导) over the military.¹⁵

Military Regions Disbanded, Standing Joint War Zone Commands to be Established

The seven military regions will be disbanded.¹⁶ In their place will be established new entities called *zhanqu* (战区), which in English can be rendered as either "War Zones" or "Theaters of Operation." The Chinese name is what matters most. The character *zhan* (战) in the term *zhanqu* makes clear that these organizations will be focused on warfighting and operations.

There is no *official* word (as of 14 January 2016) on how many new theaters will be established, and neither are the boundaries, internal organizations, staffing, or force structures of these entities known at this point. As yet unsubstantiated rumors in the Hong Kong press and beyond suggest five theaters: a North, East, South, West and Central War Zone or Theater. We will have to wait to see what transpires.

The intent seems to be that these entities will be standing joint organizations, with a staff that is joint in composition and with assigned forces from more than one service. Apparently, these organizations will report directly to the CMC, thereby establishing a joint command system that will flow from the theater of operations directly to the CMC with no stops in between (the former four general departments). As the MND spokesman said in a 12 January 2016 press conference, the "defects" in former organizational set up had "become increasingly prominent."¹⁷ Strictly in the realm of speculation, based on their geographic locations, one could envision each of these new entities focused on specific contingencies along the specific "strategic directions" (*zhanlüe fangxiang*; 战略方向) that are the focal points of PLA operational planning.

The Services: Primary Role as Force Modernizers and Providers

The major roles of the (now four) services (PLA Army, PLA Navy, PLA Air Force, and

¹⁵ Li Xuanliang, "Xi Jinping Meets with Responsible Comrades at Various Departments of the CMC Organ, Emphasizing the Requirements of Stressing Politics, Striving to Win, Rendering Services, Playing an Exemplary Role, Endeavoring to Build a CMC Organ with 'Four Iron Qualities'", Xinhua, 11 January 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-01/11/c_1117739283.htm.

¹⁶ The seven military regions are the Beijing Military Region, Shenyang Military Region, Jinan Military Region, Nanjing Military Region, Guangzhou Military Region, Chengdu Military Region, and Lanzhou Military Region.

¹⁷ "MND holds press conference on CMC organ reshuffle", *China Military Online*, 2016.

PLA Rocket Force) will be to modernize their respective forces, according to the Chinese media. “The distinction between the joint operations command of the theaters and the construction function of the services needs to be made clear.”¹⁸ The *CMC Opinion* states that, “It is necessary to improve military services (*junzhong*; 军种) leadership management system, optimize organ function arrangement and the organization setup of military branches,” and that the services will have a major role in force modernization, management and logistics. Not much more detail has been provided beyond this.

At the risk of mirror-imaging the U.S. system, it may not be too much of a stretch to speculate that the services will have the responsibility not only for modernizing their forces, but also manning, organizing, training, equipping, and providing forces to the warfighting commands in the War Zones (Theaters of Operation). Also strictly in the realm of speculation, as mentioned already, one could envision some elements of the former general departments that were focused on service-specific issues being sent to the services staffs and headquarters: the army, PLAAF, PLAN, and PLA Rocket Force. However, this level of detail has not been placed in the public domain, and may not be.

A New Service: The PLA Rocket Force

On 31 December 2015, the former Second Artillery Force (*er pao*; 二炮), a branch (*bingzhong*; 兵种) of the PLA ground forces was disestablished. In its place, a new service (*junzhong*; 军种) co-equal to the Army, Navy, and Air Force was established: the People’s Liberation Army PLA Rocket Force (*Zhongguo Renmin Jiefang Jun Huo Jian Jun*; 中国人民解放军火箭军).

The PLA Rocket Force will be responsible for China’s nuclear missiles and conventional missiles. It is *not* clear if this includes the nuclear assets of the PLA Air Force and PLA Navy. The PRC Ministry of National Defense claims that the creation of the PLA Rocket Force will not change China’s doctrine for the employment of nuclear weapons. As stated by the MND spokesman:

China always pursues the policy of not using nuclear weapons first, adheres to a self-defense and defensive nuclear strategy, and always maintains its nuclear force at the lowest level of safeguarding national security requirements. China's nuclear policy and nuclear strategy are consistent, and there will be no change to that.¹⁹

At the inaugural ceremony of the PLA Rocket Force, Xi Jinping reportedly told the assemblage that the mission of this new service is to “...enhance credible and reliable nuclear deterrence and counter nuclear strike capability in accordance with the strategic requirements of nuclear and conventional missiles and of full-area war deterrence, strengthen medium and long-range precision strike force building, increase strategic

¹⁸ Wu Ming, “Remolding Our Military’s Leadership and Command Structure is a Necessary Choice for a Strong and Revitalized Military,” 2016.

¹⁹ Wang, Sun, and Huang, “Defense Ministry Spokesman Gives Detailed Explanation on Relevant Issues of Deepening National Defense and Army Reforms”, 2016.

checks and balance capability, and strive to build a powerful modernized rocket force.”²⁰

A New Command Organ for the Ground Forces

As of 31 December 2015, the PLA Army (*Zhongguo Renmin Jiefang Lujun*; 中国人民解放军陆军), has its own dedicated service headquarters or “leading organ” (*lingdao jigou*; 领导机构), as it is referred to in the PRC media. The army, which is the oldest service, established in 1927, will no longer be led, managed, and modernized collectively by the former four general departments (now disbanded) as it has been for decades. This headquarters will have the same responsibilities of the services noted above, and might also absorb some of the army-specific elements of the former four general departments. As of this writing, no official public statements have been made about the organization or composition of this new headquarters.

A New Strategic Support Force: High-Technology Warfare

Also established on 31 December 2015 was the Strategic Support Force (*Zhanlüe Zhiyuan Budui*; 战略支援部队), which is a completely new entity. Of all of the official information released by Beijing to date, the PLA has been most vague about the missions, organization, and composition of this new force. It is not even clear at this point if the Strategic Support Force is a service-level organization like the navy and air force, etc., or an independent functional command.²¹ Its name in Chinese would suggest the latter, not a service-level organization, but that is a guess at this point.

From what can be gleaned from official commentary, the Strategic Support Force is going to have several mandates, none of which have been spelled out in any detail. These include the following: some unspecified role in logistical support to the warfighting forces, some responsibility for “civil-military integration,” and responsibility for “the building of a new type of combat operation force.”²² The latter two functions strongly suggest that the Strategic Support Force will be responsible for developing, managing, and possibly deploying the most modern, high-technology assets that define modern warfare to the warfighting commands. Our biggest hint is the term “new type operational forces” (*xinxing zuozhan lilian*; 新型作战力量).

In the parlance of the PLA, “new type operational forces” generally refers to those key capabilities or units which are characterized by cutting-edge technologies and are deemed essential for prosecuting modern, high-technology and information-intensive campaigns. Without such assets, according to various PLA writings, a military force

²⁰ Li Xuanliang, Zhang Xuanjie, and Li Qinghua: "Meeting on Establishment of Army Leading Organ, Rocket Force, Strategic Support Force Held in Beijing; Xi Jinping Confers Military Banners to Army, Rocket Force, Strategic Support Force Units of the People's Liberation Army and Delivers Speech", Xinhua, 1 January 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-01/01/c_1117646667.htm.

²¹ We note that the Strategic Support Force does not have the character “*jun*” (军) in its name, but rather *budui* (部队), meaning a force or unit of a certain level.

²² Wang, Sun, and Huang, "Defense Ministry Spokesman Gives Detailed Explanation on Relevant Issues of Deepening National Defense and Army Reforms", 2016, and Li, Zhang, and Li, "Meeting on Establishment of Army Leading Organ, Rocket Force, Strategic Support Force Held in Beijing; Xi Jinping Confers Military Banners to Army, Rocket Force, Strategic Support Force Units of the People's Liberation Army and Delivers Speech", 2016.

fighters under great disadvantage. Examples usually given are cyber space, outer space, the electro-magnetic spectrum, ISR assets (intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance), and precision-guided munitions, to name a few. The term is sometimes applied to special operations forces, special aviation and maritime assets such as unmanned aerial and underwater vehicles (UAVs, UUVs), and electronic counter-measures units, etc.

These capabilities and units reside at the heart of what the PLA refers to as “informationized local wars” (*xinxihua jubu zhanzheng*; 信息化局部战争), which the PLA’s new military strategy (published in May 2015) has identified as the type of modern warfare that the Chinese armed forces must be able to prosecute, and which, from an operational perspective, this entire reorganization is meant to facilitate.²³

The need for these types of high-technology assets and capabilities also undergirds the call for enhanced “civil-military integration” in research and development and production, which means that the development of new technologies in the civil and military research and development sectors should be better coordinated and mutually supportive. Hence, this may be one reason why “civil-military integration” is listed under the auspices of the new Strategic Support Force.

So, an informed guess is that the Strategic Support Force is where cyber space, outer space, and other high-tech capabilities will reside. We will simply have to wait and see how this new command shapes up, and not jump to conclusions in the absence of solid evidence.

New Oversight Organizations Directly Under the CMC

The reorganization of the PLA is also meant to address systemic shortcomings that are believed to have resulted in corruption or abuse of command authority going unchecked. One major problem identified by the PLA is the absence of independent organs to provide oversight, as the following scathing commentary from *PLA Daily* asserts:

For a long time, there have been problems of abuse of power among leaders of some units and organs, the phenomenon of methods that break regulations, discipline, and law, and the “four customs” (*si feng*; 四风) and corruption have developed and spread. In the end, an important reason for this is a lack of mechanisms that effectively limit and oversee power, especially in regards to leadership organs, as the limits on and oversight of leading cadres exist in name only (*xingtongxushe*; 形同虚设).²⁴

To begin to correct this systemic issue it has been decided that organs providing oversight of the PLA will henceforth be directly subordinate to the CMC. These

²³ *China’s Military Strategy*. Beijing: State Council Information Office, People’s Republic of China, May 2015.

²⁴ Wu Ming, “Remolding Our Military’s Leadership and Command Structure is a Necessary Choice for a Strong and Revitalized Military,” 2016. The “Four Customs” probably refers to “formalism, bureaucracy, hedonism, and extravagance”, which have been identified in the past as deleterious behaviors to be eliminated from the PLA.

organizations will include the new CMC Audit Office, CMC Discipline Inspection Commission, and the CMC Politics and Law Commission, with the latter also having oversight of the PLA military court and procuratorate (*jianchayuan*; 检察院) systems.²⁵ The intention is that auditors and other inspectors from the CMC will be dispatched throughout the PLA — starting with the CMC’s own departments, across the services, and down into the theaters of operation to make independent assessments free from command influence, to borrow a term from the U.S. military.²⁶

VIII. Some Issues Raised by the Reorganization

Xi Jinping and the Military: More “Red” and More “Expert”

It would not be unreasonable to posit that Xi Jinping is the most engaged CMC Chairman since Deng Xiaoping. As with the Party and State bureaucracies, Xi is taking the PLA into the “post-Dengist” period, and it appears that he intends to make the PLA both more “red” (closer to the CCP) and more “expert” (better warfighters).

The wholesale reorganization of the PLA to be better positioned to engage in modern, high-tech joint operations, while also fighting corruption and recentralizing military authorities in the person of the Chairman of the CMC is no small feat. It will be a major legacy of Xi’s (assuming it is successful). Doing so in the face of strong vested interests is a bold move, suggesting very strong support for Xi among some group of senior PLA leaders who also believe that such major changes are necessary and long overdue.

Although Xi Jinping undoubtedly approved the major contours of this unprecedented reorganization, and may have been very involved in following the details and brokering the deals that had to be made, the essence of what needed to be done could only have come from within the PLA itself: the professionals who have seen the need for change for some time.

In this regard, Xi has become the critical enabling agent of military reform by providing the political muscle necessary to overcome resistance to change within the PLA. So, one could say that he has handed the PLA its own “Goldwater-Nichols moment.” Just as it took a literal act of Congress to transform the U.S. military into the joint force it is today, it has taken the authority of the Central Committee led by Xi Jinping — via the “decision” of the Third Plenum in November 2013 and subsequent actions — to provide the political mandate to compel the PLA to enact much-needed and painful reform measures it probably would not take if left to its own devices.

Also on Xi Jinping’s watch as CMC Chairman (since 2012), the PLA has adjusted China’s national military strategy (the Military Strategic Guidelines) and Xi has also led the charge in the “re-redding” of the PLA as a Party army, as evidenced by the Gutian conference of November 2014.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ “Xi Urges Breakthroughs in Military Structural Reform”, Xinhua, 26 November 2015, news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-11/27/c_134859198.htm.

A Litmus Test of Political Loyalty

The scope of this reorganization is going to impinge on a wide array of vested interests in the military. The concerns about push-back can be measured by the intensity of the almost two and a half year-long political work campaign since the Third Plenum aimed at preparing the force for such sweeping changes and the reality that there will be institutional and personal “winners” and “losers” created in the process. While the PLA leaders rightly assert that the metric for the ultimate success of the reorganization will be measured in increased combat effectiveness, the unspoken metric for wholeheartedly carrying through on some very painful changes will likely be political loyalty. One suspects that those officers who are not fully on board will have a short shelf-life in the new PLA. Many retirements are likely to follow.

The Reorganization Will Affect Key Relationships

Changes to the PLA’s structure have the potential to affect three key sets of relationships: Party-PLA, civil-military, and PLA-PLA relations.

First, the fundamental principle of the subordination of the PLA and military affairs to Party control and discipline is a critical dimension and objective of the reorganization. One way the leadership intends to accomplish this is by removing some of the key intermediate layers of authority that have existed between the CMC (and its chairman) and the force. A second way is by having the CMC maintain direct control over the various organs responsible for overseeing discipline and inspection as well as creating a CMC office responsible for ensuring the reorganization itself is carried out. Third, the Party committee system will be strengthened. How the leadership will measure the efficacy of their efforts on the political front, and what success will look like, is an open question. It is clear, however, that professionalization without “a correct political orientation” will be unacceptable. We can expect that the PLA will enter a prolonged period of intensified political work.²⁷

Next, civil-military relations have the potential to be affected on various levels, both in positive and in potentially stressful ways. On the positive side, the call for closer and better “civil-military integration” in research and development in the high-technology sector could result in resources and synergies that benefit the PLA armaments community, the state-owned defense industrial sector, as well as the private sector firms that can develop or supply end items with military applications for the PLA’s “new type operational forces.” Also, it is likely that the PLA will create a civil service-like system that will bring an unknown number of civilians into the force, thereby creating a new civil-military dynamic within the PLA itself.²⁸

On the negative side of the ledger, there is going to be a sizeable demobilization of at

²⁷ For a deep look at the PLA political work system see, Kristen Gunness, James Bellacqua, and Julia Rosenfield, *Not Just Party Propaganda: An Institutional Overview of the Political Work System in the Chinese People’s Liberation Army*. Alexandria, VA: CNA, August 2006, CRM D001475.A3/1Rev, and David M. Finkelstein and Kristen Gunness, Co-editors, *Civil-Military Relations in Today’s China: Swimming in a New Sea*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2007.

²⁸ A few years ago, the PLA established a working group under the Cadre Department of the General Political Department to study and development plans for bringing civilians into the PLA.

least 300,000. It is going to be the responsibility of the local governments and the state-owned enterprises to find jobs for these individuals, some of whom will transfer (*zhuanye*; 转业) to different civilian government positions. The Party is already warning the state-owned enterprises not to shirk their duty in this regard. Civil Affairs Minister Li Ligu has stated that finding positions for demobilized soldiers is a matter of military modernization as well as “social harmony and stability.”²⁹ However, placing the disenfranchised may not be as easy as it sounds. There may also be separations from service with no government-to-government transfers, with the potential to place the burden on local governments to find ways to integrate these former service members into the community.

Also on the difficult side of the ledger, there may be a “BRAC-like” impact when the military regions are stood down, possibly creating second order negative impacts on the local economy. It is unclear how the dismantling of the decades-old military region system may affect the surrounding civilian communities.³⁰

Finally, relations *within* the PLA and among service members could be affected, especially at the higher ranks, as authorities are transferred, resources are relinquished or gained, and the trappings or definitions of professional prestige inevitably change.

The Reorganization is Bound to Create Organizational Dislocations

A reorganization as deep as the one the PLA is undergoing, and the changing relationships and authorities that come with it, are certain to create a period of institutional uncertainty and entropy. Added to the reorganization is the ongoing anti-corruption campaign. How much turmoil will be created remains to be seen. This issue is not lost on the Party and the PLA. The *CMC Opinion* makes clear that the Party and PLA leadership understand that the armed forces are going to undergo a period of difficult transition over the next few years. In the face of the self-acknowledged difficulties and dislocations to come, it is not unreasonable to assume that the timing of this difficult transition was connected to a risk assessment that determined that the armed forces could undergo a period of reorganization, out to 2020, and still be capable of dealing with any external military challenges that might need to be met.

For the PLA: A Long Road Ahead

The year 2020 is when the PLA hopes to have its new organizations, processes, and joint command system in place. But, 2020 will not be a terminal point for the Chinese joint force. In some respects, 2020 may only be a starting point. Even when the new structures, organizations and relationships are in place, it will probably take some time, perhaps years, to be able to exercise the new system efficiently. As the U.S. has learned, “jointness” takes practice and is an ever-evolving endeavor; it is a process, not

²⁹ Yao Jianing, “State-owned Enterprises Not Allowed to Refuse Veterans,” *China Military Online*, December 29 2015, http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2015-12/29/content_6835935.htm.

³⁰ BRAC is the acronym for the U.S. Department of Defense’s Congressionally-mandated “Base Realignment and Closure” program, whereby military facilities are consolidated or closed for fiscal and operational reasons. It is politically contentious because of the negative impact on local economies and oftentimes involves members of Congress who lobby on behalf of their constituents not to lose military installations in their districts.

an end point. Nevertheless, assuming the PLA can make all of this work, when key dimensions of this reorganization are completed, the PLA will likely be in a better place operationally than it is at the moment.

For U.S.- China Military Relations: Changes Could be Felt Quickly

One area where the results of the reorganization will undoubtedly manifest itself very quickly is in the military relationship between the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) and the PLA (and with other countries around the world, for that matter). Specifically, DOD is going to have to assess, ideally with the assistance of the PLA, how counterparts between the two military establishments have or have not changed, whether programs in motion will be affected by the disestablishment of certain national level organizations, or whether *new* counterpart positions are now in play given the creation of the PLA Army command organ, a joint staff under the CMC, etc.

IX. One Recommendation

For the purposes of this hearing, there is but one recommendation that I would offer. It is that appropriate resources be made available to the community of specialists who focus on Chinese military affairs — those specialists in government service and those subject matter experts outside government — in order to ensure that we are able to keep up with developments as the PLA makes this historic transition.

We need to understand that our insights into and understanding of the Chinese defense establishment, carefully built over decades since “reform and opening up,” are about to change. We just do not yet appreciate how much at this point.

Those who follow Chinese military affairs are going to have to spend a lot of time trying to understand whether, and how, and with what levels of success, this defense establishment is meeting its aspirational objectives. They will then have to assess the impact on the various U.S. equities and interests at stake.

Long-standing assumptions will need to be revisited — the PLA, like the rest of China, is entering a new era. Confidence levels will need to be revalidated as what we have believed about the PLA in the past may no longer be true, or not be true for much longer. Open minds will be the order of the day as the changes unfold.

Without the resources needed to follow and analyze these affairs — resources both from government and from the private and public sectors — we shall be at a distinct disadvantage.

Table 1: The New Central Military Commission Organization³¹

CMC General Office	<i>junwei bangong ting</i>	军委办公厅
CMC Joint Staff Dept.	<i>junwei lianhe canmo bu</i>	军委联合参谋部
CMC Political Work Dept.	<i>junwei zhengzhi gongzuo bu</i>	军委政治工作部
CMC Logistics Support Dept.	<i>junwei houqin baozhang bu</i>	军委后勤保障部
CMC Equipment Development Dept.	<i>junwei zhuangbei fazhan bu</i>	军委装备发展部
CMC Training & Management Dept.	<i>junwei xunlian guanli bu</i>	军委训练管理部
CMC National Defense Mobilization Dept.	<i>junwei guofang dongyuan bu</i>	军委国防动员部
CMC Discipline Inspection Commission	<i>junwei jilu jiancha weiyuanhui</i>	军委记律检查委员会
CMC Politics & Law Commission	<i>junwei zhengfa weiyuanhui</i>	军委政法委员会
CMC Science & Technology Commission	<i>junwei kexue jishu weiyuanhui</i>	军委科学技术委员会
CMC Strategic Planning Office	<i>junwei kexue jishu bangongshi</i>	军委战略规划办公室
CMC Reform & Organization Office	<i>junwei gaige he bianzhi bangongshi</i>	军委改革和编制办公室
CMC International Military Cooperation Office	<i>junwei guoji junshi hezuo bangongshi</i>	军委国际军事合作办公室
CMC Audit Office	<i>junwei shenjishu</i>	军委审计署
CMC Office Affairs General Administration	<i>junwei jiguan shiwu guanli zongju</i>	军委机关事务管理总局

³¹ The English names of the CMC's subordinate organs are the result of looking at English and Chinese language reporting on the new CMC organization. For the CMC Office Affairs General Administration, an English translation was chosen to best convey the function of that office. See MND press conference hosted at http://news.mod.gov.cn/headlines/2016-01/11/content_4636184_2.htm. For English, see, "MND holds press conference on CMC organ reshuffle", *China Military Online*, 2016. See also (in Chinese) 新华社北京1月11日电（记者 李宣良）中共中央总书记、国家主席、中央军委主席习近平11日在接见调整组建后的军委机关各部门负责同志时强调，要紧紧围绕党在新形势下的强军目标，贯彻新形势下军事战略方针，牢记使命、牢记责任，当好军委的战略参谋，努力建设具有铁一般信仰、铁一般信念、铁一般纪律、铁一般担当的军委机关，为实现中国梦强军梦作出贡献。

PANEL I QUESTION AND ANSWER

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Thank you. The first question will be Chairman Shea.

CHAIRMAN SHEA: Well, thank you very much. Great testimony, all three of you.

We're the Economics and Security Commission so I'm going to inject a little economics into my question. Dr. Mastro, Mr. Heath, you talked about the desire of the Chinese military and government, the CCP, to expand the military's expeditionary capabilities, and Dr. Finkelstein, you talked about the desire for modernization and reorganization. And both aspects require cash, money to fund, and with the Chinese economy in the news these days, I can't help but ask do you think there's an emerging guns versus butter debate occurring in China?

Clearly if the desire is to promote more consumer spending, you need to spend money--a consumer-oriented economy--you need to spend money on health care, retirement security so people don't engage in precautionary saving, but at the same time, you want to build this great world-class military. So is there an emerging guns versus butter debate occurring in China? All three.

DR. FINKELSTEIN: If there is a guns and butter debate, it's not in the public domain so I would say that. But the reason I suspect there is not necessarily at a macro-strategic level a guns and butter debate because you have to step back and I think appreciate that the modernization of the military is not being done in isolation, that this is part of a larger reform of the nation and the Party that Xi Jinping rolled out at the Third Plenum, and that really had three elements to it.

It had an economic reform agenda, it had a Party and state process reform agenda, and it had a military agenda. So it's not clear to me, sir, that in their minds, they're facing a guns and butter debate. Whether or not they're haggling over the specific number of dollars to go from this program to the other is something that probably one would assume goes on. But at a macro-strategic level, the modernization of the military is seen as absolutely as critical to China as economic development.

In fact, under Xi Jinping's tenure, you've had economic development and national security raised almost to the same level, a great departure from the Dengist years when military modernization was the fourth modernization.

CHAIRMAN SHEA: Thank you.

Mr. Heath.

MR. HEATH: Sir, in my view, the Chinese conclusion is that more guns are required to ensure the butter keeps coming. The reason why is that China's economy is so deeply integrated with the world economy, and there are so many vulnerabilities that have opened as a result of that, that failure to provide security for SLOCs, for overseas interests, for energy imports, for exploiting the maritime domain, and extracting all the fishing and mineral resources will resort in a smaller and smaller size chunk of butter, if you will.

It will impact the ability of the economy to grow. Therefore, the Chinese can be expected to continue to invest in expeditionary capabilities as a means of ensuring future economic growth.

CHAIRMAN SHEA: Thank you.

DR. MASTRO: Sir, I'd like to contribute to what my colleagues have said by adding a slightly different perspective from the domestic dimension. While, of course, I don't think they have to make a tradeoff, it's not either/or, there are some discussions about how that might be

different.

For example, in personnel costs, I think one of the main reasons that Xi Jinping has announced a reduction of the military by 300,000 people is the desire to professionalize the force, and to date, the Chinese military has been unable to meet their recruiting numbers for college graduates that are necessary to make some of these software modernizations.

While the reasons are not openly discussed, if you talk to junior officers, the amount that they're being paid is definitely an issue, and also the competition with the private sector is an issue. So an unexpected result might be that the Chinese military has an easier time recruiting.

On the other hand, I think that the guns and butter debate is definitely there in terms of the Chinese military's public image. There is a question given the fact that the Chinese people themselves are suffering a bit economically whether or not it's worth spending all this money on the military. There is debate about this in sort of the netizen forums, and I think the anti-corruption campaign is largely designed to placate a great deal of this debate about whether or not the Chinese are spending too much on their military.

Xi Jinping is very concerned that when the time comes the military won't be able to perform, and I think that may be the main impetus for all of the reforms that Dr. Finkelstein laid out. So it's very important from their perspective, especially in an economic downturn, that it looks like the money being spent on the military is being spent well, that the military officers themselves are not corrupt, and when the time comes, the military will be able to perform in some of the missions that Mr. Heath laid out.

CHAIRMAN SHEA: Thank you.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Larry.

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: I'm going to ask two, one to the panel, and then one specifically to David Finkelstein.

One of the central questions I think we have to wrestle with is if the U.S. or allies and China face similar contingencies, will we see the People's Liberation Army willing to work in a coalition or will the PLA independently conduct parallel operations? I think that's, for the future, I think that's a big question.

Dave, if the Chinese leadership believes that there's a low likelihood of future external military challenges, what does that mean about the way they will probably behave in the South China Sea and toward Taiwan?

MR. HEATH: I'll take a stab at the first one. As regards to the question of whether the Chinese in a future contingency would be willing to cooperate directly in a multilateral way with the United States and its allies, I think first off I would note that the two countries do participate multilaterally through the U.N. so there is a precedent for some sort of multilateral cooperation. I think that's the arrangement the Chinese prefer because it reinforces both Chinese and U.S. authority, but I do concur that in operations off the Horn of Africa, the Chinese seem to prefer to operate on their own in their own manner, and that's possible as well.

My suspicion is that in the future, the Chinese will continue to welcome opportunities to work with the U.S. under a U.N. authority because U.N. authority gives them some leverage over the pace and scale and scope of military operations. Outside the U.N., I think the Chinese are going to be much more reluctant to engage directly with the U.S. and its allies.

DR. MASTRO: Sir, I think it depends a lot on the operational environment. When you pose that question, I can think of various situations in which they would probably embrace a coalition approach or others where they want to be more independent, and I think when Mr. Heath mentioned that we could cooperate on certain types of operations, for example,

humanitarian aid, disaster relief, these are types of operations that are occurring in relatively permissive environments in which the scope and duration of them is relatively limited.

I can see in those scenarios China being quite willing to engage with other countries because that way they can reap, first of all, the international benefits associated with presenting themselves as a responsible power. A lot of Chinese writings talk about what they consider to be the "China threat theory," suspicions involved with China's rise, and they do point to cooperation in coalition forces as one way that you could dissipate the theory closer to home in their immediate environment.

However, in perhaps more hotly contested non-permissive environments, I think what the Chinese are thinking about right now is, one, they don't want to be involved, period. There's a reluctance and cautious aspect to it so I could see if they do decide, given the overseas interest that they have to be involved, they would likely want to do it in a more private, quiet and less intrusive way than what the United States and its partners are used to doing.

So in that case, it's likely to operate independently. I think also, and perhaps this is the case of the Gulf of Aden, but a lack of confidence in their operational abilities is also one reason they tend in some situations to operate independently. I think once they're more confident in their ability to operate, then perhaps they'll be more comfortable operating side by side with other military forces.

DR. FINKELSTEIN: I would certainly associate with the comments of Oriana and Tim on the operating. As Tim pointed out, the PLA has actually been operating in parallel with naval forces out in the Gulf of Aden. They're not part of the coalition. They're operating in parallel. And, of course, they're also conducting an increasing number of multilateral and combined exercises with other navies especially so there's-- and there's the legacy of the SCO. Right. So the Chinese are probably having these debates.

You know, I like to say that we've now entered post-Dengist China, meaning that many of the very staid and over-30-year-old precepts for Chinese behavior and predilections that we've become very used to are now sometimes being debated in China. It doesn't mean that they're acting on new ways of behavior, but they're at least rethinking them.

I also point out--I don't think anybody else mentioned it--that the new counterterrorism law that was passed by Beijing this past December, much to my surprise, provided a legal basis for the PLA conducting counterterrorism operations outside of China under certain conditions, another element of their expeditionary possibilities.

But on Larry's question in particular, I'm really struggling with how to answer that. I've been thinking about it for quite awhile. As I carefully couched in the paper I submitted, that the PLA believes that they could go through this period of turmoil and still meet whatever challenges they believe need to be met.

At the moment, certainly there's nothing going on in the PLA that would preclude them from continuing their behaviors and policies in the South China Sea, but on the question of Taiwan, that's a really interesting one because one could argue, without any data, but one could argue that by putting themselves through this period of turmoil, they've decided they don't think they need to do anything really significant across the Taiwan Strait unless they are forced to. But I don't know the answer to that question, Larry. So that's why I said I'd really like to be the fly on the wall when this risk calculus was put in shape.

And then there's the question of 2020. I don't quite understand what's sacred about that particular year, and then what happens after 2020? Do they actually believe they can do this? And what challenges does that pose? So I'm sorry I can't do better for you on that one.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Katherine.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: Great. Thank you, all.

The last question, Chairman Wortzel's question, begins to address the question I had, and it arose, Mr. Heath, from what you presented, and I'll phrase the question, and perhaps others can respond, too. You describe China as having, since 2010, a peaceful expansion, and that they seek to play a leading role in Asia, with an emphasis on leading, and then you went on to describe the U.S. relationship with China as being one of cooperation and/or competition.

As I thought about that, China playing a leading role in Asia, to me, I think it can only be, from what I see now, a theoretical goal. I don't see them playing a leading role or an effective leading role with North Korea, or with South Korea. You mentioned Taiwan. South Asia. I think of leadership as building a coalition with leaders and followers.

So my question for you is what do you see? How do you see them taking a leading role in Asia in what you, Dr. Mastro, called those areas of difficulty and reluctance, not just the somewhat easier tasks of peacekeeping or medical care like Ebola? Mr. Heath, and then perhaps the others have thoughts, too.

MR. HEATH: Thank you.

I think the policies of Xi Jinping have made very clear that the Chinese intend to build on their already existing economic leadership in Asia. They are by far the largest trade partner for most countries in Asia and certainly all the U.S. allies. Xi Jinping has outlined a number of policies to supplement that with initiatives in the security and political domain aimed at building, I would argue, a parallel security structure architecture in Asia as an alternative to the U.S. dominated security alliances.

And the argument from the Chinese is that the U.S. alliance system and U.S. political leadership made sense in an era when the U.S. was the economic leader in Asia. That era has passed. There's a new era in which China is the economic leader, and new political and security architectures are required for a more stable and peaceful Asia. This is their argument.

The way they're carrying this out, we've seen under Xi Jinping the rollout of a number of economic initiatives that build on China's leadership. The One Belt, One Road is an example. The free trade agreement, FTAAP, the Chinese have argued is an alternative to TPP. Those are economic-related initiatives.

Politically and security-wise, the promotion of CICA, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building, the promotion of Shanghai Cooperation Organization the promotion of Six-Party Talks, these are all organizations where the Chinese have a leading role, and the Chinese have not only promoted these, but Xi Jinping is the first leader since Mao Zedong to openly criticize the U.S. alliance system as a relic that he argues should not be strengthened, and he argues that Asia's security lies with a new direction. So he's been very explicit in arguing that the future of Asia, economically, politically, and security-wise, lies in a direction which China plays the leading role.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: That's helpful. So the economic and then with these other--

MR. HEATH: Yes. As far as the dispute areas you mentioned, I think the Chinese argument about those is, first, that the legacy of the U.S. alliance system makes those problems worse. If these countries realized that they had no chance of help from the U.S., they would not resist China as strongly as they do. You can see this most clear in the case of the Philippines, and so that's one of the Chinese arguments.

This is why Xi Jinping has promoted this idea of a new type of great power relationship where he essentially is arguing that the U.S. should work with China to reduce and weaken those

alliances over time so that those countries will have no other choice but to accommodate Chinese demands.

DR. MASTRO: Ma'am, I think your question really highlights how the Chinese think about what we would refer to as leadership, but really their focus is on being a dominant power in the region, and I think that is very different than what the U.S. focus is on being a leader in the region.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: Uh-huh.

DR. MASTRO: Their expectations are mainly about--Mr. Heath mentioned--the accommodation of Chinese preferences and the resolution of conflicts according to conditions that are favorable to China, and so in many cases that were listed of Chinese efforts to start organizations or institutions, in my mind, they're still very much defining even broader global interests in very narrow domestic terms.

Even the new type of great power relationship is primarily a plea for the United States to, what the Chinese would say, accept their inevitable decline and make way for China. In my mind, the Chinese are right now a very immature major power. I had an official say to me once very upset, that China is now a great power in the region and therefore it should be able to do whatever it wants and no one should say anything about it.

My response is that's the opposite of a great power. A great power is one in which no matter what you do, everyone has something to say about it.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: Right.

DR. MASTRO: And so until the Chinese have this - a different vision of what it means to work with partners and other countries in the region - I think you're right to say that this is not going to be a Chinese-led region; it's going to be a China region.

And a final point, an interesting point that I think lends a lot of credence to concerns about China being a dominant partner, is this main difference. The United States wants its partners to be as strong as possible. The United States looks for coalition partners and allies and tries to raise those countries up economically, politically and militarily.

China wants the countries that it works with to be as weak as possible so that it can have its way and coerce them instead to take on certain policies that are beneficial to Beijing. To me, that's a fundamental difference that does not bode well for the future region if the United States does step back and allow China to take a, quote-unquote "leading role."

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: That's very helpful.

DR. FINKELSTEIN: The only thing I would add very briefly to these excellent answers is that we see the Chinese doing two things, I think: leading where they can and shaping where they can't. And there are places where they clearly can take leading roles based on their economic element of national power. They can use that to create an AIIB, an Asian Investment Infrastructure Bank.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: Right.

DR. FINKELSTEIN: They can take a leading role in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. They can take a leading role with some countries in Southeast Asia. Where they can't, they try to shape, and they use, and this is where the military element of national power is becoming very important. Xi Jinping has something that most Chinese leaders really didn't have at their disposal. He has a military element of national power that's coming on line that can actually be more than just a homeland defense force, and this is a new tool in his bucket.

So leading and shaping. And to what purpose? To what purpose? To achieve China's key national security objectives. And that's another discussion we should probably have maybe

for another hearing.

But what is it that China is trying to achieve? Well, first and foremost, national security interest, number one, is always the survival of the Chinese Communist Party as the ruling government in China, but also a domestic agenda that has to go on, and I also happen to see the domestic security agenda and domestic agenda as coequal with the external agenda and both being very important to Xi Jinping. There's a phrase that the Chinese banter around, the two big situations, "liange da qu," that you hear where they have to--that the external affects the internal; the internal affects the external. They see these as intimately linked.

And so we should never forget to look at these other external issues through a domestic security prism as well, but lead and shape. Lead where they can; shape where they can't.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: Thank you, all. That's very helpful.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Thank you.

Senator Talent.

COMMISSIONER TALENT: Dr. Mastro, I love your last answer. You should be PACOM commander. You're in the Air Force; right? Why don't we make that one of our recommendations?

[Laughter.]

DR. MASTRO: I'm actually moving over there for my next duty assignment so I'll let them know.

COMMISSIONER TALENT: Good. They need to jump you up. Okay. Two questions. Very, very informative testimony and thank you so much for it. One, would I be basically correct, and I know this is an oversimplification, in thinking about China's development of expeditionary capability, I think that outside of the near seas in East Asia, the objective is basically practical and economic, in other words, to secure their investments and their citizens. Whereas, in their near seas and in East Asia, there's also, and probably more important, political and nationalistic goals.

But for the time being anyway, global power projection is driven by very practical ends, and so just if that's basically correct, you know, let me know.

And then the second question. In terms of how they are reorganizing the military, and it's their Goldwater-Nichols moment, David, you mentioned. Okay. When Goldwater-Nichols was done, a person familiar with it could tell you, and again it would be an oversimplification, but basically true, what the org chart was for command and control in the American military; right? You got the President, the Commander-in-Chief; you've got the service secretaries who do force provision and sustainment; you have the COCOMs that are in charge of joint operations, operations within their regions; and you have the Secretary of Defense, who is the chief appointive officer who unifies both force provision and ops; and then you have the Chairman who assists in joint ops and provides direct personal advice to the President; right?

I mean then that's basically it. We all know that there's a whole lot more to it, but that's basically it. So can you tell me what similar command and control structure they are aiming for or are going to get? I mean who is the--I guess the Central Military Commission is the commander-in-chief collegially, but who is the secretary? Who's driving this? Who's the equivalent to their secretary of defense in this organization if they've got one? And if they don't have, I mean if you can't tell me what it is they're organizationally aiming at, what does that say about the likelihood of success of this?

I mean one of the reasons Goldwater-Nichols succeeded is because over time the people pushing it--first of all, they had something reasonably concrete they were aiming at, and the

people pushing it had developed the case for a long time and sold the case. So I guess I'm getting at, do they know where they're going with this? And if they don't, are they going to be able to get there?

DR. FINKELSTEIN: Well, thanks for those great questions. Yes, to your first comment about in their neighborhood, warfighting; abroad, much more economic and developmental, as they call it, national development. In fact, the PLA Navy has a new service strategy or at least a newly announced service strategy as of May 2015 in the latest defense white paper called "Near Seas Defense, Open Seas Protection," and when you talk to PLA Navy folks and you read the materials, it becomes very clear that near sea defense means the PLA Navy prepares for warfighting in the near seas and in those regions where it claims sovereignty, and its expeditionary missions, for the moment, for the moment, are focused on securing their developmental interests.

All of the data that Oriana so masterfully gave you before about Chinese nationals, you know, the Chinese have actually had to do two NEOs in the last few years--Libya in 2011, semi-military NEO, but in Yemen in 2015.

So there's a lot of truth to the fact that it's the fact that you have hundreds of thousands of Chinese citizens working in the world's worst neighborhoods. There are sea lines of communications that need to be protected from the Middle East. There are some real economic equities they think they have that require them to have a force that can defend those developmental interests at the moment.

COMMISSIONER TALENT: So defense in the near seas really means--

DR. FINKELSTEIN: Yeah, warfighting.

COMMISSIONER TALENT: --coercion; right? Well, I'll say it. Coercion. Defense globally actually, for the time being anyway, really does mean basically--

DR. FINKELSTEIN: So I mean when they say defense in their neighborhood, it doesn't mean coercion. It means warfighting. They have to be able to fight wars; right.

So on your second question, of course, the reorganization is in its incipient stages; it's still rolling out. But I think it's very clear what they want to do. You know it's very difficult to find counterparts between the U.S. and Chinese, but if you ask me who is the national command authority in China, it would be Xi Jinping acting in his role. In one person, you have the president of the state, the Secretary General of the Communist Party, which is his real source of power, and he's the chairman of the Central Committee's Military Commission. So there's the national command authority.

And the objective, where they want to go--it's very clear where they want to go. They want to get rid of all the intermediate levels of leadership between the national command authorities and these joint warfighting commands that are going to be stood up at some point if they haven't been already so that there can be a direct and very simplified chain of command.

And who came up with all of this stuff? Well, I don't the names of the people who did, , but this is something that the PLA has known it's had to do for over a decade, maybe more, and they just couldn't get the political muscle to roll over the vested interests and bureaucratic obstacles to cracking what are going to be a lot of rice bowls.

There are going to be a lot of losers in this reorganization, right, which is one of the reasons Xi Jinping held the very important Gutian Political Conference in November 14; right? Remember, you guys work for the Party, and the Party says you're going to change. So I think they know where they're going. It may change from time to time as they refine and adjust this, but I think--and I think they've been actually relatively transparent about this. I'm amazed at the

number of official MND press conferences that have laid out some of this. So, yeah, hope that's helpful.

MR. HEATH: Sir, if I could--Senator, if I could add just a little bit? I think your characterization on the first question is largely correct, but I do want to add a caveat, that I think there is a little bit of "bleed" in both directions. So while China is mostly concerned about economic and pragmatic interests outside the Second Island Chain they have similar economic and pragmatic concerns in Asia. [This is why] they want stability and peace [and why] they're willing to work with the U.S., in RIMPAC, for example, and in HADR. We see them worried that the rivalry between U.S. and China could spin out of control. So they're looking for opportunities to tamp down that dynamic.

And similarly, outside of Asia, the competition and suspicion between U.S. and China bleeds out in that domain as well. We mentioned the parallel efforts in the anti-piracy operations. If you looked at a purely pragmatic point of view, you would think that leveraging U.S. capability and participating in U.S.-led efforts would probably be more efficient, but for political reasons, the Chinese are suspicious and are seeking to operate on their own lines.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Briefly.

DR. MASTRO: If I could just add, sir, what I hope is a useful analogy. In my mind, when I think about China's role globally, I think that their initiatives are less like a Chinese trojan horse, a duplicitous strategy designed to provide cover for some secret global ambition or hegemonic ambition, and it's more useful to think of it as a Chinese tripwire, something that is likely to create an even greater demand signal for contingency operations, perhaps inadvertently but not unforeseeably.

That being said, I'm not completely reassured by what I consider to be a lack of Chinese global ambition. We've seen in many cases the fact that China does not think strategically about an issue, but becomes obsessive about a lower level issue and what it means for Chinese security that can create great obstacles to moving forward.

For example, I would say the North Korea issue is one of these in which the Chinese have in many cases failed to see the bigger picture of the need to denuclearize North Korea, and for many years prioritized border security over that goal.

That being said, I would just say that many reasonable people would disagree with my assessment that they do not have global ambition. I just returned from my third trip in the past six months to India, and that is a place where many strategists are very concerned that the commercial ports that the Chinese are building in South Asia and the relationships that they're building within what India considers to be its sphere of influence are a part of a larger strategic plan.

I personally don't see a lot of evidence for that. I think the commercial ports are purely commercial, and if, in some future date, China changes its mind and decides that it does want a more dual-use structure in which they start using those commercial ports for military operations, we would see plenty of notice because there would have to be a lot of infrastructural changes to those ports, and so I don't think there's any need to be concerned about that right now.

But I do know that it's quite possible, just like China has changed its position on many things before. They have felt comfortable throwing out principles that have lasted decades when they're considered to now be obsolete. So for years people said China would never operate in peacekeeping operations. For years, people said China would never be involved in international organizations. Now people say China will never establish overseas bases, but we see those debates happening in China. And so one thing we know for certain is that nothing is for certain

when it comes to Chinese military development.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Thank you very much.

Carte.

COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: Perfect timing, Dr. Mastro. It seems to me based on the panel's testimony today and some of your writings, that there is tension between this growing interest in force projection and expeditionary capabilities and longstanding principles of Chinese foreign policy and opposition to entering into formal alliances, mutual defense treaties, and establishing overseas bases.

Yet both you and Dr. Finkelstein have both noted that their approach to these issues is flexible and pragmatic, and they are willing to forego these time honored traditions and maxims when it suits their best interests.

And, Dr. Mastro, I think you used the phrase that their ideological opposition to these sorts of notions is elastic and could change and be reshaped if prompted. My question is what would prompt that change, and how long would it take, not only to make the doctrinal shifts that would be necessary to effectuate such changes, but also obviously to implement the shift, much less begin the construction on places or bases?

DR. MASTRO: Thank you, sir, for that question. I think the first thing I would say is I agree, China can be very pragmatic about a lot of issues. Even in its ideological height under Mao Zedong, they had an alliance policy called "lean to one side," in which they were best friends with the Soviet Union, and then they just changed their mind and had a policy of leaning to the other side.

If they can be so pragmatic at the height of the Cold War, it seems to me that they can reevaluate a lot of their ideologies, especially now.

However, I don't want to be completely cynical about the role of principles in Chinese foreign and security policy. I don't think that they just pay lip service. I think these are deeply ingrained ideas about what it means for China to be a major power, and also I think a lot of these ideas come from assessments of what it is to be an effective great power.

So, for example, China's non-interference principle, while it has evolved in recent years from being focused on outcome - that China should not influence the decisions made by other countries - to process - how China should influence - you should only work, for example, with legitimate governments and not other groups, I think that change occurred. But they didn't throw out the principle because they largely assessed that U.S. policies of becoming involved in domestic politics of other countries, and in some cases being involved militarily in other countries, is ineffective from the Chinese perspective and extremely costly.

So when it comes to the basing issue, I don't think that they're going to adopt a U.S. type of model. I think they take a look at the U.S. basing model and they think this is costly and it's also not necessary. For the fairness of the United States, there's a lot of path dependency. If we decided today what type of model we needed to project power overseas, not based on legacies, it would look very different; right?

Having forces in Europe does not actually reduce the amount of time it takes significantly for the United States to project power in nearby areas. Or having forces in Korea or Japan, given the threat that China could potentially pose, we know that it's unlikely that the United States will even operate from those bases in certain contingencies.

So I think what the Chinese are now discussing and looking for is what is going to be effective for them to project power globally. It's not going to look like anything that the United States has done, but they are going to be pragmatic, and they're already starting to talk about

principles, for example, of the conditions under which it's okay to have bases overseas.

So, in my mind, the fact that they're debating that - how those bases should be used - for example, they say you can have a base overseas as long as it's not used to attack another country, as long as it's used just to defend your core national interests, or as long as the host nation welcomes you, and your interests are in line with those countries, now that might seem, again, to be just rhetorical or lip service. But I think for a lot of Chinese strategists thinking about the framework that's going to work best for China is a very serious endeavor, and in the end, we're going to have a result that looks very different from what the United States has done.

MR. HEATH: Senator, I think a very good question you asked about how the Chinese leadership is wrestling with their growing requirements and needs and their longstanding policies and principles. My own view is that several years ago, the leadership had addressed this topic, and after several years of effort have largely worked through how they intend to update or revise a lot of their policies to justify the shift on expeditionary activity.

I mentioned the security policy change around 2010. There are similar changes in foreign policy. I think intellectually the Chinese leaders are not constrained as much by these legacy principles and policies. The biggest constraints are political and strategic in the sense of the Chinese are concerned about the destabilizing effects of a serious deterioration in relations with the U.S. So they're worried about pushing too hard on multiple fronts.

And, economically, also tied to politically, the Chinese leadership clearly has its hands tied dealing with its domestic economic situation. Its resources are being constrained, and it is struggling with some serious economic issues.

I would add the single biggest factor I think that would drive a major ramp-up in expeditionary activity would be a major deterioration in the security environment for China, principally driven by a serious downturn in relations with the U.S. If U.S.-China relations really went south, I think you'd possibly see shift towards rapid militarization, a clear shift of guns over butter, and even at the cost of butter, and that would give the expeditionary areas more of a militaristic flavor in terms of defending Chinese interests against possible U.S. and allies. Short of that, it's hard to see the Chinese investing and paying that huge economic and strategic cost.

DR. FINKELSTEIN: Just a little bit of perspective. I can't help myself because I was trained as an historian. The reason that we're even asking ourselves these questions and others are, and they're legitimate and important questions, is because we are witnessing a China that is undergoing a profound transition, to wit, that China's national security interests have expanded in ways that even they could not have imagined.

Again, you know, we use the Gulf of Aden as an example. If you would have told me, asked me ten years ago, would I ever envision the Chinese navy off the Horn of Africa doing counter-piracy operations, I would have said you're crazy. Or that they'd be building ports in places like Gwadar or a base or a facility or whatever it is. We don't know what it is. A facility, whatever we want to call it in Djibouti.

The fact of the matter is, is that because of China's tremendous economic growth, it has found itself with national security interests that in the past it never had to grapple with. And this has put a lot of pressures on a couple of things in China. Number one, it has proven that China's national interests have outpaced the capacity of their system to manage those interests, which is why they had to create a National Security Council- like organization, foreign leading small groups, all sorts of internal organizations, led mostly by Xi Jinping at the moment, to manage their national security, their foreign policy.

It's put a lot of pressure on their time-tested precepts of international foreign policy, the

Dengist approach to the world; right? The things that we became comfortable with under Deng Xiaoping are now under question because 2016 is not 1978. And so I think the fact that we're asking these questions points out that we're in this important interregnum.

We don't have the answers yet. We're starting to see traces and possibilities out there, and I don't think even the Chinese have the answer yet to what it is they're trying to accomplish except that they know they have to keep that economic engine running, they have to reunify with Taiwan, and they have to achieve sovereignty or pursue sovereignty in their neighborhood.

So I just thought I would throw this out. Again, we went through these questions again after Mao was gone. We didn't know what Dengist China was going to look like, right, so here we are, another spin of the cycle.

DR. MASTRO: If I could just add one piece of speculation because I forgot to address that part of your question.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Brief.

DR. MASTRO: And again this is just speculative, but it seems to me one thing that could lead to a critical juncture of decision-making about these issues is if the threats to China changed. Right now Chinese interests and nationals find themselves at risk because they're operating in volatile conflict prone areas. They're in the wrong place at the wrong time.

But last year for the first time what we've seen is more and more China is actually being targeted, right, so in July 2014, an ISIS leader made a video in which they specifically condemned Chinese policies towards Muslims. September 2014, you had suspects being arrested in the Philippines for planning to kidnap Chinese nationals because they were upset about China's policies toward the Spratlys.

Or more recently, when Beijing had issued a travel warning because of protests that were occurring in Turkey about Chinese treatment of Uighurs in Xinjiang. So if the threats become less "this is just a way of doing a business in the world and these are the risks associated with that," and more and more that these risks are specifically tied to China and that China is being targeted, in that case, the threat perception might become heightened in the Party, and you might see a quicker development of these capabilities and a more rapid reaction to them.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Thank you.

I have a couple of questions. You correct me if I'm wrong, and I'm slightly cynical about this--the--

VICE CHAIRMAN BARTHOLOMEW: Slightly?

[Laughter.]

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Their mouths, diplomatically, seem to be bigger than their capability to deliver at the moment. They articulate grander goals than they're capable of achieving. It also strikes me that miscalculation is our U.S. interest--biggest problem facing, and I would label that to be Taiwan since you don't have to go very far expeditionary wise.

Yet, I would also hesitate. You mentioned the turmoil in the PLA. Have you ever tried to merge an airline, much less a military? And one nobody has talked about yet is that Chinese military has always suffered from an overly hierarchical decision-making process. Okay. In other words, a soldier or a lower-level officer has a harder time making a decision to act as we do all the time and we train our people to do all the time in combat.

So I'm worried about Taiwan for political reasons, given any domestic consideration that the military has used on Taiwan, and that they cannot afford to lose in that circumstance, and in the South China Sea, I don't see the expeditionary capability going beyond ships and ballistic missiles as a response--not people. Nobody is going to land people in the Philippines, but they

might take out Guam for us in a Taiwan scenario.

And I don't see their ability worldwide to be anything to think about in the short run. I am concerned and agree with you, Dr. Mastro, about the immaturity of their power, and that means to me the immaturity of their decision-making, and that to me leads to the miscalculation that I am most afraid of.

So talk to me about Taiwan and their ability to take it whenever they want to since they did a landing exercise yesterday sending the DPP a message. So am I crazy about something?

MR. HEATH: No, I think those are very apt observations. I will start with a comment on their vision and goals and the disconnect between their vision and their actions. The Chinese view is that all great powers offer their vision of the world, and that's what the Chinese are doing. It's different from the U.S. by design. It's one that better serves Chinese needs and interests, and the precedent they would cite is the U.S. offering up its vision and ideals around the time of maybe Woodrow Wilson with 14 Points and similar visions and ideals when the U.S. didn't have much military capability to do it. Chinese, similarly, I agree, are offering visions and ideals which are wildly at variance with their actual very limited capability which you outlined.

But their capability will grow, and they are pursuing a number of policies to try to implement [their ideals] incrementally, bit by bit, and I mentioned several of them--the CICA, SCO, all these various initiatives, AIIB, OBOR. They're doing things bit by bit to try and implement parts of it.

As far as Taiwan and other contingencies, I think that you could argue that not only does Taiwan remain a potential flashpoint, but the number of flashpoints have grown, and this speaks to that security policy shift I mentioned earlier, one of peaceful expansion. By nature, this is a policy that increases friction points with a number of countries, including the U.S. in cyberspace [and] with our alliances in multiple domains. I think this is a major reason why the Chinese have centralized decision-making on security issues. They seek tightened control over both the military and non-military forces that are in contact or potentially in contact with many other countries.

The Chinese are very worried about how these friction points could escalate and a miscalculation and which could in turn result in a serious crisis that causes big problems for them.

So you see clear shifts since since 2010. Coincident with this move towards more of a peaceful expansion, there has been greater emphasis on crisis management among senior leaders, among Chinese scholars and academics. They are focused on how you manage a crisis when it pops up. Also, a greater emphasis on deterrence.

I want to highlight that the Second Artillery has been elevated in stature to be a service coequal with that of the other services. This is a symptom of the Chinese recognition that deterrence is becoming more important as a way to force the U.S. to calibrate its response in the event a crisis does erupt.

If you read the military strategy white paper, a major focus of effort is on a lot of military tasks and responsibilities prior to conflict. It's designed to try to manage tensions, deal with a crisis, get a clash under control. I think that's a serious focus of effort for the Chinese. They're worried about an expanding number of potential flashpoints. Taiwan remains one of them, but there are others now, and trying to find a way to make sure none of these head off into war is a primary occupation of the leaders.

DR. MASTRO: If I could--sorry--if I could just sort of weigh in on this crisis management issue because I have a slightly different perspective on it? Crisis management is

only useful to deal with inadvertent escalation and tension, and what we have in a lot of these areas in South and East China Sea is things that are happening on purpose. The Chinese are engaging in a Thomas Schelling “rock the boat and signal to the United States I’m happy for it to tip over, are you?”

So, of course, there are situations in which they want to have a degree of control over that, but I think it would be naive to say that, you know, the Chinese care as much about dealing with inadvertent escalation as the United States does. There’s a lot of people in China, though their views of escalation are changing, that fundamentally believe wars happen when leaders want them to happen. Sure, you have a crisis decision point, but in the end, China is not going to find itself in a conflict that it doesn’t want to be in.

Going to the point about Taiwan, I think the answer is somewhat in the question in that I am less concerned about Taiwan, and I’m less concerned because, sir, of something that you said, which was China can’t lose that war. To me, the greatest thing that imposes caution right now in the Chinese military is not U.S. deterrence; it’s not our efforts to demonstrate our capabilities. What it is, is a lack of confidence in their own capabilities, and until the Chinese military has operational experience, they are going to be cautious.

So what am I concerned about? I’m concerned about Vietnam; right? Vietnam is like a win-win conflict situation for the Chinese. They know they’ll do well. They get to gain some territory, and at the same time, the United States is not required to react in any way; right? Vietnam is not an ally, and so it’s likely the United States will not react significantly, and even though it shouldn’t, I think that will undermine U.S. credibility as a force of peace and stability in the region.

And once China can test those operational capabilities, then I would be concerned about Taiwan, but for at least the foreseeable future, I don’t see that as move one so I think we can take at least a deep sigh of relief on that.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Dave.

DR. FINKELSTEIN: Thanks. I would just like to say that I think that your concern about miscalculation is well placed. That’s one of the biggest concerns we ought to have. Whether it’s miscalculation in the South China Sea, whether it’s miscalculation in the Taiwan Straits or miscalculation on the part of the Chinese about their own capabilities, I think your concerns are very well placed.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Or miscalculation about a judgment they make about the United States.

DR. FINKELSTEIN: Yes. I mean we could go down a long list of all their potential miscalculations. One thing I did want to throw out though is that one of the things that we never did get before this hearing was what the Commission’s concept of expeditionary means. That was a word that was thrown out there, and it was not defined, and, you know, expeditionary means a lot of things to a lot of different people.

Let me tell you what I think it means in terms of the PLA. The PLA--again, I keep going back to this period--we’re going through a period of tremendous transition, not just in China but in the Chinese armed forces. The Chinese armed forces over the last decade have been making a slow transition from a force that was historically focused strictly on homeland defense to one that is being given more external missions, right, mostly in their neighborhood, but also beyond, as they go after their economic interests and defend their citizens.

But from an operational perspective, strictly operational, and getting away from strategy and all that stuff, if you’re a military that’s been ground force centric for the last 70 years, and all

of your wars have been on your border and nowhere else, then when you talk about the South China Sea and Taiwan, brother, that's expeditionary.

So when we talk about the PLA becoming expeditionary, let's not just think about whether they can or cannot project force somewhere in the Indian Ocean or off the Horn of Africa or in the Mediterranean. There is "expeditionary" in their own neighborhood, and this is what they're trying to achieve, and they ain't there yet, but they're working towards it, which is what this reorganization is all about.

They have certainly created an exquisite network of missile defense to make it very difficult for U.S. forces or anybody's forces to operate with impunity at certain ranges near the Chinese littoral, but that's different than having an expeditionary force projection force to achieve other objectives. No doubt it's serious, and this is a great concern.

So Taiwan is an expeditionary mission; right?

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: I quite agree. That's why I raised it.

DR. FINKELSTEIN: Yeah, so I guess I'm associating with your self-styled cynicism.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Carolyn.

VICE CHAIRMAN BARTHOLOMEW: Thanks very much and thank you to all of our witnesses, both for your interesting testimony, your interesting and thoughtful answers, and for showing up at a time where the city is sliding into weather hysteria. So we'll be able to get everybody out before the snow starts.

Dr. Mastro, I'm just going to note, on Vietnam, we could talk about this a lot. I'm not as convinced as you are that China would have a cost-free engagement with Vietnam. A couple of years ago, I guess it was 2009 when we were there, and we met with one of China's leading military thinkers, who said to me very quietly when I said, you know, I know you want to resolve this diplomatically, but what happens if you don't succeed at that, and he said so quietly, well, as you know, we know how to fight and win. I am not going to say that they would necessarily win, but I think there would be costs associated.

Nonetheless, I want to talk a little bit about reform, and Xi as a reformer, who, it is turning out, is not the kind of reformer that a lot of people hoped that he would be when he moved into a position of power. I'm always struck that one of the things that Charter 08 called for was that the military would be serving the state, not the Party, and in this, along with a lot of other things, I think we're seeing sort of a closing, not an opening, of what's going on in China.

Dr. Finkelstein, you mentioned the politics of all of this about which I'm particularly interested. I mean Xi is consolidating power in a context of the Party losing validity in the eyes of the Chinese people. So I understand that these changes that they are proposing and are about to implement on the structure of the military are driven by the need to institutionalize, to drive change, but I also wonder how much of it is being driven by a fear of declining Party power.

The second piece of that for me is institutional turmoil, which you mentioned. I mean I can't believe that just about everybody at high levels of Chinese government, including in military, are not afraid of the knock on the door at this stage. Between the anti-corruption campaign and now in the military this restructuring, I mean there's a lot of palace intrigue that must be going on behind the scenes, and I wondered if all or any of you could talk a little bit about what some of the risks might be to us about that kind of palace intrigue going on.

So that's one thing. And then, finally, what kinds of risks are inherent in the Chinese leadership moving forward on something in order to deflect attention from domestic concerns? So I can't delink these changes that Xi is trying to drive from this sense that the Party has got to regain control of what's going on, and what does that mean for us strategically?

DR. FINKELSTEIN: So, nor should you try to delink the reorganization from larger political issues, I think. Again, I tend to see the reform and reorganization of the military as part of the larger package that Xi has put out there where control of all the bureaucracies is increasingly being grabbed back by the state.

When you talk to people--

VICE CHAIRMAN BARTHOLOMEW: By the Party.

DR. FINKELSTEIN: By the Party, as you were, the Party. I misspoke. Certainly by the Party. When you speak to people out there and you read some of the military and non-military stuff, you get the real sense that since Xi Jinping took control, there's been a real move to recentralize control of how the Party-State is run, put it back in the hands of the Party, and I see that as part of the PLA also.

And so one of the things that's been so amazing to me, and I don't claim to understand the political dynamics of this at all, is that in the course of running the political work campaign in the PLA to get them ready for these rice bowl -cracking changes, a lot of dirty laundry has been aired, and I've been surprised about that. There have been some commentator articles. Well, back in April two years ago, there was a series on building combat power, in PLA Daily, with such great titles as "Generals Who Are Good at Ordering Dishes Should Make Way for Generals Who are Good at Commanding Forces."

That's a literal title; all right? Or there was another PLA commentator article, an eye-popping one, from my perspective, frankly, just in the last couple of months that, by innuendo, accused the four General Departments of having grabbed authorities over the military that rightly belonged to the Central Military Commission, and that an historical allegory from the Western Zhou dynasty about feudal princes was used to discuss the military regions. And I'm asking myself, because I don't know the answer, Commissioner, what is it that I don't understand that's going on out there that's going on below the surface?

So I think there clearly is some political issues out there, and, of course, there have been some Western scholars of China and the Chinese military who over the past years wrote that, oh, it's inevitable that with reform in economics that the military will become a state organ. I mean even the fact that a Westerner wrote this sent people in the Party and the PLA into tailspins and screwing themselves into the ceiling, right, because that is the ultimate heterodoxy.

So there is this real concern. There seems to be a real concern that no daylight ever be allowed to creep in between the Party's control over the military. What's going on below the surface on this I really don't know. I also think you're right. There are a lot of people in China who are looking over their shoulders. There's an air of apprehension, fear, in some cases, uncertainty about personal rice bowls. These are the things that we just don't understand.

As for the risks, you asked about risks, I can't speak for people inside the government, but I'll speak for people who look at this stuff from the outside like myself for the most part, but I'm at a point where I'm more in tune with what I don't understand about how that system works than what I do understand.

A lot of the things that we thought we understood need to be revisited. I mean if, you know, people like me have been writing forever on the Party, you know, the PLA is under the control of the Party, and the CMC is a Party organ, therefore, the PLA is under the control of the Party, but the PLA is making the point of saying we've got to make sure that the PLA is under control of the Party, right, well, what was going on before; right?

So the risk is that maybe some of us don't know as much as we really think we understand about what goes inside that black box, which is why we need to make sure that our

people on the inside who have such tremendous information continue to get resourced and do that good work.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Dr. Mastro.

MR. HEATH: If I could offer some comments. First, I would advise us to be cautious in overestimating the weakness of the Chinese Communist Party. If you look at Western polling, by firms like Gallup, et cetera, the Chinese people, in general, seem to have a lot of support for the Chinese Communist Party leadership. They tend to be among the most optimistic people in the world by some of the most recent polls in terms of the prospects for China and their own personal lives.

Xi Jinping himself seems to enjoy enormous popularity. Obviously, the polls reflect the fact that he's the only choice available for the Chinese people, but I do think it is more than that. It's easy to dismiss the support as simply an artifact of total control. I think the fact that the Chinese Communist Party has overseen a major increase in the standard of living for the people for decades now has built a lot of credibility for the Party, and they want to keep that.

So here's the central challenge for the Chinese Communist Party. They realize they have a short amount of time in which they still have the good faith of the people before that could quickly erode, and their challenge is how do you keep that increase in the standard of living and how do you make China a great power--the two promises that they've made to their people?

The problem that they're facing is that the old way of delivering both is exhausted. It doesn't work anymore. You cannot grow the country through exports and investment-led growth. Those engines are gone. So the only option left is to transform the economy and develop new sources of growth and transfer wealth from wealthy elites, who are mostly government people and Party officials, to the hands of the people so that the people can start driving growth.

And so there's huge political and economic, extremely difficult, choices that the Chinese Communist Party leadership has to tackle and have been tackling. We can debate whether it's the wisest approach or not, but I think it's fair to recognize the scope and magnitude of the challenge facing the Chinese leadership and the difficult choices they have.

Either they enact a crackdown and suppress and centralize power and take the risk and hope that these measures will provide them the means to carry out some of these difficult policies, or they don't do that, and then they risk further slowdown, further problems for the country in which the standard of living starts to stall out and people start, again, questioning the leadership of the Party.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Dr. Mastro, briefly.

DR. MASTRO: Thank you.

To go to the final question that you had, ma'am, about diversionary war theory, this idea that if you have less domestic support, that a leadership might want to divert their discontent to an external conflict. I won't bore you with the amount of alternative future analyses I've done on this issue. I'll just give you the bottom line, which is if the CCP does not feel confident in its control of power in China, I think we're going to see a very quick internal focus, no sorts of, you know, global expeditionary operations, even less so this constant operating presence in South/East China Sea.

They're not going to want to give the people any reason to be on the streets, even if it is ostensibly to provide a nationalist support for their policies, and they're going to want to focus more on using their military force to maintain domestic stability, which is the primary role of the PLA.

And once they get their house together, maybe then they'll go back to harassing us and our allies, but if they don't, I don't think we have to be concerned about them taking more aggressive actions.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Thank you.

Senator Dorgan. I got to get final questions in.

COMMISSIONER DORGAN: Well, thank you very much.

First of all, I'm pleased to be a part of the Commission. I was invited to and think it's consequential and relevant, and I appreciate serving you. And in this room, I served on the Senate Appropriations Committee for 18 years, and, Mr. Finkelstein, you are sitting at a desk where it's not unaccustomed to be asking for money, and you predictably did.

[Laughter.]

COMMISSIONER DORGAN: You might tell us where--and you can just submit it for the record perhaps--you indicated you felt there should be more funding for Chinese specialists, and it might be useful for us to get an analysis from you where do you think that investment should be made. I understand the point you made. I don't mean to make light of the point that you've made, but it would be useful, tell us, where do you think you would make those kinds of investments? And you can just submit that for the record.

I want, let me just ask the broader question, and then you may answer it as you wish, the three of you. In 1978, I was at the Kennedy Center event when Deng Xiaoping came to town, and I've been to China prior to that time and since that time, and I was in China six or eight months ago, and I was thinking then about what has changed since that period in the 1970s, and it is dramatic. They have plugged into the international economic system. It's very hard for them to unplug from that system. There's no circuit breaker in which they would think China can just unplug from that international global economy and things will be fine.

Things would not be fine, and they know that. So that limits their choices some, not all of them, but limits some of their choices. But I want to just ask a question about what I think is the most relevant issue, and it's the one that makes Chinese officials defensive and at least behind the stare somewhat embarrassed in my judgment.

I asked just some months ago all of the Chinese officials with whom I met about North Korea and said to them, you tell us that stability, both international stability and regional stability, is unbelievably important to you and you want to contribute to that stability. Is that not at odds with either the Chinese support for or the failure to rein in one of the great tyrants of the world in North Korea who threatens the U.S. and its allies with actual nuclear attacks? And those threats are fairly routine with Kim Jong-un.

And so I asked the Chinese leaders with whom I have met, how do you justify that, and tell us are you not somewhat embarrassed by the support, and would you not with the rest of the world attempt to find a way to address this, and clearly the Chinese position must clearly be at odds with promoting regional stability?

Well, they have answers for it. But the answers are very much like memorized lines in a stage play. The lines just don't change, and I expect, I understand why, that if someone did change the lines, they would be called to account for it. But the answer is not good. It's not acceptable. It is not something that we would in any way understand.

In terms of all of the issues out there, the most relevant issue to me is the Chinese support for a country and a leader who threatens nuclear attacks against the United States and its allies. Your assessment of what Xi and all of the others think about that in the quieter moments of their lives?

MR. HEATH: I'll offer some initial thoughts and invite my colleagues to weigh in. I do think there has been a shift in the Chinese policy towards North Korea from a less sentimental attachment to more a calculation of the cost/benefit of this relationship. We've seen that the Xi Jinping government has been rather cool to Kim Jong-un. I don't think they really particularly like him. They don't trust his judgment, and they're I think frankly exasperated by his behavior.

That said, I think they regard their options as very limited. They can either press so hard on Kim Jong-un and the North Korean government by withholding access to desperately needed food and other resources that the government could collapse, in which case the Chinese have a serious disaster on their hands, This would be a problem of magnitude that I think for them currently outweighs the threat that the North Koreans pose by potentially weaponizing their nuclear bombs.

But I agree with you that it's not a satisfactory answer. Their current approach has simply enabled Pyongyang to keep manufacturing and refining and improving and increasing the threat, and I don't have a concrete recommendation for the U.S. other than that working more closely with the Chinese in this one area of convergence--I do think there's some convergence here between U.S. and China--maybe we can achieve some breakthroughs because I agree, the current approach is not very successful.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Dr. Mastro.

DR. MASTRO: Thank you.

I think from the U.S. perspective, this idea that China doesn't take a harsher stance against a crazy man who has nuclear weapons, who is starving his people, is confusing, but when you put that description there, that was China. If you talk to the Chinese people in mainland China, they're more optimistic about North Korea's future because they say, you know, that's what China was like under Mao.

So they see the fact that they had a good leader, Deng Xiaoping, come in and allowed to pave the way for reforms that led to where China is today, and so, in many cases, they're not so, they're not so hopeless about the fact that not only could North Korea go along that path, but China could benefit economically from that.

In my conversations with Chinese officials, they talk more about how excited they are about access to ports in North Korea and to be the country to build their infrastructure than concerns about nuclear weapons.

I would just say that all of this has to be taken into account when you think about the competition between the United States and China. In my mind, the primary concern, or what China is thinking about, is the future of the Korean Peninsula and whether it will find itself under the sphere of influence of the United States or of China, and as long as they think the United States is going to continue to stay in South Korea and potentially become more influential in the whole peninsula after reunification, China will never support it, no matter what the North Korean dictator does.

COMMISSIONER DORGAN: I understand your point, but Mao did not have nuclear weapons, and that's the significant difference.

DR. FINKELSTEIN: So, yeah, as I often remind my Chinese interlocutors, with friends like North Korea, you don't need enemies. If it was not for North Korea, China would have owned Taiwan in 1950. If it was not for North Korea and their missiles, you wouldn't have had the Revised Guidelines for Defense Cooperation with Japan in '98. And if it wasn't for Korean actions, you wouldn't have had Japan providing monetary support for national missile defense.

So why is it that they continue to stay in league with North Korea? Because they want

that buffer. Until they understand what a unified Korea might look like, that buffer is better than anything that they could imagine. They want North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons, but for different reasons than we do. We feel threatened by North Korean nukes. They do not. They worry more about proliferation and Japan deciding that it will justify Japan getting a nuclear weapon.

So we have common ground at the moment, status quo, but for very different reasons, and of course they have ethnically Korean provinces on that border with North Korea. They worry about instability on that border.

So it's going to be very tough to get the Chinese to pry loose their addiction to North Korea, and, as Tim said, there's been a notable shift in attitude certainly on the part of the Chinese, and it actually goes back to 1992 when relations between the two soured when Beijing recognized South Korea. So I think this is a tough one.

But let me just address the resources issue. So let me be very, very clear on this. I happen to believe--

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Quickly.

DR. FINKELSTEIN: --that the best analysts of the Chinese military are inside our U.S. government. And my recommendation is that I would want to know that those people on the inside who are looking at these issues have what they need. That's the bottom line.

COMMISSIONER DORGAN: Okay.

DR. FINKELSTEIN: I don't know whether they need stuff. I don't know what their situation is. I'm not privy to those budgets, but I know that these are some of the best people in the world looking at this issue, and in this time of fiscal constraint in our government, I would want to know that they're getting what they need to be able to track all of this.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Let me thank you, the panel, and we'll take a quick break and get back on schedule at 11 o'clock with the second panel.

Thank you very much.

[Whereupon, a short recess was taken.]

PANEL II INTRODUCTION BY COMMISSIONER JEFFREY L. FIEDLER

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Our second panel today will focus on the implications of PLA joint training and operational deployments for the development of China's expeditionary force projection capabilities.

First, we'll hear from Mr. Mark Cozad, a Senior International Defense Policy Analyst at RAND. Mr. Cozad's work at RAND focuses on strategic warning, intelligence analysis, and security issues in Europe and East Asia.

Before joining RAND, he served in both the military and intelligence communities, to include an assignment as the Defense Intelligence Officer for East Asia and as the Deputy Assistant Deputy Director--

[Laughter.]

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Only in America--of National Intelligence for the President's Daily Brief.

Next will be Dr. Christopher Yung, who is the Donald Bren Chair of Non-Western Strategic Thought at the Marine Corps University. He conducts research on China's expeditionary warfare capabilities, emerging foreign and defense policy, and maritime capabilities.

He is the former Senior Fellow and Deputy Director at the Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs at National Defense University. Dr. Yung has supported the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, and the Combatant Commanders concerning Asian defense and strategic issues.

Please keep your opening remarks to seven minutes, and we'll have a vigorous round of questions following that. Thank you. Mr. Cozad. Yes. And Co-Chair Wortzel will keep the question list.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF MR. MARK COZAD
SENIOR INTERNATIONAL DEFENSE POLICY ANALYST, RAND CORPORATION**

MR. COZAD: Good morning and thank you, Co-chairs Fiedler and Wortzel, members of the Commission and staff. It is an honor to testify before the Commission on the PLA's concepts of joint operations and the military science research operational exercises and experiments that form the basis of PLA joint capabilities today. In my testimony, I will discuss PLA joint exercises and their applicability to future PLA expeditionary capabilities.

The PLA's joint exercise objectives over the past ten years have focused on two broad categories of testing and implementation. The first is enhancing training and the second is preparing for future operations. These essential focus areas currently outlined in China's military strategy, published in May 2015, are central to what PRC political and military leaders have defined as "preparation for military struggle."

The five areas the strategy identified as driving military preparations include: enhancing system-of-systems operation capacity; training in multiple domains and geographic environments; maintaining constant combat readiness; improving military training; and preparing for military operations other than war.

Furthermore, the PLA is striving to develop a military based on the concepts of "flexibility, mobility and self-dependence."

To date, none of the PLA's joint exercises have addressed expeditionary capabilities directly, particularly if an expeditionary force is defined and understood in the same context as the U.S. Department of Defense's definition.

Chinese operational concepts being tested in joint exercises are focused on operations involving two of China's most significant potential conflict scenarios: Taiwan-centered operations and chain reactions along China's periphery.

As China's overseas interests continue to expand, however, the need for expeditionary capabilities will most likely increase. Recent commentaries in China's official press highlight growing importance of overseas military operations, particularly in terms of protecting Chinese enterprises and citizens overseas from what PRC leaders term as "turbulence, terrorism, piracy, natural disasters and epidemics," among a growing array of interests.

Since the beginning of the 12th Five Year Plan in 2011, joint exercises have become a centerpiece of PLA modernization. Primarily, they provide a means by which PRC senior leaders can measure the PLA's progress toward achieving its most important modernization goals intended to produce a military that is more flexible, adaptable and deployable.

At the same time, integrated joint training methods examined in earlier exercises have evolved into a broader effort to improve realism and more effectively evaluate unit performance. Although many press reports following these events highlight shortcomings that continue to hinder PLA progress in the field of joint operations, they also portray significant improvements in realism and complexity as the units involved are placed in more dynamic scenarios, away from their familiar surroundings and with dedicated opposition forces providing more than token resistance.

Based on these improvements, the capabilities developed during these joint exercises are essential for meeting the PLA's objectives for being able to fight local wars under informatized conditions.

Overall, recent joint exercises have centered on large bodies of conventional forces and major conflict scenarios consistent with the "local war" construct. In multiple cases, such as

Mission Action-2013, Stride-2015, and Firepower-2015, the exercise scenarios were oriented toward Taiwan. In those cases where scenarios were neither reported nor self-evident, the exercise content and numbers of units involved represented relatively large-scale operations applicable to either Taiwan scenarios or border conflicts on China's periphery.

Accordingly, the progression of these exercises remained focused on the core elements that PLA leaders have identified as necessary to meeting their required modernization objectives.

From the PLA's perspective, the skills developed during joint exercises are applicable to a range of potential future expeditionary capabilities. The most recent edition of Science of Strategy published in 2013 argued that even though non-war military activities have their own unique characteristics and guiding principles, the development of capabilities for these activities is linked closely to the development of combat capabilities.

Based on this logic, PLA joint training involving long-range mobility, local logistical procurement, and adapting to new operational environments would be translatable to future operations to secure and protect PRC citizens and interests overseas. In line with new strategic concerns, the PLA has placed increasing emphasis on developing new capacity within the PLAN Marines, the PLAAF's 15th Airborne Corps, and the People's Armed Police Special Forces.

When considered with long-term PLAN counterpiracy deployments and in the context of these organizations' participation in joint exercises, these examples indicate that in an emergency or crisis situation, the PLA likely would have some capacity to consider responding to an overseas contingency even in the absence of an explicit classification of those activities as expeditionary.

While the PLA's expeditionary capabilities remain nascent and underdeveloped, the example of PLAN deployments to the Gulf of Aden demonstrates the PLA's capacity to deploy on relatively short notice, sustain extended operations, build on its experience, and implement changes based on those insights.

The key question that remains is whether the experience derived from the PLA's joint exercises would enable a successful operation requiring forced entry and sustained operations in a high-intensity hostile environment? It seems at this stage of development, this would be an extraordinarily difficult proposition for the PLA even under the best of circumstances.

Building on the major joint exercises held during the 12th Five Year Plan, exercises in the 13th Five Year Plan will undoubtedly reflect the PRC's most significant strategic concerns. The training subjects and scenarios involved in these exercises will thus be tailored to address those conflicts most central to the PRC's national security interests.

Following Taiwan's recent election and continued tensions on the Korean Peninsula, there a distinct possibility the PLA units most likely will maintain a predominant focus on training for Taiwan and regional contingencies.

However, as China's military strategy recognizes and recent threats to Chinese citizens in the Middle East demonstrate, PLA leaders and planners might be compelled to respond to intensified threats against Chinese citizens from terrorist organizations and related political instabilities that could harm PRC interests. If these threats were to materialize, the nature of PLA joint operations training would almost surely expand its scope to dealing directly with building an expeditionary capability toward these new sets of security concerns.

This concludes my statement and I look forward to your questions.

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PLA Joint Training and Implications for Future Expeditionary Capabilities

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RAND Office of External Affairs

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PLA Joint Training and Implications for Future Expeditionary Capabilities²

Before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission

January 21, 2016

The development of an effective joint operation capability has been a centerpiece of People’s Liberation Army (PLA) modernization objectives for much of the past two decades, particularly after the successes PLA witnessed from U.S. and allied forces operating over Iraq and the former Yugoslavia. The new methods of warfare that PLA observers identified during these operations placed a premium on the efficient use of both information and weapon systems to target an adversary’s war-making capacity as opposed to the brute-force conflicts of attrition that characterized military operations in previous generations. The strategic importance placed on gaining superiority in the air, sea, space, and information domains presented an imperative to People’s Republic of China (PRC) leaders—reorient the PLA’s static, ground-oriented military to become more agile and efficient or fail to keep pace with the demands of the global revolution in military affairs.

In 2001, PLA initiated its program to develop a credible joint operation concept with the *Five-Year Plan on Headquarters’ Informatization Building, 2001–2005*.³ This multifaceted effort consisted of conceptual development that brought together a broad body of military science research, technology development, new training guidelines, and operational experimentation. The plan’s culmination was marked by two experimentation exercises named Sharp Sword 2005, led by units in the Chengdu and Nanjing Military Regions. Units from the Chengdu Military Region were tasked with exploring new modes of integrated joint training, along with air-land integration between the PLA Army and PLA Air Force (PLAAF).⁴ Units from the Nanjing Military Region were tasked with experimenting on firepower strike coordination,

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² This testimony is available for free download at <http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT451.html>.

³ “Push Forward Revolution in Military Affairs with Chinese Characteristics, Build Informatized Command Organs—Excerpts of Advanced Typical Experiences from the All-Army Conference on Headquarters Building,” *Jeifangjun Bao*, September 28, 2004, p. 3.

⁴ Zhuang Lijun [庄利军] et al., “A Rapidly Expanding Transformation in the Training Domain” [训练领域一场方兴未艾的变革], *Liberation Army Daily* [解放军报], February 6, 2006; Cheng Sixun, “Exploration and Practice of Integrated Training of Military Region Units: Part One,” *Battle Flag News* [战旗报], February, 9 2006; and Cheng Sixun, “Exploration and Practice of Integrated Training of Military Region Units: Part Two,” *Battle Flag News* [战旗报], February 10, 2006.

integrated training methods, and interservice coordination mechanisms.⁵ Although this exercise highlighted several shortcomings in PLA's capability to perform integrated joint operations, it marked a significant foundational basis on which follow-on efforts would build.⁶

PLA's Concept of Joint Operations

PLA's evolving framework for "integrated joint operations" forms the foundation for its current joint operation concept.⁷ In order to achieve success in local wars under informatized conditions, PLA recognizes that it must link military information systems and networks that will enable PRC military planners to fuse "operational strengths" from each of PLA's services.⁸ These integrated joint operations thus rely on a flexible system that permits and enables adjustments and coordination over the entire depth of the battlespace and within all domains as the situation requires. As one senior PLA officer argued in the early conceptual development stages, these types of operations are driven by "the guiding ideology of 'comprehensive supremacy, precision strike, and destruction of systems.'"⁹

PLA's concept of integrated joint operations is linked closely with two other key ideas that drive PLA modernization objectives—"informatization" and "system-of-systems operations."¹⁰ The concept of informatization has guided PLA modernization formally for at least the past decade.¹¹ PLA considers it to be the essence of integrated joint operations, which rely on information networks to integrate and systematize operations designed to obtain information superiority.¹² From this perspective, informatization underpins most facets of integrated joint operations and serves as a key unifying theme in much of the experimentation that supported development of important new operational concepts, including "three attacks, three defenses," noncontact warfare, and target-centric warfare. Integrated joint operations are considered "the basic form and necessary requirement for informatized war," particularly in terms of ensuring real-time information support, effective precision weapon employment, and a system capable of

⁵ Zhuang [庄利军] et al., 2006; Zhang Wenping and Yan Wenbo, "Advance Phase of Second Artillery's Integrated Training Starts—Establishing Steering Group on Integrated Training, Organizing Trial Comprehensive Integration and Integrated Training, Conducting Theoretical Study on Integrated Combat and Training, and Exploring Characteristics and Laws of Integrated Training," *Rocket Forces News* [火箭兵报], July 13, 2004, p. 1; and Lu Feng and Ni Menzhi, "Mobile and Camouflaged Launches Using New Equipment Under Complex Weather and Terrain Conditions," *People's Front* [人民前线], July 28, 2004.

⁶ *Battle Flag News* [战旗报], "An Expedition That Spans History," March 9, 2006; and Wang Jianmin, "Footprints of the Forerunner," *Battle Flag News* [战旗报], February 16, 2006.

⁷ Shou Xiaosong [寿晓松], ed., *The Science of Military Strategy* [战略学], Beijing: Military Science Press [军事科学出版社], 2013, p. 125.

⁸ Shou, 2013.

⁹ Zhan Yu [战玉], "A Study of the Theory of Integrated Joint Operations" [一体化联合作战理论探要], *China Military Science* [中国军事科学], Issue 6, 2007, pp. 11–21.

¹⁰ Shou, 2013, p. 125.

¹¹ Ge Dongsheng, ed., *On National Security Strategy*, Beijing: Military Science Publishing House, 2006, p. 62; Hao Yuqing and Cai Renzhao, eds. *Science of Armed Forces Building*, pp. 280-282, and Ge, *On National Security Strategy*, p. 280; and Zhang Yuliang, ed., *The Science of Campaigns*, Beijing: National Defense University Press, 2006, p. 85.

¹² Song Youfa and Hong Yaobin, eds., *Integrated Joint Operations Command Headquarters Work*, Beijing: Military Science Press, 2005, p. 1.

rapidly deploying and configuring the necessary forces for a range of environments and contingencies.¹³ Furthermore, integrated joint operations entail precision timing for maneuvers, precise position data for fire strikes, and precision support for forces across the battlespace.¹⁴

PLA's emphasis on the "system-of-systems" concept is based on linking command automation; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR); precision strike; and rapid mobility in order to rapidly and efficiently strike an enemy's systems composed of vital sites and key nodes.¹⁵ PLA forces thus seek to employ "combat systems" that optimize operational strengths and the efficiency of critical weapons and capabilities from across PLA's services based on specific operational purposes, usually defined in the context of joint or combined campaigns.¹⁶ *The Campaign Theory Study Guide*, an early PLA textbook that address system-of-systems, identified the connection between campaigns and combat systems in the following manner:

Paralyzing the enemy's combat system has become an important means of winning a war. . . . Once there are problems in key links of the system, the entire weapon system and combat system will lose its combat effectiveness, or will even become paralyzed. This illustrates that modern campaigns are the confrontation between combat systems.

Advanced weapons and equipment and good strategy and planning both depend upon the integrity and coordination of combat systems.

Therefore, in modern campaigns, *attacking and paralyzing key nodes in the enemy's combat system* while ensuring the integrity and coordination of one's own combat systems has become an important way of winning.¹⁷

This important PLA teaching text—although an early version—highlighted two imperatives for success in future wars that remain central to PLA thinking on system-of-systems operations: the need to build and protect one's own combat system while simultaneously identifying an adversary's critical weaknesses and attacking them. These ideas, developed through PLA's military science research efforts, provide the underpinnings for PLA's most recent joint exercises.

Joint Exercise Objectives

Since PLA's initial experiments, joint exercise objectives have focused on two broad categories of testing and implementation: enhancing training and preparing for future operations. These essential focus areas—outlined in China's *Military Strategy*, published in May 2015—are central to what PRC political and military

¹³ Zhang, 2006p. 80; and Shou, 2013, p. 127.

¹⁴ Shou, 2013, p. 127.

¹⁵ Shou, 2013, p. 126.

¹⁶ Shou, 2013.

¹⁷ Xue Xinglin [薛兴林], ed., *Campaign Theory Study Guide* [战役理论学习指南], Beijing: National Defense University Press [国防大学出版社], 2001, p. 66, emphasis added.

leaders have defined as “preparation for military struggle.”¹⁸ The five areas the strategy identified as driving military preparations include (1) enhancing system-of-systems operations capacity, (2) training in multiple domains and geographic environments, (3) maintaining constant combat readiness, (4) improving military training, and (5) preparing for military operations other than war (MOOTW).¹⁹ Furthermore, PLA’s “integrated combat forces will be employed to prevail in system-vs-system operations featuring information dominance, precision strikes, and joint operations” while promoting the principles of “flexibility, mobility, and self-dependence.”²⁰ Despite the military strategy’s recent publication, PLA joint exercises since 2009 have built on these key themes and served as a centerpiece for PLA capability development.

PLA joint operations training entered a “standardized development” phase as the 10th Five Year Plan ended in 2010, presumably to experiment and test the joint operation concepts and practices that emerged from the Sharp Sword exercises. In 2009, PLA claimed a total of 18 large-scale exercises that explored a wide range of joint operation subject matter, including civil-military integration, naval and air force power projection, “systemic operations,” joint training methods, and war zone-level command and control.²¹ Three key exercises during 2009 and 2010— Firepower 2009, Stride-2009, and Mission Action 2010—demonstrated PLA’s progress in joint operations during the 10th Five Year Plan. More importantly, the underlying themes guiding these exercises and evaluations would serve as the basis for many components of the major exercises seen in the subsequent 11th Five Year Plan. In August 2009, four PLA divisions subordinate to the Shenyang, Lanzhou, Jinan, and Guangzhou Military Regions conducted “the first large-scale, intertheater, live-forces, checkout-type exercises since the founding of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army,” named Stride-2009.²² Participating units deployed to a PLA combined tactical training base located outside of their respective military regions. Training subjects ranged from practical evaluations of training practices and procedures to long-range mobility. PLA training methods were further enhanced through the use of dedicated opposition forces and the newly deployed “Army Unit Exercise and Evaluation System.”²³ Substantively, exercise participants tested new equipment types, including multiple features of the Beidou navigation and positioning system, electronic warfare systems, and psychological warfare support vehicles, among many others.²⁴ Stride-2009 also served as a comprehensive test in multiple specialty mobility-related areas, including fuel and material resupply, medical support, war compensation, and political work.²⁵

¹⁸ Information Office of the State Council, *China’s Military Strategy*, reprinted by *Xinhua*, May 26, 2015, p. 11.

¹⁹ Information Office of the State Council, 26, 2015.

²⁰ Information Office of the State Council, 2015.

²¹ “Overview of PLA Military Training in 2009,” *Liberation Army Daily*, December 30, 2009.

²² Li Yun and Wu Tianmin, “Stride-2009: A Major Exercise Sticking Close to Actual War,” *Jeifangjun Bao*, August 11, 2009, p. 1.

²³ Li and Wu, 2009.

²⁴ Li and Wu, 2009.

²⁵ Li and Wu, 2009.

Shortly after Stride-2009 began in October 2009, the PLA General Staff Department's Military Training and Arms Department convened an All-Army Symposium named Firepower-2009, which examined precision strike under informatized conditions. This three-day event brought together PLA experts and scholars tasked with developing new approaches and models for an advanced warfighting concept capable of integrating "precision reconnaissance, precision command, precision firing, and precision evaluation."²⁶ In contrast with the evaluation- and test-focused aspects of Stride-2009, Firepower-2009 served almost exclusively as a means for experimentation using demonstrations and working groups composed of military science researchers and operators. The symposium's content clearly reflected PLA thinking on the intersections between joint operation and system-of-systems concepts.

Mission Action-2010 marked the culmination of the 10th Five Year Plan's joint operation training efforts. This exercise involved multiple units from across multiple military regions in a test exercise that focused on transregional maneuver and testing of key operational functions, including joint campaign command, joint firepower strike, comprehensive protection, and precision support.²⁷ Overall, the exercise stretched for 20 days and included participants from the Beijing, Chengdu, and Lanzhou Military Regions, along with elements from both the PLAAF and PLA Navy (PLAN). Most notably, Mission Action-2010 marked the first time that operational forces crossed military region boundaries to participate in an operationally oriented joint exercise.

Progress and Prospects

Since the beginning of the 11th Five Year Plan, joint exercises have become even more of a centerpiece in PLA military modernization and experimentation. Primarily, they provide a means by which PRC senior leaders can measure PLA's progress toward achieving its most important modernization objectives. In contrast to the heavy emphasis placed on experimentation and concept development in the major joint exercises during the 9th and 10th Five Year Plans, recent joint exercises have focused on testing and evaluating a wider range of operational missions intended to produce a more flexible, adaptable, and deployable military. At the same time, the integrated joint training methods examined in earlier exercises—along with recognition among senior leaders that training quality needed to be improved overall—have evolved into a broader effort to improve realism and more effectively evaluate unit performance. Although many press reports following these events highlight shortcomings that continue to hinder PLA progress in the field of joint operations, they also portray significant improvements in realism and complexity, as the units involved are placed in much more dynamic scenarios away from their familiar surroundings and with dedicated opposition forces providing more-than-token resistance. Based on these

²⁶ "All-Army Artillery and Air Defense Forces' Symposium on Precision Attack Exercises Under Informatized Conditions Concludes," *Liberation Army Daily*, October 15, 2009.

²⁷ Cai Pengcheng and Li Yun, "Mission Action-2010 Trans-Military Region Mobile Exercise Concluded," *Jeifangjun Bao*, November 4, 2010.

improvements, the capabilities developed during these joint exercises are essential for meeting PLA's objective of being able to fight local wars under the conditions of informatization.

Overall, recent exercises presented scenarios involving large bodies of conventional forces in major conflict scenarios consistent with the "local war" construct, particularly those termed as "medium-scale" and "high-end" local wars.²⁸ In multiple cases—Mission Action-2013, Stride-2015, and Firepower-2015—the exercise scenarios were oriented toward Taiwan.²⁹ For instance, during

Stride-2015, Taiwan press reported and presented photos showing that PLA was practicing against a mock-up of Taiwan's Presidential Palace.³⁰ In cases where the scenarios were neither reported nor self-evident, the exercise content and numbers of units involved represented relatively large-scale conventional operations applicable to either Taiwan scenarios or border conflicts on China's periphery (see table). Accordingly, the progression of these exercises, even when centered on current leadership themes, remained focused on the core elements that PLA leaders have identified as necessary to meet their required modernization objectives— informatized, system-of-systems-based, high-tempo, multidimensional operations that integrate all PLA combat strengths.³¹

²⁸ Shou, 2013, pp. 99–100.

²⁹ Kang Yongsheng and Zhang Dianfu, "The 'Mission Action' Military Exercise Has No 'Deep-Level' Intentions," *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao*, September 27, 2013; "Chen Hu's View on Military Affairs: Detailed Interpretation on 'Mission Action 2013,'" *Xinhua*, September 27, 2013; and "Chinese Military Exercises Include Simulated Attack on Taiwan," Central News Agency, July 22, 2015.

³⁰ "Chinese Military Exercises Include Simulated Attack on Taiwan," 2015.

³¹ Shou, 2013, pp. 93–98.

Table: Select PLA Joint Exercises (2009–2015)

Exercise Series	Exercise Type	Main Content	Scenario	Key Points
Stride (Kua Yue)				
2009	Test and deploy evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-range mobility • Command and control • Systems integration • Logistics • Political work • Civil-military integration • Training methods 	Generic (viewed as threat within region)	Response to inability to combat forces to relevant theaters in crises; largest exercise of its kind at that time.
2014	Test and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint campaign command and planning • Training methods • Long-range mobility • Air and space reconnaissance • Information warfare • Air and long-range firepower strikes • Special operations • Civil-military integration 	Generic	Opposition force won six of seven confrontations; after-action analysis revealed commanders had not placed enough emphasis on key operational elements; weak command and organization.
2015	Test and 29 evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-range mobility • Training methods • Joint operations • Air-land integration • Special operations • Urban combat • Night tactics • Reconnaissance • Electronic warfare 	Taiwan	Opposition force won all engagements; lacked experience operating in unfamiliar terrain; poor coordination and information-sharing between units and service arms.
Firepower (Hue Li)				
2009	Experimental (symposium) on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconnaissance • Command and control • Precision strike • Training methods 	Generic	Likely a culmination of theoretical work performed joint firepower strikes and integrated joint operations.
2014	Tactical training exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-range mobility • Rapid response • Counter nuclear, biological, and chemical warfare • Air defense • Reconnaissance • Information operations • Firepower strikes • Training methods 	Generic	Focused on “actual combat” and improving joint operations; poor intelligence fusion; target acquisition under electromagnetic conditions.
2015	Test and evaluation for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combined arms • Long-range mobility • Command and control • Maneuver • Firepower strikes • Systems integration • Dynamic targeting • Damage assessment 	Taiwan	Slow decisionmaking and coordination; poor training some units prior to exercise; communication issues in complex environment.

Exercise Series	Exercise Type	Main Content	Scenario	Key Points
Mission Action (Shi Ming)				
2010	Test and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-range mobility • Power projection (PLAN/PLAAF) • Joint campaign command • Joint firepower strike • Comprehensive protection • Precision support 	Generic	First-time use of integrated command platform; information confrontation in all phases of exercises; commanders lacked knowledge of information-based system-of-systems operations.
2013		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amphibious operations • Long-range mobility/ power projection • Firepower strike • Comprehensive support • Protection • Civil-military integration • Air defense • Training methods 	Taiwan	Commanders continued to rely on old concepts; command staffs failed to use information systems effectively; showed limited adaptability.
Joint Action (Lian He)				
2014	Tactical training exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint operations • Theater command and control • Reconnaissance • Information operations • Training methods • Logistics • Ground-air integration • Civil-military integration 	Generic	Problems with air-ground integration; lack of standards for joint planning; problems coordinating firepower strikes; recognized need to improve mechanism for targeting.
2015	Mission-commanders oriented joint with emphasis on joint exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint command • Tactical joint operations • Joint logistics • Equipment support • Sea-air-land integration • Information operations • Maritime operations • Training methods 	Generic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stressed training • Urban combat • planning; attempted to build flexibility and adaptability among staffs; encouraged coordination between PLA services.

Training objectives for these exercises varied, but they focused largely on the key themes underpinning PLA modernization initiatives.³² Probably the most significant theme involved in each event dealt with long-range mobility and logistics support. Stride-2009 set a precedent for deploying units from multiple military regions to distant training facilities. Subsequent exercises built on this initial event with larger and more-complex deployments. Stride-2009 involved approximately 50,000 troops from four military regions—Lanzhou, Jinan, Shenyang, and Guangzhou—deployed to regional training bases that were on average 1,200 km from their home bases.³³ A main exercise component involved testing PLA's military logistics system, particularly local logistics and supply procurement, use of civilian air and rail transportation

³² For a more detailed breakout of exercise content, scenarios, and issues involved with each exercise, see the included table.

³³ Kent Ewing, "China's War Games Unnerve Neighbors," *Asia Times*, August 18, 2009.

assets, and coordination of bulk materials among PLA and local logistics departments.³⁴³⁴ By comparison, a single phase of the Mission Action-2013 exercise involved approximately 40,000 troops maneuvering up to 30,000 km to the designated training range.³⁵³⁵ Most notably, units deployed by means of military and civilian motorized, rail, maritime, and air transportation, simultaneously having to conduct “anti-reconnaissance, anti-air raid, anti-jamming, and anti-harassment drills” while en route to their designated training centers.³⁶³⁶ Subsequent exercises involved similar numbers and complexity and placed significant emphasis on long-range mobility in the exercise objectives. Firepower-2015 involved units from all seven military regions, and Joint Action-2015 consisted of five phases involving units from the Nanjing, Guangzhou, Chengdu, and Lanzhou Military Regions, along with PLAN and PLAAF.³⁷³⁷

Another major point of emphasis for PLA’s joint exercises is improving the ability of commanders and their staffs to plan and direct operations involving forces from multiple services and arms in unfamiliar, complex environments. Toward this end, PLA leaders have attempted to increase the realism and rigor involved in joint exercises by employing opposition forces, realistic scenarios that reflect potential future combat scenarios, and rigorous evaluation systems. During Stride-2014 and Stride-2015, opposition forces—referred to as “blue force” units in the PLA—won an overwhelming number of their confrontations against participating units.³⁸³⁸ In addition, the use of blue force units when coupled with long-distance deployments to unfamiliar training facilities provided commanders participating in all joint exercises with an opportunity to confront unfamiliar situations. These conditions stressed command staffs’ abilities to manage information, develop situational awareness, and direct the full-range of capabilities of the units participating in the exercises.

In addition to these two central themes in PLA joint training, these major joint exercise series contained a wide range of critical themes, including joint firepower strikes, reconnaissance and intelligence, special operations forces, amphibious operations, urban combat, and electronic warfare, among many other training subjects. During the 13th Five Year Plan, PLA will continue to build on achievements from the 12th Five Year Plan, while emphasizing improved training methods and exercise scenarios. To this point, PLA joint operation development has followed a consistent path of concept development, experimentation, and test and evaluation involving all parts of PLA. With the recent guidance outlined in *China’s Military Strategy*, PLA has been given a clear set of guidelines for those areas most critical to its

³⁴ Liu Mingxue, “PLA Modern Logistics System Develops Rapidly,” *Jeifangjun Bao*, September 18, 2009; Hu Qiyin and Sun Kedong, “Military-Local Cooperation: Joint Training and Joint Support,” *Guangzhou Zhanshi Bao*, September 17, 2009, p. 2; and Gai Xuhui and Tan Changjun, “Advance Detachment of Air Transportation,” *Jeifangjun Bao*, September 2, 2009.

³⁵ Wang Yushen, “PLA Will Carry Out ‘Mission Action-2013’ Exercise,” *Jeifangjun Bao*, September 9, 2013.

³⁶ Wang, 2013

³⁷ “PLA Holds Series Exercise to Beef Up Combat Power in Joint Operations,” *Jeifangjun Bao*, October 14, 2015; and “Firepower-2015’ Trans-Military Region Military Exercise Kicked Off,” *Jeifangjun Bao*, May 5, 2015.

³⁸ Lan Ying, “What Signal Does the Series of 10 Military Exercises Send?” *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao*, July 25, 2014; and Fang Yongzhi, “The Duty of the Blue Forces Is to Tell the Red Forces What Kind of War to Fight in the Future,” *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao*, July 24, 2015.

future concept of joint operations.

PLA joint capability development, as reflected in major exercises, has met with multiple successes. Likewise, this process has also highlighted a series of long-standing problems that PRC military leaders recognize as major obstacles to future operational success. In broad terms, the complexity involved in PLA exercises has improved markedly since the set-piece, large-scale exercises performed in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Most notably, exercises in which units deployed to dedicated training centers far away from their home garrisons, bases, and ports have emphasized the need for rapidly moving over long distances to respond to crisis situations.

Furthermore, as units deployed, they were tasked with integrating new weapon systems, reconnaissance capabilities, and command and control systems in scenarios that made regular use of blue forces, further lending realism to the training.

As PLA has improved in many areas, these exercises have highlighted a series of shortcomings in their after-action review process. One of the most noteworthy challenges is in the experience and decisionmaking of PLA commanders and staffs. In almost all of these exercises, PLA press reporting highlighted cases in which PLA commanders were not well-versed in the wide range of capabilities at their disposal, failed to coordinate and share information among the units under their command, and demonstrated weak command and organization skills.³⁹ Furthermore, the consistent difficulty that PLA units faced when confronted with blue forces highlights potential operational shortcomings when faced with situations approximating unfamiliar foreign

Based on the sources and detail of available reporting, it would be easy to overstate either the improvements or the continued shortcomings in PLA joint operations capability. Accordingly, due to the limited detail contained in reports on PLA joint capability development, overarching assessments should be caveated with an acknowledgement of the limitations of the available evidence. Regardless, the joint exercises that have taken place over the past two Five Year Plans represent significant moves forward from those exercises convened prior to 2005. PLA has gone to great lengths to improve realism and build real capability. Similarly, PLA continues to highlight persistent problems in command, integration, and planning. Therefore, the improved realism in joint exercises is, in part, designed to alleviate a

³⁹ There are numerous articles that discuss those shortcomings identified in a given exercises or those which the training event is designed to address. The following sources provide representative examples: Xue Xinglin, "Battlefields in the Eyes of Military Experts: Records of Interviews with Members of the 'Stride-2015 Zhurihe J' Exercise Observation Team of the National Defense University," *Guangzhou Zhanshi Bao*, October 12, 2015, p. 3; Fang Yongzhi, "Numerous New Changes in This Year's 'Stride' Series Exercises," *Zhongguo Qunghuan Bao*, June 19, 2015; Liu Qiang, "The 'Firepower-2015 Qingtongxia A' Exercise Is Conducted in a Strong Combat-Realistic Way; Artillery Groups Involved in the Exercise Are Given Comprehensive Tactical Tests with Live Ammunition Under the Condition of Live Force Confrontation," *Jeifangjun Bao*, July 19, 2015, p. 1; and Li Dayong and Li Xianghui, "Shenyang Military Region 'Joint-2013' Live Exercise Commences—Nearly 20,000 Personnel Participate in Exercise, The Purpose Is to Explore Campaign and Tactics Integrated Exercise Model, Advance In-Depth Jointness Among Ground and Air Units," *Jeifangjun Bao*, October 21, 2013, p. 2.

broader lack of combat experience within PLA; however, the degree to which PRC's military science-based approach to capability development can meet its most difficult objectives remains uncertain.

Implications for Expeditionary and Force Projection Operations

To date, none of PLA's joint exercises has addressed expeditionary capabilities directly, particularly if an expeditionary force is defined using the U.S. Department of Defense definition as "an armed force organized to accomplish a specific objective in a foreign country."⁴⁰⁴¹ The Chinese operational concepts being tested in joint exercises are focused on operations involving Taiwan or contingencies on China's borders. In many respects, these operational concepts reflect long-term thinking about two of China's most significant potential conflict scenarios: Taiwan-centered operations and "chain reactions" along PRC's periphery.⁴¹⁴² As China's overseas interests continue to expand, however, the need for expeditionary operations most likely will increase. Recent commentaries in official Chinese press highlight the importance of overseas military operations, particularly in terms of protecting Chinese enterprises and citizens from "turbulence, terrorism, piracy, natural disasters, and epidemics."⁴²⁴³ In addition, *China's Military Strategy* also outlines the need for PLA to be able to protect a variety of interests beyond China's borders.

From PLA's perspective, the skills developed during joint exercises are applicable to a range of potential future expeditionary operations. In particular, the most recent edition of *Science of Strategy*, published in 2013, argued that even though nonwar military activities have their own unique characteristics and guiding principles, the development of capabilities for these activities is linked closely to the development of combat capabilities.⁴³⁴⁴ Based on this argument, PLA joint training involving long-range mobility, local logistical procurement, and adapting to new operational environments is translatable to future operations to secure and protect PRC citizens and interests overseas. In line with new strategic concerns, PLA has placed increasing emphasis on developing new capacity within the PLAN Marines, People's Armed Police Special Forces, and PLAAF's 15th Airborne Corps.⁴⁴⁴⁵ The PLAN Marines have been involved in multiple long-range mobility exercises designed to build their capabilities in multiple environments. Similarly, a small contingent of People's Armed Police Special Forces performed training in Sri Lanka that addressed "single-soldier counterterrorism techniques, small group tactics, and combat training

⁴⁰ Department of Defense. *Joint Publication 3-0: Joint Operations*, Washington, D.C., July 11, 2011. The definition is found on p. 9 of the glossary.

⁴¹ Information Office of the State Council, 2015, p. 4.

⁴² "China's Overseas Military Operations Demonstrate Concept of Peaceful Development," *Xinhua*, July 31, 2015; and Yu Jincui, "Overseas Evacuation Attests to Nation's Responsibility," *Global Times*, March 31, 2015.

⁴³ Shou, 2013, p. 86.

⁴⁴ "PAP Special Operations Personnel Participate in Joint Training in Sri Lanka for the First Time," *Jeifangjun Bao*, June 22, 2015; Chen Guoquan, et al. "The 'Mighty Dragon at Sea' Withstands the Major Test of All-Area Operations: An Account of the First Cross-Region Movement and Cold Region Training of the Marine Corps of the PLA Navy with a Complete Unit," *Jeifangjun Bao*, March 21, 2014; and "Airborne Troops Beef Up Combat Capability in Long-Distance Airborne Drill," *Jeifangjun Bao*, April 22, 14.

methods” among other subjects. Lastly, the PLAAF 15th Airborne Corps has developed a relationship with Russia’s Airborne Forces which seeks to build joint training and academic exchanges.⁴⁵⁴⁶

When considered with long-term PLAN counterpiracy deployments and in the context of these organizations’ participation in joint exercises, these examples indicate that in an emergency or crisis situation, PLA likely would have some capacity to consider responding to an overseas contingency, even in the absence of an explicit classification of those activities as expeditionary. While PLA’s expeditionary capabilities remain nascent and underdeveloped, the example of PLAN deployments to the Gulf of Aden demonstrates PLA’s capacity to deploy on relatively short notice, sustain extended operations, build on its experience, and implement changes based on those insights. The key question that remains is whether the experience derived from PLA’s recent joint exercises would enable a successful operation requiring forced entry and sustained operations in a high-intensity, hostile environment. It seems that at this stage of development, this would be an extraordinarily difficult proposition for PLA, even under the best conditions.

Joint operation exercises in the 13th Five Year Plan will undoubtedly reflect PRC’s most significant strategic concerns. The training subjects and scenarios involved in these exercises will thus be tailored to address those conflicts most central to PRC’s national security interests. With Taiwan elections looming and uncertainties about the direction of the China-Taiwan relationship, there is a distinct possibility that PLA units most likely will maintain a predominant focus on training for Taiwan and regional border contingencies. However, as *China’s Military Strategy* recognizes and recent threats to Chinese citizens in the Middle East demonstrate, PLA leaders and planners might be compelled to respond to intensified threats against Chinese citizens from terrorist organizations and related political instabilities that could harm PRC corporations and interests. If these threats materialized, the nature of PLA joint operation training would almost surely expand its scope to dealing directly with building the expeditionary capabilities tailored toward this new set of security concerns.

⁴⁵ “Ma Xiaotian Meets with Russian Guests,” *Jeifangjun Bao*, May 28, 2014.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF DR. CHRISTOPHER YUNG
DONALD BREN CHAIR OF NON-WESTERN STRATEGIC THOUGHT AND
DIRECTOR OF EAST ASIAN STUDIES, MARINE CORPS UNIVERSITY**

DR. YUNG: Co-Chairmen Wortzel and Fiedler, Commissioners of the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to appear before this Commission to discuss China's overseas operations and their implications for China's ability to undertake joint "out of area" expeditionary operations.

The specific focus on my testimony this morning will focus on three of China's recent expeditionary operations: their most recent counterpiracy operation begun in 2009; the Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations that have taken place in 2011 and 2015; and then finally their most recent U.S. peacekeeping operations involving their infantry battalion and special forces deployments.

To date, the PLAN has conducted 22 deployments to the Gulf of Aden for the purpose of engaging in counterpiracy operations. These include escorting merchant shipping, maritime intercept operations, visit, board, search and seizure, and if necessary direct action by China's special forces.

So to summarize what some of the lessons that came out of those operations were: the first immediate lesson that came out of the counterpiracy operations was an assessment of what was needed to deploy and conduct those missions, and the initial lessons learned was that they needed a different force package, and that first force package, the initial package included two surface combatants and an underway replenishment ship. The need to bring something a little different, ultimately an L-class ship, an LPD, was inserted into that force package in addition to the inclusion of special forces. So that's the first lesson that came out of that operation.

A second operational lesson that the PLA has learned and institutionalized is the normalization and stabilization of the deployment and rotation process of its flotillas.

So the initial first to seven deployments were about three to four months, and then they steadily increased to about 170 to 200 days, and they've held steadily to that range, about 170 to 200 days, since then. So between eight to the current number, 22, they've held at about 170 to 200 days.

A normalization deployment schedule suggests that the PLA has learned and institutionalized force management processes, and we can talk at length later on about what that suggests about their ability to project power and to sustain the sort of normalized rotation process. But I won't take up my time going into detail over what those are.

A third operational lesson has to do with the content and extent of the PLAN's predeployment training. And, again, I'm sure some of your questions will get to that, what kinds of training did the PLA Navy go through in order to prepare. We'll talk about that at length I'm sure in the Q and A.

And a fourth operational lesson appears to have been the improved integration of naval intelligence with its operations. So initially their escort operations were between two fixed points. As they were getting intelligence to indicate that threats that were moving closer or farther to the east, they adjusted their operations. Additionally, they were getting intelligence that pirates were targeting larger shipping, and they adjusted their tactics to deal with that.

So the idea that the Chinese are using intelligence and adjusting their operations seems to be the case, at least that's what we seem to be seeing.

A final lesson appears to have been a growing comfort and facility with the manage of

out of area logistics, and we can talk at length about the extensive network they're forming and developing, the lessons they're learning about that, and we can talk about that in the Q and A as well.

The next scenario or case study that I'll talk about is the Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation. The initial one took place in 2011 in Libya. It was an interagency force involving a single navy frigate, some commercial shipping, a single PLA Air Force aircraft, and was essentially an interagency task force headed and managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The lessons that they may have learned and applied to their later and subsequent NEO taking place in Yemen in 2015 appears to have been the following:

So the first lesson appears to be the case that the process of managing and effectively dealing with interagency coordination seems to have been the case. There were many lessons learned with regard to how difficult it is to put together a NEO involving multiple agencies.

A second lesson appears to have been that because it's so difficult to put together such an interagency task force, there are definitely benefits to having a military-only operation. So the NEO that took place in Yemen was a strictly military operation. They diverted their counterpiracy task force, reshipped task force to deal with the Yemen conflict. So a potential lesson may have been there's a great deal of benefit to having a military-only operation.

A third lesson from the Libyan NEO is the importance of accurate intelligence for the operation, the operational plan for the NEO task force. The Libyan NEO task force is said to have been surprised at the sheer number of Chinese citizens, over 35,000, requiring rescue. The military and government officials were absolutely surprised of the total number of Chinese requiring evacuation from that country.

So they have recognized that a better sense of what's going on in the country when you need to conduct a NEO is absolutely essential.

A fourth operational lesson from the Libyan NEO is the recognition of the importance of access to third-party airfields, ports and other facilities in support of these kinds of operations.

The PLA Air Force aircraft, four IL-76s, refueled in Sudan before continuing on to Libya where it evacuated about 1,700 citizens.

And then the final case that I'll look at is the U.N. peacekeeping case. Just to summarize that in a nutshell, the PLA quickly learned that when you deploy infantry battalions or special forces, you can certainly learn how to conduct expeditionary logistics. Whereas, before they would send medical personnel, engineers, and others, and particularly police, the PLA could learn nothing about how you combat load those individuals or those units on to transports, on to aircraft, et cetera. Certainly they've learned that lesson with their most recent deployments in South Sudan and in Mali.

I think what's interesting from these recent deployments is that you can learn, you can almost project what a near-term Chinese expeditionary operation would look like. And so with that, I will just take up a little bit of my time just going into what that would look like.

So the first characteristic would be the PLA will most likely normalize special operations and ground troop deployments with task forces as possible force packages to address contingencies ashore. We saw this manifest itself in the use of PLA special forces deployed on the 19th counterpiracy task force as a ready force to support Chinese U.N. peacekeeping operations in Mali.

I've been on the record as stating that the PLA is probably not far off from deploying ground forces like the United States Marine Corps deploys amphibious ready groups.

Another characteristic of future PLA joint expeditionary operations is the continued

deepening and refinement of the PLA's logistic support network and access agreements with facilities throughout in the Indian Ocean region.

And, finally, a fourth characteristic of future operations is likely to be the military-only nature of this, this type of operation. It's less likely to be interagency, more likely to be military only.

Now, if you look at these gradual improvements, you can sort of see an upward trajectory of how the PLA is increasingly able to conduct these types of expeditionary operations. These in and of themselves are not necessarily threatening to U.S. national security, but I would point out that there are a couple of indications and warning that I would point to that the United States would probably need to take a look at, and if you started seeing these types of developments would be, to me would be a great concern to U.S. national security interests.

The first of these would be the development of an overseas basing, formal basing and military facility, as we discussed in the first panel, not--unlike the kinds of access agreements they have now, which are not--which are not formal agreements, which do not involve permanent military presence. So that would be the first indicator.

The second indicator to me would be the pursuit of a full-fledged blue water power projection capability, multiple carrier battle groups with the attendant capabilities to protect that type of force.

The third indication and warning that I would list would be China's involvement in joint operational exercises with many of the countries in the Indian Ocean region involving these power projection capabilities.

And the fourth would be China's willingness to engage in out of area operations absent an invitation from the United Nations or from the host nation to participate.

So those would be a few of the indications and warning that I would take a look at. Let me end there, and I'm sure we'll have a very rich discussion on what the implications are for China's joint expeditionary power projection capabilities.

Thank you.

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. CHRISTOPHER YUNG
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**“China’s Expeditionary and Power Projection Capabilities Trajectory: Lessons from
Recent Expeditionary Operations”**

Testimony by Christopher D. Yung, PhD

Donald Bren Chair of Non-Western Strategic Thought, Marine Corps University

Testimony Before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission,

Washington, D.C., January 21, 2016

Introduction

Co-Chairmen Wortzel and Fiedler, Commissioners of the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, ladies and gentlemen, I’d like to thank you for the opportunity to appear before this commission to discuss China’s overseas operations and their implications for China’s ability to undertake joint “out of area” expeditionary operations.

On December 26, 2008, three surface combatants of the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) weighed anchor from the Sanya naval base in Hainan Island and set sail for the Gulf of Aden to conduct escort and counterpiracy operations. Since that time the PLAN has undertaken twenty-two such deployments. In the course of undertaking those operations the PLAN has learned some invaluable operational lessons to which it can improve its ability to project power far from China’s shores. This will be the first case that I discuss in detail for this hearing. In 2011 following the rapidly deteriorating political and security situation in Libya, the Chinese dispatched an interagency task force to conduct a Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) eventually rescuing some 35,000 of its citizens from that country. In 2015 the Chinese followed up with a second NEO when it diverted one of its counter-piracy task forces to rescue citizens from war torn and civil war ridden Yemen. This will be the second case that I examine and discuss with the Commission today. Finally, although China has engaged in peacekeeping operations since its initial foray into this type of activity in 1989, it has only recently deployed combat units for the purpose of conducting force protection and security provision missions. The PLA deployment of infantry units to Mali and to South Sudan in 2013 and 2015 respectively makes up the third case that I will discuss with the Commission today.

The PLA’s Evolutionary Improvements Since 2009

The Gulf of Aden Counter-Piracy Operations

The greatest abundance of information on China’s “out of area” operational deployments can be found in the PLAN’s counterpiracy operations from 2009 to the present. To date, the PLAN has conducted twenty two deployments to the Gulf of Aden for the purposes of engaging in counter-piracy operations. These include escorting merchant shipping, maritime intercept operations, visit, board, search and seizure (VBSS) and, if necessary direct action by China’s

special forces. Like all good militaries the PLA has collected operational lessons from these deployments and instituted changes throughout the seven year time period. The first of the lessons learned was a recognition that the flotilla required more lift capability in order to perform all of the expected missions in the Gulf of Aden. The initial counterpiracy mission involved a replenishment ship and two destroyers. Subsequent deployments have included in their force packages the recently acquired Type -71 Landing Platform Docks (LPDs) in addition to a guided missile destroyer and an underway replenishment ship.

A second operational lesson that the PLA Navy has learned and institutionalized is the “normalization” and stabilization of the deployment and rotation process of its flotillas. The initial first to seventh deployments were 3-4 months and then steadily increased to between 170 and 200 days.¹ The 11th Task Force set the record at 200 days and each subsequent deployment has held between 170 and 200 days.² A “normalized” deployment schedule suggests that the PLA has learned and institutionalized force management processes to include a predetermined training and “work up” process; a reliable maintenance and a timely equipment installation process; a closely monitored personnel management system; and some kind of rational scheduling system which determines which of the PLAN’s surface combatants are due to take part in the operation and which are needed elsewhere.

A third operational lesson has to do with the content and extent of the PLAN’s pre-deployment training. The first deployment involved very little pre-deployment preparation, and was very much characterized by a “learn by doing” process. With each subsequent deployment the PLAN has apparently taken its lessons and codified these into a substantial pre-deployment training process. Pre-deployment training for officers involves a two week counter-piracy course held at the Nanjing Naval Command College.³ The crews of the flotillas, additionally, receive pre-deployment training including exposure to likely contingencies on deployment, exposure to a large number of emergency plans, and drill scenarios. Additionally, the crews participate in simulations of rescue operations, participate in live fire exercises, and the special operations units take part in training involving repelling off of shipborne helicopters and Visit Board Search and Seizure (VBSS) techniques. Finally there is some evidence that by the 11th Task Force the Chinese training program has evolved to include a task force (not just individual ship but all three ships in the flotilla) pre-deployment “work up”.⁴ After leaving its homeport, the task force transits through the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea, and the Strait of Miyako, and into Northwest Pacific where it engages in at-sea exercises.⁵ This training process is close enough to a U.S. Navy carrier group or Amphibious Ready Group “work up” cycle that it is hard not to conclude that the training program is part copy of U.S. Navy pre-deployment cycle and part lessons learned from Gulf of Aden operations.

A fourth operational lesson appears to have been the improved integration of naval intelligence with operations. Prior to the PLAN’s Fifth Task Force deployment the PLAN traditionally conducted area patrols between two main points about 600 nm apart.⁶ By July

¹ Andrew Erickson and Austin Strange, “No Substitute for Experience: Chinese Antipiracy Operations in the Gulf of Aden”, CMSI #10, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI, November 2013.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

2010, according to Andrew Erickson and Austin Strange, the PLAN task forces started adjusting their escort rendezvous points to match “geographic trends in pirate attacks.”⁷ The counter-piracy task force extended the route of coverage to the eastern part of the Gulf of Aden to address the fact that the pirates had adjusted their location of attacks against shipping.⁸ Additional evidence that the PLAN is making use of intelligence in its counterpiracy planning can be found in reports that later counterpiracy task forces were adjusting their tactics to address the intelligence they were receiving that pirates were shifting their attacks to larger merchant ships. PLAN task forces began placing Chinese special forces troops on some of these larger ships.⁹ The rapid dispatch of the counterpiracy task force to Yemen as its political and security situation quickly deteriorated suggests that the Chinese have taken some effort to marry its expeditionary operations with improved operational intelligence. This strongly suggests that the PLAN has learned how to fuse information on the current situation at sea and adjacent land areas into a coherent intelligence picture which can then be translated into a planning process and into maritime operations.

A final lesson appears to have been a growing comfort and facility with managing out of area logistics support. The initial deployment involved minimal in-port access and the first crew had no liberty opportunities despite being at sea for 3 to 4 months.¹⁰ The PLAN has evolved the logistics support network to include an evolving network of facilities and bases in which the counter-piracy surface combatants can replenish themselves. At the beginning of the counterpiracy mission, the PLAN was reluctant to pull into ports for replenishment and tended to only use its replenishment ship to take on stores and then subsequently conduct replenishment at sea for the rest of the task force; however, it is apparent that the PLA has become adept at managing logistical support for these task forces. COSCO with its many agents and networks of ties has served as a key player in assisting Chinese embassies and consulates in arranging for supplies for the PLAN task forces.¹¹ As a consequence, over time the counter-piracy task forces have become quite comfortable pulling into foreign ports, replenishing, conducting military diplomacy with the navies of the region, allowing the crew liberty, and then continuing with the mission.¹²

Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEOs)

The PLA has also learned from its Non-Combatant Evacuation (NEO) of 2011 and applied some of those lessons to the subsequent 2015 Yemen NEO. In 2011 as the political and security situation in Libya steadily deteriorated following some of the chaos and collapses of Middle East regimes during the “Arab Spring”, the Chinese government dispatched a mixed civilian and military task force to conduct a Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) of Chinese citizens working and residing in Libya. The operation involved a combination of a single PLA Navy frigate diverted from the Gulf of Aden counterpiracy operation, PLAAF military aircraft dispatched from China, commercial aircraft, COSCO shipping, and leased

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Andrew Erickson and Austin Strange, “Learning by Doing: PLAN Operational Innovations in the Gulf of Aden”, *China Brief*, Vol. 13, Issue 21, Jamestown Foundation, October 24, 2013.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

ferries from third nation countries.¹³ The inter-agency task force was under the command of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and like western management of NEOs directly managed by the Chinese Ambassador to Libya. The NEO took place without any significant set backs. One interesting note is that the Chinese were not prepared for the sheer number of citizens needing to be rescued, with the eventual number of 35,000 Chinese citizens evacuated from Libya shocking the Chinese military and civilian officials alike.¹⁴

The first lesson which appears to have been derived from the Libya experience is of course the importance and difficulty of Inter-agency coordination and management. The process in which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was in charge and required extensive coordination and planning with other major players was said to have been unwieldy and needed to be streamlined and simplified.¹⁵

The process may have been so unwieldy that a second lesson appears to have been the recognition that there are benefits to a NEO involving a military only task force and not a hybrid of civilian and military assets to conduct the operation. The Yemen NEO involved only naval vessels diverted from the counter-piracy task force operations. From conversations the author has had with PLA observers of the Libya NEO the PLA was aware that had the Libyan situation been more chaotic and had Chinese citizens not been able to get to the coasts the civilian platforms and the limited Chinese military assets would not have been able to get to those citizens.¹⁶ The author has also learned from his interviews that the complexity of the inter-agency process in which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was given control over the operation made the operation more complex than was necessary.¹⁷ The Yemen NEO which involved only naval assets suggests that at least in some cases the PLA considers that the cost of inter-agency complications outweigh the benefits of such an inter-agency operation.

A third lesson from the Libya NEO is the importance of accurate intelligence for the operational plan of the NEO task force. The Libya NEO task force is said to have been surprised at the sheer number of Chinese citizens (over 35,000) requiring rescue.¹⁸ Chinese planners thought that there was a much smaller number of expatriate citizens which is consistent with U.S. planning assumptions for NEO operations. When ARG/MEU planners are given an initial assessment of the number of citizens to be evacuated, they often treble the number as a more accurate prediction of how many citizens are actually going to get evacuated.¹⁹ There appears to have been no reports of similar intelligence/information failures in the subsequent Yemen NEO.²⁰

A fourth operational lesson from the Libyan NEO is the recognition of the importance of access to third party country airfields, ports and other facilities in support of these kinds of

¹³ Andrew Erickson and Gabe Collins, "Implications of China's Military Evacuation of Citizens from Libya", *China Brief*, Vol. 11, Issue 4, Jamestown Foundation, March 10, 2011.

¹⁴ Author interviews. Beijing, March 2011.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Authors experience as a civilian analyst attached to the staff of Commander, Amphibious Group Two, from September 1998 to August 2001. In his capacity as the command's Center for Naval Analyses field representative the author took part in numerous ARG/MEU "work ups" which included preparation for Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEOs).

²⁰ "PLA Navy Use for First Time in Naval Evacuation from Yemen Conflict", *China Brief*, Vol. 15, Issue 7, April 3, 2015.

operations. The PLAAF aircraft, four IL-76s, refueled at Khartoum, Sudan, before continuing on to Libya where it evacuated 1,700 Chinese citizens.²¹ As the U.S. military learned during its “Libya raid” operation (Operation El Dorado Canyon) some twenty nine years earlier, not having access to airbases and airspace can significantly complicate a military operation. As Erickson and Collins point out another lesson from this operation is that the Chinese now have learned the diplomatic and international coordination efforts necessary to get access not only to its “Out of Area” naval operations, but also for its expeditionary air operations as well.²²

UN Peacekeeping Operations in Africa

The third and last example of Chinese expeditionary and out of area operations is its involvement in UN peacekeeping operations, particularly in Africa. China first deployed peacekeepers in 1989 when it dispatched 20 civilian personnel to the UN Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) monitoring elections in Namibia.²³ It first deployed military units in 1992 when it dispatched a small number of troops to the UN Transition Authority in Cambodia for an 18 month period.²⁴ Since then its involvement and participation in UN peacekeeping operations has steadily increased and has contributed close to 20,000 peacekeepers since the mid-1990s. In 2009 the majority of Chinese peacekeepers offered engineering, transport or medical support.²⁵ Most of the PLA’s activities in support of UN peacekeeping operations has involved the building of roads, bridges, treating patients and clearing mines. In 2009 China was the 13th largest contributor of civilian police in support of UN peacekeeping operations.²⁶

In May 2009 China’s General Staff Department (GSD) announced that it would be establishing an “Arms Force System” for Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW). The announcement indicated that “the aim is to strengthen PLA’s emergency response system and enhance its capacity for rapid deployment both inside and outside of China.” Five specialized type of forces would be created to support this system: Flood and disaster relief forces; a post-earthquake emergency rescue force; a nuclear, chemical and biological disaster rescue force; an emergency relief force for transportation facilities; and finally, an International Peacekeeping Force.²⁷ This development suggests that the PLA sees peacekeeping operations as part of an emerging and developing expeditionary force management system.

China’s most recent peacekeeping deployments to the African continent have involved a significant shift in the scale and type of these kinds of operations. In 2012 rebel groups had driven government forces out of northern Mali and by early 2013 were threatening the capital.²⁸ For the purposes of supporting the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) the PLA deployed for the first time infantry and special forces troops.²⁹ Whereas

²¹ Andrew Erickson and Gabe Collins, “Implications of China’s Military Evacuation of Citizens from Libya”, *China Brief*, Vol. 11, Issue 4, Jamestown Foundation, March 10, 2011.

²² Ibid.

²³ Bates Gill and Chin-Hao Huang, “China’s Expanding Role in Peacekeeping: Prospects and Policy Implications”, SIPRI Policy Paper #25, November 2009, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Stockholm, Sweden, p. 4.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 5.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 15.

²⁸ Frans Paul Van der Putten, “China’s Evolving Role in Peacekeeping and African Security: The U.N. Deployment of Chinese Troops for U.N. Force Protection in Mali”, Clingendael Report, September 2015, p. 9.

²⁹ Ibid.

before Chinese peacekeepers had been deployed as support units and subsequently folded into other Peacekeeping units, this time the PLA deployed as a separate integrated unit to provide force protection to the multinational UN presence.³⁰ Of equal significance, Chinese special forces deployed on China's counter-piracy task force ships already under a UN mandate. These troops were subsequently authorized to be on-call to support the Mali mission.³¹ The PLA forces deployed to Mali as a UN peacekeeping force have had to contend with a deteriorating security situation, including the possibility of attacks against the UN compound, UN encampments and UN personnel. The Mali operation has provided definite operational learning experiences to the PLA. The most apparent benefit has been to provide experience in the field to the PLA's infantry units. The mission has also given the PLA a direct exposure to the force protection mission.

In early 2015 China deployed an infantry battalion comprised of some 700 soldiers to South Sudan as part of the UN Mission to the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS). These troops like the troops in Mali, were armed with light weapons and furnished with armored personnel carriers (APCs).³² The PLA peacekeeping mission provided force protection to UN personnel operating in South Sudan. Again, like Mali, the PLA peacekeepers were made up of both infantry and special forces troops. In South Sudan however the mission assigned was more expansive. There the PLA were tasked with protecting "the local people and other countries' personnel engaged in peaceful activities".³³ These included humanitarian assistance and economic development activities. The UN mandate in fact specified that the PLA's mission was to "deter violence against civilians, including foreign nationals, especially through proactive deployment [...] and identification of threats and attacks against the civilian population, [...] in areas at high risk of conflict including [...] oil installations."³⁴ Although the South Sudan mission does not specify that the PLA mission in South Sudan is to protect Chinese property and expatriate citizens, the PLA forces in South Sudan could conceivably be utilized for this purpose.

Having described in general the evolution of China's UN peacekeeping activities, what specific operational lessons might the PLA have learned from the recent shift of the types of PLA units being deployed to African peacekeeping missions—that is, from engineers, medical personnel and policemen to infantry units and special forces? Although PLA peacekeepers have not engaged in combat operations the more security oriented focus of these latter deployments do add considerably to the PLA's bag of operational lessons learned.

First, throughout China's experience with peacekeeping the PLA has gained experienced operating in challenging environments. However, with the PLA's role shifting to a direct security provision mission the PLA will have gained operational experience in riot control, patrolling, operational intelligence gathering and analysis, civic affairs, military inter-operability with other nations, and managing a large scale military emergency command system. Secondly, the deployment of an infantry battalion into an austere environment will have provided the PLA with direct experience in expeditionary logistics and the requirements of preparing a ground combat force to deploy overseas for contingency operations—not an easy task. The Chinese will

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid, p. 20.

³⁴ Ibid, pp. 20-1.

have learned what gear to pack on a grand scale, how much of their gear should be packed and how that gear should be packed and configured in whatever forms of transportation are available for the PLA. Since the PLA forces have been transported to Africa by various means (the infantry battalion by commercial air, the Special Forces by PLAN ships) PLA logisticians and combat cargo officers will have gained invaluable experience loading combat forces on various forms of transport platforms. Finally, having deployed to Africa the PLA will have gained direct knowledge and intelligence on a range of locales which will help in future operations. These include direct knowledge of ports and facilities, air fields, bridges, roads, ethnic and cultural groupings, local politics and local politicians, foreign presence, and the military capabilities of national and local governments.

What a near term PLA joint expeditionary operation will probably look like

Given what we have just observed of PLA “out of area” operations, it is safe to make a few predictions on what near future PLA expeditionary operations have a good chance of looking like. First, it is likely to be the case that the PLAN will continue their counter-piracy deployments, possibly in another guise as the piracy problem increasingly fades as an issue. Given the success of the past seven years of the UN, EU and Chinese counter-piracy missions and the drop off of piracy incidents in the Gulf of Aden, there is now less of a pressing need for this mission. Although the counterpiracy mission could simply shift to another geographic area—perhaps in West Africa by the Gulf of Guinea where piracy is still a problem there. The counter-piracy task force is likely to evolve into a more comprehensive “out of area” force supporting Beijing’s larger “out of area” security interests. Thus, a second characteristic of China’s near term joint expeditionary operations is that the PLA will most likely normalize special operations and ground troop deployments with the task forces as possible force packages to address contingencies ashore. We saw this manifest itself in the use of PLA special forces deployed on the nineteenth counterpiracy task force as a ‘ready force’ to support Chinese UN peacekeeping operations in Mali. I have been on the record as stating that the PLA is probably not far off from deploying PLA ground forces like the USMC deploys MEUs on ARGs.³⁵ This recent development suggests that I was correct in that assessment.

A third characteristic of future PLA joint expeditionary operations is the continued deepening and refinement of the PLA’s logistics support network and access agreements with facilities throughout the IOR. The PLA has since 2009 developed a sophisticated network of facilities to which its task forces have relied on for logistics support. This has involved a concerted effort by the Chinese consulate/embassy staffs and close coordination with Chinese State Owned Enterprises with assets and personnel on the ground to lend assistance. I have been on the record as stating that the likely next step will be the acquisition of some kind of logistical support facility designed to support the PLA’s out of area non-traditional threat missions.³⁶ The recent announcement that Djibouti is permitting the PLA to construct and make use of such a facility appears to have vindicated that view point.

Finally, a fourth characteristic of future joint expeditionary operations is likely to be the military only nature of these operations. That is, as PLA power projection capabilities improve

³⁵ Christopher D. Yung, et al, “Not An Idea We Have to Shun: Chinese Overseas Basing Requirements in the Twenty First Century”, *China Strategic Perspectives* # 7, NDU Press, October 2014.

³⁶ Ibid.

and the PRC becomes less reliant on SOEs and commercial assets to conduct out of area operations such as a NEO, the nature of the operation is more likely to look like the Yemen NEO than the Libya NEO. Relieving the Chinese government of having to manage a complex inter-agency process by having a strictly military operation is a sound enough rationale to predict that these out of area operations are going to be less inter-agency and more solely military.

How to Assess the long-term trajectory of China's Out of Area Operations

While these incremental changes to PLA Navy “out of area” operations suggest a gradual improvement in the ability to operate in the Far Seas, this begs the larger question of how extensive a power projection reach is China likely to have in the decades to come? Should the United States be concerned militarily about China's expeditionary trajectory? The answer to the second question is obviously dependent on the first. The first question I will address here and the second I will address in a subsequent section of this written testimony. In 2010 I co-authored a National Defense University study³⁷ whose purpose it was to assess the long-term trajectory of China's out of area naval deployments. In that study the NDU team concluded that any evaluation of the long-term future direction of China's out of area military deployments should be examined using five criteria: (1) ability to manage distance; (2) ability to manage duration; (3) the ability to sustain capacity; (4) the ability to manage increasing complexity of coordination at long-distances; and (5) the ability to manage an extensive hostile environment.³⁸

Distance: A number of developments in the PLA Navy suggest that China will gradually and eventually master the tyranny of distance in its “out of area” operations. One data point to ponder is that the modernization of China's surface combatants has allowed China's task forces to operate at greater distances. For example one Jiangkai II (Type 054A frigate) sailed over 42,000 nm or two times the earth's circumference during its counter-piracy deployment.³⁹ A second development in support of China's “distance” problem is the aforementioned evidence that China is building a more formalized network of facilities to which it will have access and the recent news that China will establish a logistics and supply facility on Djibouti for the purposes of servicing and supporting its counter-piracy task forces. This latter development will significantly mitigate logistical problems China's counterpiracy task forces have had to face given the long distances between China and the flotilla.

Duration: The ability of China's counter-piracy task forces to stay out for longer periods of time and operate for greater periods of time is also in evidence. As mentioned previously the PLA task forces had initially been operating for a 3-4 month duration, this duration has increased to the point that a typical task force is expected to operate for about 170 to 200 days.⁴⁰ In part this is the result of improved logistical support networks as well as modernized surface combatants. However, it is also safe to say that greater duration may also be a function of improved training, an increased number of naval personnel accustomed to “out of area” deployments and an increasing number of PLAN modern surface combatants.

³⁷ Christopher Yung et al, “China's Out of Area Naval Operations: Case Studies, Trajectories, Obstacles, and Potential Solutions”, *China Strategic Perspectives # 3*, NDU Press, December 2010.

³⁸ Ibid, pp. 30-3.

³⁹ Andrew Erickson and Austin Strange, “No Substitute for Experience: Chinese Antipiracy Operations in the Gulf of Aden”, CMSI #10, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI, November 2013.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Capacity: On the issue of a deepening Chinese Navy force structure, the increasingly modern PLAN addresses yet another factor shaping the prospect of China’s long-term expeditionary capability—capacity. China will likely be able to sustain long-term operations in the “Far Seas” because it will have a larger number of modern surface combatants to rotate into the region for long periods of time. In 2009, an initial shortcoming and an “Achilles Heel” for Chinese Out of Area operations was the small number (only two at that time) of modern replenishment ships in China’s inventory. This has recently been addressed with the acquisition of additional modern comprehensive replenishment ships bringing China’s replenishment force up to seven.⁴¹ Similarly the continued acquisition of modern frigates, destroyers and cruisers also gives China a larger pool of surface combatants to draw from and enter into a pool of rotating ships thereby assisting in addressing the capacity problem. China is expected to add six Luyang-II/Type 052C and a dozen Luyang III/Type 052D destroyers, 20 Jiangkai-II/Type 054A frigates, which will substantially add to China’s modern surface combatant capacity.⁴²

Complexity of Coordination: Since the size of the PLAN counterpiracy task forces has remained constant over the past six years, China’s ability to manage and coordinate an increasingly larger naval task force “out of area” has not been illustrated by observations of the Gulf of Aden deployments. However, PLA Navy exercises in the Western Pacific have been increasingly more complex suggesting a process of improved command and control at the task force level.⁴³ Additionally, there is some evidence of improved ability of the PLA Navy to coordinate and control vessels being escorted through an effective use of VHF with foreign flagged vessels. This is furthermore manifested in coordinating rendezvous, managing ships of varying speeds and duration, and working out optimal formations for the protection of the escorted vessels.

Hostile Environments: With regard to China’s long-term prospects to deal with hostile security environments in the “Far Seas” there is some evidence that China is taking steps to address this. The acquisition of the Liaoning aircraft carrier and the news that China is in the process of building an indigenous carrier would provide additional protection to the counter-piracy task force. Unclassified reports that China will soon be procuring a Type 081 larger amphibious ship such as an LHD⁴⁴ would—with its large flight deck and capacity to hold more aircraft than is currently the case with the Type 071 LPD—go a long way toward providing increased AAW and ASUW protection to future counter-piracy task forces. By 2018 the PLAN may field more ships with phased array radar than its rivals in the Far East (e.g., the JMSDF) and has been equipping its most recently acquired surface combatants with helicopter hangars which can be expected to improve ASW in the long-run.⁴⁵ Additionally there are unclassified assessments which claim that China is developing a cruiser sized combatant which can, if

⁴¹ “Trends in China’s Naval Modernization”, Testimony of Jesse Karotkin, Office of Naval Intelligence before the U.S. China Economic and Security Review Commission, January 30, 2014, p. 5. See also Dean Cheng, “China’s Pivot to the sea: The Modernizing PLA Navy”, *Backgrounder # 3084*, Heritage Foundatin, December 17, 2015.

⁴² Dean Cheng, “China’s Pivot to the sea: The Modernizing PLA Navy”, *Backgrounder # 3084*, Heritage Foundatin, December 17, 2015.

⁴³ Christopher H. Sharman, “China Steps Out: Stepping Stones Toward a New Maritime Strategy”, *China Strategic Perspectives # 9*, NDU Press, April 2015.

⁴⁴ Ronald O’Rourke, “China’s Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities—Background and Issues for Congress, Congressional Research Service, December 21, 2015, pp. 37-8.

⁴⁵ Dean Cheng, “China’s Pivot to the sea: The Modernizing PLA Navy”, *Backgrounder # 3084*, Heritage Foundatin, December 17, 2015.

equipped properly, assist in the missile and area defense mission over time.⁴⁶ However, in so far as the PLA needs dedicated anti-missile ships capable of providing protection to its task forces like USN cruisers do for the U.S. carrier strike groups, China's AAW and missile defense systems are still in their infancy so it is safe to say that for the foreseeable future PLAN "far seas" operations would still be vulnerable to a concerted missile attack from land based aircraft and other seaborne aircraft .

Long-term Indications and Warnings (I&W)

These long-term developments just described do not necessarily portend a direct threat or challenge to future U.S. national security interests or to international security writ large. However, it is possible to identify a number of long-term developments that would suggest threatening developments inside China and would be a concern for U.S. national security interests. The first of these of course would be the construction and establishment of a formal overseas base with significant naval and air assets stationed there. The increasingly formal network of facilities that the PLAN currently has access to cannot be put in this category. I am also on the record as expressing my skepticism that such a "String of Pearls-like" development would occur.⁴⁷

A second I&W would of course be the persistent development of a blue water capability comprised of significant power projection assets. China developing and constructing several aircraft carriers as well as such attendant force protection assets as missile defense surface combatants, a long-range submarine force, a surface combatant force capable of conducting effective ASW, and numerous effective air wings all portend military developments that would directly challenge U.S. and Indian military superiority in the IOR regardless of China's strategic motives.

A third I&W would be a consistent effort on the part of the PLAN and the PLA to conduct large scale joint exercises with a few of the militaries in the Indian Ocean Region. The repeated presence of the PLAN in increasingly larger numbers of surface combatants conducting joint naval drills with some of the militaries in the region, would suggest an effort on the part of the PLAN to become familiar with the operational capabilities of potential partners and to the operational environment in which a future conflict might take place. Such a development, of course, does not encompass PLAN participation in joint naval drills with the U.S., India, and Australia as happens with the Malabar exercises.

A final I&W would be China's willingness to take action and deploy troops on the ground in Africa and elsewhere in the absence of a U.N. mandate or an invitation by a potential host nation to assist in a security situation. At present China's officials are on the record as indicating that any overseas Chinese deployment of forces either at sea or on the ground requires one or both of the above mentioned conditions. With such expanding interests in Africa it is conceivable that the Chinese might find themselves in a situation requiring that it deploy ground forces to help protect Chinese citizens or property. It is possible that China could take such an

⁴⁶ Ronald O'Rourke, "China's Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities—Background and Issues for Congress, Congressional Research Service, December 21, 2015, p. 26.

⁴⁷ Christopher D. Yung, et al, "Not An Idea We Have to Shun: Chinese Overseas Basing Requirements in the Twenty First Century", *China Strategic Perspectives* # 7, NDU Press, October 2014.

action in the absence of a UN mandate or an invitation by the host nation without necessarily threatening U.S. national security interests; however, were this to happen this suggests that the Chinese leadership has undertaken a fundamental shift on its attitudes toward out of area operations and what is permissible for Chinese intervention abroad.

Policy Implications

Whether Chinese joint expeditionary operations go down a path that would be of concern to U.S. policy makers or not, a PLA with an increasingly global reach certainly will have strategic implications for U.S. policy. First, such a military will allow the PRC to exert a degree of political pressure that it is only now beginning to enjoy. Such a capability combined with a “One Belt, One Road” foreign economic policy initiative will represent a degree of Chinese political leverage/influence over some of the governments of the IOR that is significantly above what China enjoys today. If China also establishes a more permanent military presence on one of the region’s facilities I am on the record as stating that the U.S. relationship with some of the countries of the IOR has probably fundamentally shifted⁴⁸—in short, some of the countries of the region have concluded that they are not necessarily aligned with the U.S. and have thrown their hats in with the Chinese.

A second implication is that the PLA Navy will have been transformed into such a capable force that U.S. assessments of China’s warfighting capabilities will need to be re-evaluated as they pertain to the more likely “Near Seas” contingencies (e.g., a Taiwan scenario or a South and East China Sea scenario). Therefore, a 2035 PLA Navy which has experienced over 25 years of improving “Far Seas” operations is likely to be a much more lethal naval force than is presently the case. A confrontation between China and the U.S. over a Taiwan scenario in 2035 would mean the U.S. confronting a Chinese Navy which has much improved ASW, ASUW, AAW and sea borne logistics.

Third, if China is able to comfortably project power in the Indian Ocean Region and beyond, that implies that China will be able to exert political and diplomatic pressure through the threatened use of force in areas that China has not traditionally done in the past. Although certain such coercive activities have been declared “off limits” by Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials and Chinese academics, and representative of hegemonic behavior U.S. policy makers should be cognizant that the Chinese could serve as a competing voice on larger geo-political issues to which the U.S. has a significant interest.

Finally, on a more positive note a gradually improved PLAN with an effective rotational presence in the Indian Ocean and the ability to conduct complex far seas operations has the potential to be a more effective global partner—assuming that the U.S. and China see eye to eye on a range of maritime security issues. Consequently, a China that is acting like a partner in global security has potential for greater opportunities to conduct joint exercises with the U.S. military and to engage in other cooperative activities with the U.S. such as joint NEOs or joint humanitarian assistance/disaster relief operations, and even possibly joint counter-terrorism or counter-insurgency operations abroad.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Conclusion

The People's Liberation Army over the past seven years has accumulated a number of invaluable operational lessons from its counter-piracy, NEO and peacekeeping operations. These lessons have unquestionably improved the PLA's ability to operate "out of area". American PLA watchers may disagree over the depth and extent of the Chinese Navy's improved capability; however, no expert observer would disagree that the Chinese Navy has become much more "salty" or comfortable with blue water and "out of area" operations. Similarly, no China watcher would disagree with the idea that PLA ground forces are much more comfortable operating in alien, foreign, and increasingly challenging security situations since initiating PLA participation in UN peacekeeping operations.

The PLA's comfort with these kinds of "out of area" operations manifest themselves in how the Chinese military has been adjusting its operations to improve effectiveness. These adjustments, in turn, provide clues on how the PLA is likely to conduct joint expeditionary operations in the future. The most eye opening likelihood is that PLA ground forces are likely to be deployed on PLAN task forces, as USMC MEUs deploy on USN Amphibious Ready Groups, and will be tasked to address a wide range of Chinese overseas contingencies (e.g., NEOs, HA/DR, counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency). A second likelihood is that the PLA will deepen and make more extensive its logistical support system, developing divisions of labor, and eventually evolving into a semi-permanent Chinese overseas military personnel presence. I have labeled this type of facility a "dual use logistics facility" elsewhere. Finally, as China's military power projection capabilities mature we are likely to see less inter-agency, hybrid "out of area" operations and more military only expeditionary operations..

This paper examined the long-term trajectory of China's "out of area" operations using criteria developed in a previously published National Defense University report. I argued in that report that evaluating China's long-term out of area trajectory should be based on five criteria related to distance, duration, capacity, complexity of coordination, and mitigating hostile environments. This paper has argued that China appears to be on a positive trajectory towards dealing with these obstacles. The paper has also identified specific "warning signs" or "indications and warning" which would provide clues to U.S. policy makers and strategists that China's "out of area" operations have taken a dangerous turn. These I&W are: (1) formation of and utilization of a full fledged overseas military base; (2) the formation of a comprehensive offensive blue water power projection capability; (3) repeated involvement in "out of area" joint exercises with several of the nations of the IOR; and (4) Chinese willingness to operate "out of area" in the absence of a U.N. mandate or permission from a host country.

Finally, there are long-term strategic and policy implications of this assessment. Regardless if the I&W listed above start to manifest themselves or not, if the Chinese military by 2030 are comfortable conducting "far seas" operations and have developed an extensive network of supporting logistics facilities, the Chinese will be in a position to exert greater political pressure on the region than has previously been the case. This will pose a large political challenge to the United States given that Chinese interests in the region will not necessarily overlap with American interests. Twenty years of effective Chinese "far seas" operations will also add to the lethality of the PLA Navy in a "near seas" contingency which is more likely to involve the United States than would a "far seas" contingency. Lastly, a more professional and

effective PLA Navy and PLA ground force, comfortable with “out of area” operations, would, under positive circumstances make a more effective global security partner with the United States if U.S. and Chinese security interests overlap for some, if not all, situations,

Over the past seven years, the PLA has taken some significant steps toward improving its ability to operate abroad. This is a remarkable achievement in such a short period of time. This does not necessarily portend a threat to U.S. national security, however, a robust, effective PLA capable of challenging U.S. security interests far out from China demands prudence and vigilance. It is my hope that my testimony today has helped congress, this administration, and subsequent administrations in their evaluation of China’s long-term joint expeditionary capabilities.

PANEL II QUESTION AND ANSWER

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: Well, thank both of you. I want to thank you for some very thoughtful testimony. Jeff, you're on.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: I have a couple of questions. I'm concluding that other than close-in expeditionary capability, meaning going after Taiwan, the islands they're creating don't strike me as particularly defensible when push comes to shove, and is that there's going to be an emphasis on special operations; right.

The second thing I got from your testimony, both your testimonies, is the logistics problem that they have. I mean it's one thing to store food and fuel. It's another thing to store weapons, right, which you need in order to have a real expeditionary capability. You can't fly them all in right away. So there's that limitation.

Do they have any combat experience in their peacekeeping operations? And what kind of fight did they run into in Yemen and in Libya? Have they gotten any combat experience out of this?

DR. YUNG: Limited. Limited experience. What you get out of the U.N. peacekeeping operations are more patrolling, security, force protection type of experience.

Being out in the field is certainly important so I don't want to dismiss the idea that they're getting field experience and the ability to operate out in the field and interact in an international environment. Direct combat experience, no, they're not getting that type of experience from their out of area expeditionary operations.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Because it's a different kind of experience when somebody shoots at you; right? I mean decision-making--

DR. YUNG: Yes.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: The joint decisions that you were talking about in the Aden Gulf that they've experienced on the piracy work are absent conflict. I mean, yeah, okay, I get it, it's good, but, you know, you can communicate with people easily when nobody is fighting with you.

DR. YUNG: Right.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: So they don't have--I raise the issue of decision-making. Clearly if you're operating in Aden, the commander was making his own decisions.

DR. YUNG: Yes.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Right?

DR. YUNG: Well, hold on. Now there was communication between that task force and Beijing so there is a tether. So he's making his own decisions, but there is coordination--

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: What's the tether like? I mean--

DR. YUNG: That we don't know. We're not sure exactly how restrictive that tether is.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Because it seems to me that their capability is always diminished by their sort of overly hierarchical decision-making process. So we're not picking up that these guys are being able to make more decisions on their own without worrying about Beijing?

DR. YUNG: I can certainly--let me defer to Mark. But I have, I have one data point on that, but let me let Mark answer that question.

MR. COZAD: I think there are a couple of issues that tie into this. The first gets to the question of combat experience, and they are very explicit in recognizing that there is not a great deal of combat experience in the PLA right now. Much of the system that they have in place is

focused on military science research that is based off of observations of other militaries, engagement with other militaries, and they're trying to take those lessons, indirect as they may be, and incorporate them into a workable framework.

So when you look at a concept, and joint operations is one--I highlight this in my written paper--when you look at the way that they put those together, it is a very long-term process that does a very in-depth analysis of all the different components of how these operations fit together. So in the absence of combat experience, they rely on that system to give them what they think they need, and I think that's a big question in terms of how good these capabilities really are, is the degree to which that system provides that experience.

The second part of that is a major focus in their recent joint exercises has been on developing the capabilities of command staffs and commanders to be able to act in situations of uncertainty and in new environments, and that has been a challenge for them in these exercises. That is continuously highlighted in the after-action reports that we see, in the military press reporting that we see, and it's been a fairly consistent theme. This was something that was recognized by both the Navy and the Air Force, probably about five years ago, in that mid-level staff officers have a limited amount of creativity and a limited amount of decision-making capacity in situations where they aren't able to work off--

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: It's a fear of making a mistake; isn't it?

MR. COZAD: I think that's an element of it, but I also think that it's a system that is very structured, is bounded by what they see as laws of war and a process that tells you how these things are going to unfold, and because of that, it's a very different perspective than officers who walk into a system that is much less structured, much less dictated by that body of military science research and the institutions that puts those out.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Thank you very much.

DR. YUNG: The only thing I would add to that is your question about the degree of the tether. From my discussions with the PLA Navy, there was some buzz that they had wanted to take greater participation in the foreign, the other counterpiracy operation, the SHADE or the EU-led task force, but that when they went back to Beijing, they were not given permission to do so.

So the impression I get is the operators wanted to have greater interaction with the other forces, but Beijing would not permit them to do that, and so that gives you a sense of the degree of the tether that still exists there. So I would argue that they're not, the task force commander is not given free rein to do whatever he wants. He does have to go back to Beijing to ask permission to do certain types of things.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: Thank you, both.

I have two brief clarification questions based on what you've shared with us so far, and then I would like to get from you, given your testimony, what you think we might recommend; what are the implications of what you found?

So the clarification question, first of all, for Mr. Cozad, you were outlining the training and preparation that's going on, and you mentioned the marines, and then secondly you named the armed police special forces. I'm wondering if you could describe a little bit more what that is, and if there was a third component after that, I missed capturing that.

And then, Dr. Yung, you spoke what it would be like, what it would look like going forward, and you said one thing that might be the case is a joint task force in the Indian Ocean. If you could amplify on that, that would be great.

But to the role of this Commission, when we take what we've been hearing today and with our other hearings and develop a report to Congress, we try to be very specific on recommendations. So given what you have told us today, what recommendations might you suggest we think about over the next few months?

Thank you.

MR. COZAD: In terms of the PLAN Marines, the People's Armed Police Special Forces, and the third was the PLA Air Force's 15th Airborne Corps.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: Okay.

MR. COZAD: I added those because they are regularly involved in joint exercises. However, the nature of their involvement in the joint exercises is a little bit different from some of the key themes that I think are really central to this idea of expeditionary capabilities.

The People's Armed Police Special Forces act outside of the PLA. One of the interesting points about them has been that they have been involved, in certain cases, in overseas training on counterterrorism operations, and the one that I highlight specifically is their training with Sri Lanka. So, again, in a situation where you're potentially looking at Chinese citizens being held overseas, they have to go in and do some type of rescue operation in a hostile environment, that is a very important experience for them, and a lot of that was actually on tactics and training. It wasn't a theoretical discussion or more of just a face-to-face bilateral type of meeting.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: Is it a large group?

MR. COZAD: No, it was a small group.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: Small group.

MR. COZAD: It was a very small group. I don't have the specific numbers, but they mentioned that it was small.

With the marines and the 15th Airborne Corps, the marines, in particular, have been doing a lot of training in environments recently that are outside of the norm of what we have seen the marines typically do. And the marines are located down in the Guangzhou military, or the former Guangzhou Military Region--excuse me. And they've primarily been focused on training for situations that are related to Taiwan.

What we have seen over the past couple years is a much greater emphasis on training in cold weather environments, in mountain environments, in urban environments, and part of that is an explicit statement on the part of the PLA that they are looking to build up this capability for uncertain environments or to respond to specific crises.

They don't say what those crises are, but again it's to make a more adaptable and deployable force. The PLA Air Force, 15th Airborne Corps, again is very closely tied into these joint exercises. Frequently, however, with these exercises, it's their capacity in some sort of a Taiwan situation.

The thing that I thought was very interesting about that, however, is within the past year, the PLA Air Force commander met with the commander of the Russian VDV and talked about deepening the relationship between the two organizations and taking away some lessons learned, and what I think is significant about that is when we look at the Russian military, the VDV, their airborne forces are typically one of the elements of that military that are maintained at a very high degree of readiness with the idea that they will be deployable for a range of crises and contingencies.

So that's why I think the focus on those, although slightly outside of the joint capabilities range, is a very important development.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: Thank you.

DR. YUNG: To the question of what a PLA joint task force would look like in the Indian Ocean region, I think in some of the work that I've done, I speculated four years ago that I could conceive of the PLA deploying special forces or ground troops on these task forces to go into the Indian Ocean and address contingencies ashore--counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, force protection--I'm sorry--protection of property, protection of businesses, et cetera.

That was speculation four or five years ago. The Mali deployment—in which special forces deployed with a counterpiracy task force—that the U.N. mandated that force to then be a force in readiness to go support the U.N. peacekeepers in Mali--

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: I see.

DR. YUNG: --suggests to me that this is becoming much more of a reality. Additionally, it just makes sense that the Chinese would do this. If you put ground forces on your counterpiracy task forces, they're ready to conduct operations ashore, to deal with NEOs, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief, and it's politically safe. No troops ashore, no permanent military presence in another country, and they are ready to react to any contingency the Chinese military needs them to do.

Additionally, it addresses the netizen or the citizen problem. What's the Chinese government going to do about these problems we have abroad? Well, we deploy our special forces, our ground forces to address whatever problem. So I think it has all the elements of a policy that works for Beijing. It's politically safe, and even the United States would not really have a problem with that. And what's wrong with an ARG/MEU deployment of Chinese making? So I think it has all the elements of it, and I think we're beginning just to see the fact that it's, I think, coming to fruition.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: Thank you.

MR. COZAD: And I wanted to get back--

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: Yes.

MR. COZAD: --to the second part of your question for me, and I think in looking at the development of joint capabilities within the PLA, it gets back to that question of the process by which they derive their lessons learned and take those lessons learned and turn them into concepts of operation and actually tactics and operational practices, and that is that the PLA has been--has lacked combat experience. For militaries traditionally that have lacked that combat experience, it has been extremely important for them to gain that experience through advanced training.

And typically with the two models that you're looking at you're looking at militaries aligned along the Soviet model and the U.S. model and advanced training that comes from both of those.

With the U.S. and Chinese model or with the U.S. and Chinese relationship, the depth of the training that has gone on between them is limited. For all the statements of the cooperation between the two, there's clearly a great degree of mistrust there, and I think there are certain things that the Russians in their interests are not going to provide in that training relationship.

On the other side, and we can take examples looking at, say, India, which had significant capability shortfalls in the 1990s, reached out to a variety of nations and learned very quickly how to use advanced weapons from a wide range of different suppliers.

It raises the question about China's military engagement with the United States as well as with other places. I think it is in our interests definitely to continue military-to-military relations that are focused on confidence- building measures. The one thing that I think has to be watched out for is the types of know-how and practical information that they seek from us, but also from

our allies and those countries that we have training relationships with because it is a potential pathway into that knowledge by engaging with countries who we do a lot of work with.

So I think from that standpoint, we have to be very cognizant of the types of relationships and the depth of the relationships and the substance of the relationships that China is striking out with partners of our own.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: Thank you. Dr. Yung.

DR. YUNG: And also to address the second part of your question, what types of recommendations or things should this Commission at least think about or at least be focused on?

Let me echo what Dave Finkelstein had said about the focus on the people looking at this problem. I agree with him that the very best folks looking at this are within government, but I'd also note that Dave's offhanded remark about the fact that five of your testimonial folks are CNA analysts suggests that even our think tanks and the resources that they may need also should be focused on.

I'm no longer associated with CNA or with RAND, but let me just say that those folks do good work, and so we also need to think about that resources are in short supply, and it affects everyone.

But I would also note another thing: for the next generation of analysts looking at this problem, we've cut funding towards national security foreign languages.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: Right.

DR. YUNG: The ability to read Chinese and all of these different languages is absolutely crucial, but those resources are going away. So our next generation of young folks who are going to be trained in Chinese and have the ability to travel abroad and do that is also something I'd like to highlight, and we are dangerously close to depriving those folks of the resources to do that type of work as well.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: Thank you both very much.

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: I want to explore areas where the U.S. should encourage or avoid working together, particularly in the area of NEOs. I mean I had a very graphic experience when we had to evacuate students and tourists out of Beijing after Tiananmen, and the Japanese had rented all the buses. They had every bus, and I went up to the Japanese attaché and said, you know, I got like 150 people here, can I use your buses? They were empty. And he said no. Drove away.

Russians came by, empty, and said, sure, go ahead, we'll drop them off at the embassy. And I later went over to the Japanese Embassy, and he explained that there's a legal prohibition. There was. It's been lifted in the past three months. But there was a legal prohibition in Japan of any military cooperation on things like that with another military. So my question to you is outside U.N. control, in a NEO, are you aware of any legal constraints in China that would prevent the PLA from working with us because I can envision places and times where we might have to work together? Or are those CMC policy decisions?

And the second part of that would be what can we do to explore how we might approach a common contingency together?

DR. YUNG: I'm unaware of any legal restrictions preventing the PLA from participating in Non-combatant Evacuation Operations. In fact, when I was at NDU, and we had strategic dialogues with us, they were exploring the possibility of increasing the cooperation. So at least my PLA counterparts didn't seem to suggest that there were any restrictions.

Short of the legal restrictions the Chinese state up-front, is the operation involving host

approval, is there some sort of U.N. mandate, et cetera, their view on the restrictions always tended to be the political. That is could we get cooperation with the United States? Additionally, the Chinese have one other political concern. Does it look like the Chinese are somehow kowtowing or at least second fiddle to the United States? That would be another consideration the Chinese might take.

But other than that, the Chinese have not expressed any limitations on their willingness to do NEOs. Now, the flip side of that question is our concern about cooperation with the Chinese and what they learn. Some of our operators have said that there are certain basic tasks that they're reluctant to share with the Chinese.

So, for example, the counterpiracy task force has pulled up to some of our operators in Djibouti and said, hey, can we conduct a replenishment at sea with you? Can we do these types of things? And our operators rightfully will say no because that certainly will enhance your capability. So there are certain limitations on what we should cooperate on if it enhances their military capability, and I would agree with that assessment.

But other than those types of restrictions, I'm not aware of any legal restrictions the Chinese would have other than the restrictions they've already laid forward right now. That is the U.N. mandate restriction and an invitation from a host nation to participate in some sort of operation.

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: So an opposed force insertion, even if their citizens were at risk, would create problems for them?

DR. YUNG: I think politically it would. I don't think there's any legal restriction that the Chinese would have, but, yeah, politically, that might cause problems for them. But as Oriana has indicated, the Chinese will certainly adjust their stand on some of these principles based on the circumstance at hand. So if their citizens are in grave peril, there's a political argument that the Chinese leadership could make that, hey, we need to go in and insert our forces to pull those individuals out.

In fact, let me just point out that I actually had this conversation with the PLA NDU colonel on this point. I had indicated that I said, listen, as your interests grow and expand, you're going to have to do these types of operations. You're probably going to have to violate some of the principles, as you indicated, and go in and grab people out of countries that are falling apart.

His response, whether it was true or not, was, no, I don't see that happening. It's unlikely to happen in the way you indicate. You Americans like to walk around with a big hammer. Your military is like a big hammer, and so you see a nail everywhere. So his view was, no, we wouldn't conduct that kind of operation; I don't see it happening that way.

I don't buy it. I think ultimately they're going to be rethinking some of those principles if there's a necessity to pull people out or to do operations that support China's national interests abroad.

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: And I take it that you would also not see them in a U.N. Chapter VIII operation?

DR. YUNG: A U.N. Chapter VIII being?

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: Opposed. The host country--

DR. YUNG: That's correct. That's correct.

MR. COZAD: I would agree with Dr. Yung's statement. I think the only thing that I would add to that is--and I think the point was made in the previous panel--is that we need to take into consideration their fear of showing weaknesses in their capabilities, and especially as we look at them trying to portray themselves as a regional power, as them looking at their

military force and the build up of that military force, not only from a domestic perspective of what that investment has provided, but also from an externally focused perspective of whatever deterrent it may provide, is that in situations where they are not comfortable with those capabilities, it may be more difficult for us to be able to enter into some type of agreement like that.

I think that's one of the things as well that has limited their willingness to reach out on a large scale to other countries. That in order to get benefit from that training, they are going to have to expose some of those potential weaknesses in pretty critical areas.

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: Commissioner Bartholomew.

VICE CHAIRMAN BARTHOLOMEW: Thanks very much and, again, thanks to our witnesses. I also want to commend them, the co-chairs of this hearing, for bringing in front of us a witness associated with the Marine Corps. It's not a service that we hear from very often so I'm really pleased to see you at the table and thank you.

Just one comment as we talk about Chinese language training. Of course, as we're cutting funding, federal funding, for these kinds of things, the Chinese are investing in educating our young people, funding language and culture training in schools across this country. So there may well be a generation gap, but we have a generation of young people who will be coming up with Chinese language skills and, of course, the Chinese are not doing this out of the goodness of their hearts. They think that there is some propaganda value that's going along with that.

As to my questions, over the course of the past ten or 15 years, China analysts both inside and outside the U.S. government have been surprised, I think, at how quickly China has done its modernization. I'm thinking of submarines. I can't tell you how many times we've had witnesses come up and say, well, we're really surprised about this, and it reached the point where I thought, well, the only thing that should be surprising us is that we continue to be surprised at the advances that the Chinese government is making in their modernization.

So I wondered if you could say anything about what if anything has surprised you as you have looked at this trajectory that they're going on? Are there patterns, are there incidents of things that would not sort of normally fit into what you would predict as this is what they should be doing, this is what we expected them to do? That's my first question.

And then the second one is how much and what are they learning by participating in peacekeeping operations?

MR. COZAD: The question on surprise is a fairly loaded one for me seeing that I've been on both sides of that fence, and I would be one of the ones who would argue that we have been less surprised in many cases than many people would portray. I think in many cases, there have been surprises associated with specific rollouts of weapon systems.

I would argue that in many cases--a personal opinion here, but based on observations in many different places within the community and outside--is that we tend to look at things in very narrow windows with the way that the Chinese develop their military, whether it's from a technical standpoint or from a procedural standpoint.

And the examples that I will give you, if we go back and we look at certain types of weapon systems, many of those weapon systems were begun either in the late '80s or early '90s, and over a period of time, we have starts, stops, retooling of a specific program, and if you have analysts who are not associated with the very early periods of those weapon systems, it may look like those things are ahead of schedule when, in fact, they've been on the books for approximately 20 years, and I can give a few specific examples in another forum for you on that.

And there are a couple of those that are very poignant. I think as well when we start

looking at other capabilities, particularly along the lines of operational concepts, and I think joint operations is a good example of this, these things do not develop overnight. They have done a very extensive study about the nature of modern warfare, the nature of threats they are facing and potential courses of action, and they move out accordingly with the way that they put those capabilities in place.

I think over time that is a very difficult thing to track. I think we have a limited amount of information into that system, which again limits our ability to predict exactly where it's going, but I would say that's a really critical part of us being able to understand and predict where they're moving in the future.

And in terms of things that have surprised me, I have to say one of the things that I think is the biggest surprise is the development of the aircraft carrier and the explanations when that first came out. We saw it as it came in, much more press reporting, much discussion about it, not a lot of understanding of where it would go, and then over time we saw it being worked on. We saw it, you know, evolve, but there was silence out of the Chinese government. Finally, when they made the point about what this was for, they talked about it as something that great powers have or something that was experimental.

And I thought that was a very important departure from a lot of the other weapon systems and capabilities that they developed, specifically because those had been at the end of a long period of study and development, and this seemed to be something that went along the lines of prestige, which although prestige accompanied the development of weapon systems, it was not the primary purpose that they used to justify having those weapon systems in their inventory, and for me that was a very important discovery.

DR. YUNG: When you hear analysts talk about being surprised by Chinese developments, most of the China community was surprised by the pace of the modernization, how quickly things were coming on line. I would say that's the vast majority of where the surprise--when you hear people testifying and saying I was surprised, that's probably where you're going to get most of those answers from. I was surprised at the pace of the development.

I would like to point out on the record that 20 years ago, I argued against the folks at the Office of Naval Intelligence and intelligence community that said, no, there will be no carrier on line by 2000. You're probably going to see a Chinese regional force that will give us some challenges by about 2020 or so, and you can go back and look, google my name and see some of the reports I wrote for CNA on that issue. And so I would argue that I was probably less surprised about the pace of modernization. But if you ask individual China analysts about where they're surprised, it would be the pace of individual--I will say I am surprised, I was surprised at how quickly submarine development in China has taken place. That's one thing.

The second thing I would be surprised about was I was absolutely stunned with regard to the out of area of operation, the counterpiracy operation. I was absolutely not expecting that. So I will state that that was certainly something that surprised me. But if you ask most China analysts where they were surprised, it would be in the pace of the modernization, how quickly things are coming on line, how fast they are getting assets, reverse engineering them and then spitting them out and then experimenting, then retooling and then being able to project power out. That's, to me, where most China analysts will say they have been surprised.

With regard to your question on peacekeeping, I didn't have time to go into the specific lessons that the Chinese get out of peacekeeping, but let me quickly just read that since that's the question you asked. So in particular from their most recent deployments involving their infantry battalions and their special forces, what do they get? They get experience in running control,

patrolling, operational intelligence gathering and analysis, civic affairs, military interoperability with other nations, and managing large-scale military emergency command systems.

So that's some of the flavor of what you get in addition to the fact that they learn about expeditionary logistics. The more that these types of forces go abroad and deploy on different types of platforms, whether on a counterpiracy task force ship, on military aircraft, or on commercial aircraft, they're going to learn how to combat load different types of ground forces, and that's something you can take to the bank when it's time to project power with ground forces. So that's my general take on what they would learn out of U.N. peacekeeping.

VICE CHAIRMAN BARTHOLOMEW: Let me just follow up quickly, which is do you think that they are choosing which peacekeeping operations to participate in based in part on what they can learn, I mean perceived weaknesses in their own system, and what they can gain out of these operations?

DR. YUNG: That is very difficult to answer. I don't know the answer to that. Now, you can make an argument that some of the peacekeeping operations have been directed at areas where the Chinese have business interests--

VICE CHAIRMAN BARTHOLOMEW: Uh-huh, right.

DR. YUNG: --so the Mali, the Mali example, they have property and business interests there. An argument could be made that if you needed to support a U.N. peacekeeping force there to help protect Chinese business interests, you would have a U.N. mandate, and you'd probably have Mali permission to participate. So an argument can be made that some of their peacekeeping operations might have been designed to deal with Chinese business interests, but that would be just speculation. I don't know if I would make that a larger argument or a larger pattern because certainly the Chinese have participated in peacekeeping operations that they had no business interest in. And so it's harder for me to make that argument, but you could make that argument.

VICE CHAIRMAN BARTHOLOMEW: I want to be clear that when I asked about what has surprised you, it was not where have you been wrong that I was asking about, but you know, in the spirit actually of what Dr. Finkelstein also said, I mean this sort of constant looking at our own beliefs and expectations and how things are unfolding compared to that, have there been things where you've just sort of woken up--

DR. YUNG: Yeah.

VICE CHAIRMAN BARTHOLOMEW: --and said, oh, my God, I did not expect this to be happening, and it changes the way that we have to think about this.

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN SHEA: Well, thank you. I'd like to mention that Mark, if I recall correctly, is an Air Force Academy graduate; right? And so we've got Air Force and marines here.

Two questions. We heard in the last panel that there's a lack of self-confidence among the Chinese military in their own military capabilities, and we heard--I think, Mark, you mentioned repeatedly, that China's military does not have a great deal of combat experience, which leads me to surmise that there is probably an element within the Chinese military that wants to try its toys out, that wants to gain some combat experience.

And I was wondering is that an accurate assumption, and do we, on the theory that people are policy, that you've really got to know people, who the people are, in order to understand what the policies that might come out, does our intelligence community have a bead on who these folks might be in the Chinese military who are sort of a bit more anxious to garner some combat experience?

And then the second question is we heard in the last panel that General Secretary Xi believes we could have an army that is loyal, fiercely loyal to the Communist Party, but also very effective at warfighting. That it's not a choice; they could be unified. And I've read--correct me if I'm wrong--that in the Chinese navy with these vessels, there's a commander of the ship and also a political appointee with equal rank to the commander, and to me, it's very odd, I guess to me, and then I guess for a person from the West, but how does that impede the ability to have jointness and expeditionary capability, if it does impede it?

So those are the two questions for both of you.

MR. COZAD: I think on the first question, I'm sure there probably are officers and senior officers who want to test the PLA's chops in any number of scenarios. I don't really have any direct evidence of that, and on the question related to the intelligence community, I've been out of the intelligence community for a few years now so I really can't give you a good sense of where that stands.

But I think what's important is in the things that I have seen about the PLA talking about its own capabilities, I think that they have been very realistic about where their shortcomings are. I've experienced a lot of discussions about miscalculation on the part of the PLA based on overestimating their capabilities, and I have not seen too many of those based on their own studies of their own exercises and their own capabilities.

There may be statements that are made in individual exchanges between people where those types of things come out. And I know certainly I've experienced some of that. However, that doesn't really match up with what they're saying in their diagnostic studies about their own capabilities.

So I would say if there is that element, it very likely is somewhat tempered. Now, again, that gets back to the bureaucratic issue of if you have military officers who have been given specific tasks and been given capability, they probably want to be able to contribute to whatever the solution is. So I'm sure there is definitely an element of that within the PLA, but in terms of just a broad statement, a broad feeling of wanting to go and test their capabilities somewhere, I haven't been able to detect that.

In terms of the discussion about political officers, yes, political officers are alive and well. That's been a huge area of emphasis in discussions about national defense mobilization. Political mobilization is actually a very important element of that. Does it limit their ability to function as a military? I haven't seen anything that really definitively says that this cuts into operational training time. We know that they devote training to both.

What I will say that the PLA believes it is important to have the members of their military be loyal to the Party because in any scenario, they need to make them willing to fight in very dangerous combat situations. After the Iraq War in 2003, there was a lessons learned study that was put out by the National Defense University for the General Staff Department of the PLA, and one of the key conclusions that it came away with there was the level of motivation of American and allied soldiers in Iraq, operating in that type of environment.

And there have been numerous other reports that have dealt with issues like that, and for the PLA, they see political officers fulfilling a very important role in motivating soldiers to fight so it is that loyalty to the Party, but it's also closely tied to motivation to be able to fight for extended periods of time.

CHAIRMAN SHEA: Thank you.

Dr. Yung.

DR. YUNG: Okay. The question of self-confidence. A couple data points. So, first, we

have an opportunity to look at some of their top military leaders when they send their general officers to the United States to visit us, their version of capstone or their version of their general officers getting an education. When we send ours, our capstone class involving our senior officers who were just put on general officer rank, we send them over, they send their officers over here. So we get to take a look at those individuals who are going to be taking senior posts in the Chinese military. The deputy military region commander of several regions will, for example, be in that class.

So one of the reasons we argue for this type of interaction is we get to take a close look at who these gents are, how confident they are, how they interact in an international environment, how they interact with our general officers. We bring them over to the Pentagon and they interact with our general officers.

One thing I've certainly noted is greater confidence in those individuals. That is before you'd see them not willing to talk out at these sessions at the Pentagon or at National Defense University, you know, for fear that a political commissar, usually the head of the delegation, is there. I've seen that going away over the last few years. So a greater degree of confidence. For whatever it's worth, their commanders seem to have a greater degree of confidence.

Secondly, I'd point out that the one benefit that the Chinese get out of these out of area operations, even though they're not combat oriented, is they get greater confidence from those types of operations. So for every successive counterpiracy operation that they successfully do and go back, you have a force that's becoming saltier, more blue water oriented, more confident in the ability to operate out of area.

And so, yes, they still have a lack of confidence in terms of they haven't seen combat, but they are coming up with workarounds to deal with some of those shortcomings.

I would echo Mark's point about the commissar. I would note that the Chinese commissar system goes back decades, and so this is a question that PLA watchers, China watchers constantly ask the Chinese, how this works, and we're trying to get a handle on how you have this dual command system? What's the division of labor between a commissar and a commander? And somehow the Chinese feel very comfortable with it.

That is, the commissar has a morale function. He has a function in terms of making sure that individual personnel are loyal to the Party but, also, as Mark points out, willing to fight, and the commander has some operational issues that he works out with.

So the Chinese are very comfortable with this dual command structure that to a U.S. military person seems very odd and unusual and to us unwieldy, but for the Chinese, they seem very comfortable with that.

CHAIRMAN SHEA: Okay. Thank you.

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: I want to pursue, if I could, the idea of independent decision-making, and then also a little bit on combat logistics. There have been 22 Gulf of Aden deployments, and I know, Chris, you've made the point that there's still a "Mother, may I?" process that goes on before they can do certain things, going back to Beijing, maybe General Staff Department or wherever.

But certainly when you've had 22 task force commanders that have been steaming around there making decisions all by themselves for--what is it--six years, eight years?

DR. YUNG: Seven.

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: Seven years. They're getting pretty comfortable. Not only are they getting comfortable, at least in the navy, with making independent decisions, but they like it. I mean that's the way navies operate.

And then let me pose a second set of questions that really relate to some of the points you've made on combat logistics. The People's Liberation Army Air Force Airborne forces have now transitioned from small insertions to mass tactical jumps. When you do that, you combat load. They've gone on their internal exercises by air all the way out both to Xinjiang and the Qinghai Plateau. You combat load for that.

When you load other forces on aircraft even if they're not air force, you combat load, and now there have been two deployments that you characterized as small amphibious ready groups or MEUs--I think they were company size elements of marines--that made operational landings. You learn combat loading from that. So I wouldn't sell them short there, and I--

DR. YUNG: Did I hear your first question being do they like--

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: I'm saying that I think what I heard from you is you're shortchanging their acquired knowledge and independence of decision-making.

DR. YUNG: Yeah. I don't think there's any question that it's going to have an impact on their leadership, and I think, in fact, I would note that I think one of the requirements for advancement now is you have to be able--you will have had to have done those piracy, counterpiracy deployments. And so, yes, you're right.

If the impression was I'm shortchanging that there is an operational impact from this or their willingness to be more independent, then I would agree, that they probably are becoming much more independent oriented.

The question is will the system allow that to happen? Now some of the changes we're hearing about in terms of reform back in China about how you do joint operations, that could have a change in terms of allowing these task forces to be a little bit more independent. That's something I'm trying to carefully watch. The ability to manage the out of area operations back in Beijing, a joint force that's able to monitor, manage, interact with those task forces, that's certainly another indication and warning that I would take note of.

With regard to the combat logistics, one of the things we haven't talked about in great detail already is the issue of basing. The first panel talked about it a little bit, but I would argue that any type of operation in which China is projecting vast amounts of power in a conventional combat scenario would have to involve, in my opinion, some sort of overseas basing question, the establishment of a facility, permanent presence of military troops, and the ability to put ordnance and things you cannot simply just transport by sea or lightly put on ships. They would have to put ordnance and other weapon systems there and utilize that in some sort of contingency in the Indian Ocean region.

And I've expressed my skepticism at that because once you do that, you leave yourself vulnerable to the rough neighborhood you're in. I mean the Indians could strike those things with any of their capabilities that they've got. So the Chinese I think have a geographical problem. That is I can see these types of out of area operations to support their, as we put it before, their economic interests in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean.

But it becomes much more problematic for the Chinese if they want to project the kinds of power projection that we're talking about that would be a concern to the Indians, to the United States, because they leave themselves vulnerable. You'd have to put a significant amount of naval assets in parts of the Indian Ocean that, one, have problems with stability and, two, are vulnerable to conventional capabilities of all of their neighbors.

And so the Chinese would be in a very difficult position if they went down that path, and I don't think the Chinese are stupid and will do that, and so I'm very skeptical that they're going to establish some sort of large-scale military base where you've got permanent personnel placed

there for the purposes of conducting large-scale conventional combat in the Indian Ocean.

MR. COZAD: If I could just add one point to the decision-making discussion. I think that's a great illustration about the importance of experience. When they are placed in those situations, like I mentioned, they can adapt. And they've shown that they can adapt, and one of the points with the exercises with interjecting those new phenomena, uncertain environments, those types of things, is to do exactly that.

The problem that they may confront, and we think they're confronting it, is depending on the level of scripting, the level of preknowledge of the exercise, the level of routineness that enters into the exercise, it's an imperfect environment, whereas, where you look at the Gulf of Aden deployments, they have to make those decisions or else they're going to face significant operational problems.

And so I think what we should really focus on is not from the standpoint that they're incapable of changing because of this system that has bound them into a certain way of thinking; it's how long will it take them in a given combat situation to actually manage that change and to start implementing that change?

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: I'll segue into it because I'm concerned about a couple of things. One, from what you just described of their problem with bases, they could only operate on a smaller scale for a shorter period of time, which argues for special operations, going in and getting some of their people out.

The speed of decision-making-- everybody is talking about, all right, I'll give you that the naval commanders in the Gulf of Aden have learned to make decisions. But that's not the air force. That's not really the army. It may be some special forces guys. The question that I don't think anybody seems to have the answers to because it's opaque under Xi Jinping is what is the decision-making process at the CMC level when a commander is sitting there waiting? And they historically have a very slow decision-making process. I suspect it's a little quicker under Xi, certainly quicker than it was under Hu Jintao. But we still don't know what that is; do we?

And I'll get back to another question later. Answer that.

DR. YUNG: We don't know what the process is, and what we--it is rather opaque. I would say that it's much more deliberate than fast reaction. I think the Chinese still have a problem with making quick decisions related to their national security. Example, the P3 collision with their F8 in 2003--was it 2003? 2001. 2001.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: It was Jiang Zemin.

DR. YUNG: So I think when the PLA and the Chinese Communist Party leadership have to make a fast decision, I think they have a problem with that. That is, the deliberations that they go through, ironically, for an authoritarian state, I think is surprising. That is I think our system is much quicker and our ability to make--

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: I know.

DR. YUNG: --national security decisions than China. So if you look at a number of different cases, that specific case, the Belgrade bombing, where we accidentally bombed their embassy, the amount of deliberation that the Chinese had to go through in terms of is this real or not took them much longer than I would say should be the case, and so I can't answer your question directly. I think it's still too opaque to tell.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: I mean the question really is--you're giving me old examples. The question is, is there any recent example of more rapid decision-making at the senior level?

MR. COZAD: I think that gets to the heart of the issue with the reorganization, and one

of the issues that we've seen in these exercises and actually in the accompanying literature that trains their officers is that there's a very unclear chain of command--

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Chain of command.

MR. COZAD: --that exists. And so when we start looking at these operations, things do tend to be focused on a theater. Well, if we step back and we look at some of the Chinese concepts that have evolved out of U.S. operations and their observations of U.S. operations, things like civil defense, things like national air defense, become very important, but those go outside of just a specific theater. So you're talking about multiple theaters.

The Chinese have talked about this idea of a supreme command, but it's a very ill-defined discussion of what that supreme command actually entails. There's a lot of speculation, but there are very few places that have--actually I may not have seen any --a very brief discussion about it in one of their headquarters handbooks. That really doesn't give a very good understanding of what that is.

So when it comes down to having to coordinate amongst the services and amongst geographic needs, that raises a lot of questions, and I think that really gets to the heart of why this reorganization was so important. We haven't seen any results from the reorganization obviously because it just took place. But I would expect that in the subsequent five year plan we start seeing a lot more effort in their joint exercises to roll in aspects of this reorganization in ways that have a meaningful implication for the command and control scenarios that they're trying to exercise.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Yeah. You wanted to say--

DR. YUNG: We do have an example of look at the process. Liu Huaqing, one of the senior Chinese military leaders, had written his memoirs and had talked about the process in which the Chinese made a decision to engage in conflict with the Vietnamese in 1988, and he actually goes into some detail about the process in which he convinced the Chinese Communist Party leadership to authorize the navy to actually have that clash with the Vietnamese.

And I think that supports my earlier assertion that it's a deliberative process. So if you look at that process, it wasn't Liu Huaqing going to Zhao Ziyang and saying let's have a conflict, and Zhao Ziyang saying give me a briefing and let's go. What you had was Zhao Ziyang going back to Liu Huaqing and saying so give me your opinion on this. He goes, he gives him his opinion, and then he goes back and he has the General Staff Department do a study for him, the navy providing input, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, and then him coming back and saying we think that the best option for China to prevent the encroachment that we see from Vietnam is to do the following.

So to me, it supports the argument that they're very deliberative about this, that it's not rapid, and, in addition, I would argue that you got this sense that Zhao Ziyang was quite uneasy with the national security decision question. That is because the PLA--I'm sorry--the civilian leadership is uncomfortable with national security questions, that they're much more, as opposed to U.S. civilians who have much more exposure to defense and national security issues, I would say the Chinese leadership probably is much more deliberative on these types of issues.

So for me, I'm seeing--and this goes again back to the whole idea of joint reform, reform of the system. The Chinese themselves recognize they need that, that they don't have a system right now that allows for quick and rapid decisions related to national security.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Let me ask a quick technical question--

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: You've got time.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: --on the PAP. In years past, there was always a sort

of joint command PLA Public Security Department Bureau. Is that changing? Is that scheduled to change in this reorganization? Is the CMC taking greater control over the PAP?

MR. COZAD: I have not seen anything on that, and I actually don't think that--I don't think that there will be based off of the material that's been made available.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: And do we know if the demobilization--you know, they're cutting back on a number of people. Usually they demobilize into the PAP and, as we've seen over the last decade, enormous increases in internal security spending with the People's Armed Police. So anybody, you got any insight on the PAP thing?

MR. COZAD: I have not seen anything on that either.

DR. YUNG: Neither have I.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: One last thing. In PLA political, Politburo relationships, have you taken into consideration, or anybody that you know, the transfer of power from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping, and the sort of back-room problems with Bo Xilai and Zhou Yongkang? It seems to me that there may have been a justifiable fear by Xi Jinping that the Party--I mean that elements of the PLA were not in line. Is that a motivating factor, do you think, amongst many others in his treatment of the PLA?

MR. COZAD: I've seen speculation on that. I have not seen anything that corroborates that. One of the things I would argue with the anti-corruption drive that is very important for the PLA is that a key component of the National Defense Mobilization Law that was recently passed that is a major, major issue for the PLA in any future thinking about China going to war, particularly with the United States, corruption is a major issue that's tied into that.

And I think that there was genuine concern about the levels of corruption in the PLA and tangentially what that might actually influence in its relationship to the National Defense Mobilization Law.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Well, I mean if you're selling positions fairly high up in the leadership, that's a problem, I would think.

MR. COZAD: There's that, but there's also this issue that in a wartime scenario--it took them 15 years to get the law from concept to actual passage, and one of the key issues there is that when the Party and the PLA come into contact with civilian organizations, civilian entities, civilian businesses, and they're asking to give up, asking them to give up things that are central to their livelihood that they may not get back, that issue of corruption is potentially very, very damaging if not managed. And I think there's a big element of that in the--

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Thank you very much.

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: I wanted to raise this when Dave Finkelstein talked about rice bowls, but I think you hit the nail right on the head here, that the ability to manage the combat forces and their logistics and everything sits with the Central Military Commission. But, traditionally, handling reserves, militia, People's Air Defense, civil defense, has always been--state-owned enterprise to provide support--has always been under the provinces and really the state government, the State Council.

You're implying that that is what slowed down the mobilization law--that conflict.

MR. COZAD: Yes, and again I don't have direct evidence, but I think it's interesting that--that's more of an assessment on my part, but I think it's interesting that when the mobilization law came out, a significant portion of that mobilization law was there to address remuneration, and in the explanations of what the law meant in literature produced by the PLA, remuneration took an overwhelming portion of the space in the text.

One thing that I would note is that in the context of these joint exercises, mobilization

issues have figured very prominently in several of them. Whether it's local logistical procurement in going out and having PLA supply and logistics officers work with local communities or call up reserves and other elements, that's been a really critical part of it.

And of note, there have been several instances where you've seen things put out in PLA official press admonishing local governments for not participating, reiterating points of the mobilization law and telling them how important it is for national security. So there's an implication there that there is a fairly long road to hoe before this is finally settled and fully supported.

VICE CHAIRMAN BARTHOLOMEW: Yeah, it's really more of a comment but sort of following up on some of this and going back also to the first panel, that a successful reorganization is dependent both on the structure and then the personnel that fills out the structure. And I, at least, believe that while the anti-corruption campaign is real, it's also a purge. I mean there is so much corruption going on that who is the target today is, you know, there's politics involved in that too.

So I think it will be interesting to see as the reorganization unfolds and is being staffed whether the people who are going into the key positions are people who are there because of their competence and professionalism or whether they're there because of their loyalty to Xi and they're literally the last man standing in what clearly must be behind the scenes political fighting that's going on.

And I just think it's interesting. I mean, it's not that those things are necessarily mutually exclusive. It very well might be that some of the most competent people also happen to have the best political in-fighting skills and also be the most loyal, but I think it will be an interesting test over time as it's implemented to see what does it mean. Not only what does it mean structurally and systemically, but what light can it shed in terms of what's going on and how effective is this going to be?

If the people who take those positions are merely people who are there because they will be deferential to the higher power making the decisions, then I'm not sure that we'll see some of the change that people think might be taking place.

So it's really an observation. If any of you have any comments, that would be great but not necessary.

DR. YUNG: I think the only thing I would add to that is there is some debate as to what extent, how extensively the anti-corruption campaign is going against the PLA as a whole. So you're getting a lot of press in terms of the Party being whacked by this anti-corruption campaign, but to what extent is the PLA itself, as a whole, being affected by the anti-corruption campaign?

So Dennis Blasko has done good work on this where he points out--he cites some number of what the total number of charges, total number of convictions are, and it comes out to about maybe one percent of the total force, which to me, and I can't confirm what Dennis, his analysis, found but that to me is certainly something to take a look at.

Secondly, his argument is that the focus has been on those parts of the PLA, and this makes sense, where the function of the individual being targeted had more to do with logistics, advancement, personnel, et cetera, versus the operating forces. So now I have not verified that. I've not gone and done an analysis on my own, but that's an argument Dennis is making, which is to what extent is this affecting the PLA as a whole and to what extent does this affect the operating forces versus those parts of the PLA that have the opportunity to get involved in graft?

And I would say what he says makes sense. But, again, I have not done an independent

analysis of that, just based on what Dennis has written on that subject.

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: Well, I want to thank both of you for a great panel, great comments, and we appreciate it for the morning. We're going to take a break for lunch and reconvene at 1:30 back here. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 12:24 p.m., the hearing recessed, to reconvene at 1:27 p.m., this same day.]

PANEL III INTRODUCTION BY COMMISSIONER LARRY M. WORTZEL

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: All right. This is the final panel of the day, and we're going to explore the implications of a Chinese expeditionary capability for the U.S., our allies, and for China itself as it faces the global both expectations and challenges that are going to be associated with that capability.

First, we'll hear from Mrs. Kristen Gunness. She's the Chief Executive Officer of Vantage Point Asia and an adjunct Senior International Policy Analyst at the RAND Corporation. She specializes in Chinese military and foreign policy issues.

She served as the Director of the Navy Asia Pacific Advisory Group at the Pentagon, and also was with CNA.

Dr. Tom Bickford is a Senior Research Scientist in the China Security Affairs Group at CNA Corporation. He focuses on maritime strategy, Chinese national security policy, and China's relations with its neighbors. Before that he was Associate Professor at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh where he taught international relations and Chinese politics.

And the final panelist is Rear Admiral Michael McDevitt, Senior Fellow at CNA Corporation. He's been involved in high level U.S. strategy and policy in the Asia-Pacific for the last 25 years.

He's had four at-sea commands. He was the Director of East Asia Policy for the Secretary of Defense during the H.W. Bush administration--the good one--the one I like.

[Laughter.]

RADM McDEVITT: My favorite too.

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: My favorite.

[Laughter.]

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: And was the Director of Strategy, War Plans and Policy for the Pacific Command. And President of National War College?

RADM McDEVITT: Commandant at National War College.

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: Commandant at National War College. That's right. They left that out.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF MRS. KRISTEN GUNNESS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, VANTAGE POINT ASIA LLC, AND ADJUNCT
SENIOR INTERNATIONAL POLICY ANALYST, RAND CORPORATION**

MRS. GUNNESS: Thank you for that nice introduction, and thank you, Co-chairs Fiedler and Wortzel, members of the Commission and staff.

It's an honor to testify here today on issues of importance to the United States and the future stability of the Asia-Pacific region. In this testimony, I will address the potential benefits and problems that PLA expeditionary capabilities present for the United States, particularly as they relate to concerns and opportunities for U.S. Asia policy and U.S. military operations.

Briefly, in this context--I know some of these points have been made before, but just to reiterate--I want to highlight a few important points about the current state of the PLA that has direct bearing on their development of expeditionary capabilities, how the Chinese military will use them, and on assessing the policy implications.

First, the PLA is at the beginning of an extensive reorganization involving significant structural, political, and cultural changes, which ultimately will affect both what the PLA can do and how well it can do it.

This reorganization is occurring in the context of other major national political changes as Xi Jinping further consolidates power and institutes centralization of authority, a move likely designed to assert greater national authority over the PLA and curb corruption in the military leadership.

So assessing the PLA's level of capabilities and direction, expeditionary or otherwise, is a moving target that will require continuous evaluation as the reorganization unfolds, and this will have evolving implications for U.S. Asia policy.

With that context, there are several important concerns and opportunities that the development of PLA expeditionary capabilities create for U.S. policymakers on Asia. I'll start with the concerns.

The first concern is that the development of more advanced capabilities likely will expand China's military options for responding to both global and regional threats. Augmented sea and airlift, advanced special operations force capabilities, a larger number of surface vessels and aircraft, and I would say also very important, overseas military operational experience, could lead Beijing to be more confident in its abilities and more willing to consider the use of force, although it's still unlikely in my opinion that China would use force unilaterally outside of the Asia-Pacific region.

In addition, greater numbers of PLA Navy patrols in the South China Sea and beyond mean that U.S. and Chinese forces are operating in closer contact than ever before, raising the risk of miscalculation or escalation should an incident occur.

Basically the honing and development of expeditionary capabilities add coercive tools into the mix that weren't necessarily available to Chinese leaders before.

A second concern is that China could increasingly use a PLA expeditionary force to shape the security environment, create greater competition for the United States, or involve itself in regional matters and beyond that are either counter to or a hindrance to U.S. goals and objectives.

Possible examples of this, of increased influence or competition that could deter nations from closer relations with Washington, include Chinese-led multilateral exercises to strengthen Beijing's relations with other countries and port access agreements that provide the host country

with tangible financial benefits. While this type of influence tug-of-war already occurs, the development of expeditionary capabilities could create greater competition for the United States.

There are also some good opportunities for U.S.-Asia policy. One opportunity is that the PLA would be able to increasingly provide services that other global militaries deliver, such as rapid humanitarian assistance and disaster response, regional counterpiracy patrols, and protection of regional SLOCs.

The ability to provide such public goods is important to Beijing as it seeks to enhance its image as a great power and to calm fears by reassuring its neighbors of benevolent intent. This creates increased opportunities for U.S. leaders to encourage Chinese involvement in regional cooperative security efforts such as those I just mentioned as well as presenting more occasions for U.S. and Chinese forces to work together on issues of mutual security concern.

Another policy opportunity relates to the reaction of Asian allies and partners to a more robust PLA expeditionary force. A more assertive China with a growing expeditionary capability could lead nations in the region to be more receptive to supporting U.S. efforts to shape the security environment and to U.S. objectives in Asia. This could specifically be an opportunity to sway those nations that are currently leery of fully supporting U.S. efforts. For example, nations such as Thailand, Malaysia and India, should China build a base in Pakistan, for example, potentially fall into this category and could be receptive to increased dialogue with the United States.

On implications for the U.S. military, PLA expeditionary capabilities allow more opportunity for the U.S. and Chinese militaries to cooperate on regional security issues, particularly in the maritime domain where our two navies are well positioned to cooperate on issues such as counterpiracy, counterterrorism, HADR, and anti-drug and human trafficking.

In terms of operational concerns, one is the potential for miscalculation, and I think this was mentioned earlier, too. Given that we are now increasingly operating in the same space, again, particularly in the maritime domain, the U.S. Navy and the PLA Navy have agreed, for example, to implement the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea, or CUES, as a way to help mitigate this possibility. We probably could use more of those types of efforts.

Another operational concern is that the PLA's investment in C4ISR and space-based capabilities, while a natural outgrowth of its development of expeditionary capabilities, means that U.S. military operations could be under increasing surveillance from the PLA.

I'll conclude with several recommendations for policymakers. The first is the need to focus on crisis management and escalation control in the Asia-Pacific region. A China with a robust expeditionary capacity may have a higher threshold for risk than the United States or be emboldened by such capabilities, particularly when it comes to defending its territorial interests in the South China Sea or Spratly Islands, for example.

Increased collaboration with China and our allies and partners to study crisis management methods through either Track 1.5 or Track 2 dialogues would help to better inform strategic dialogue and should be considered a part of our overall Asia security strategy.

The second recommendation is to maximize cooperation on areas of mutual security concern. There remain a host of security concerns on which Washington and Beijing can cooperate as part of the United States' rebalance strategy, particularly as the PLA hones certain expeditionary capabilities.

These types of cooperative efforts would also assist with crisis management because they would contribute to operational awareness and encourage continued dialogue.

The third and final recommendation I have is to balance U.S. presence and have clear

regional priorities. Increased expeditionary capabilities means that China will soon be able to deliver some of the public services that the U.S. military traditionally provides in the region. It also means that the PLA is more visible, both in the region and abroad.

In an era of constrained resources, the necessity of maintaining a steady visible presence in the region, including conducting regular exercises with allies and partners, and with the Chinese, if feasible, and potentially more frequent Freedom of Navigation operations to protect maritime rights, must be balanced with comprehensive soft power engagement. Clear priorities in both of these areas can greatly contribute to regional stability and help maintain U.S. influence and partnerships.

Thank you.

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF MRS. KRISTEN GUNNESS
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PLA Expeditionary Capabilities and Implications for the United States Asia Policy

Kristen Gunness

RAND Office of External Affairs

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Kristen Gunness¹
The RAND Corporation

PLA Expeditionary Capabilities and Implications for United States Asia Policy²

Before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission

January 21, 2016

Thank you Co-Chairs Fiedler and Wortzel, members of the Commission, and staff. It is an honor to testify here on issues of importance to the United States and the future stability of the Asia-Pacific region. In this testimony, I will address the potential benefits and problems that joint People's Liberation Army (PLA) expeditionary capabilities present for the United States, particularly as they relate to concerns and opportunities for U.S. Asia policy and U.S. military operations.

China's expanding interests increasingly require a capacity to provide security for investments and business ventures around the globe, including millions of People's Republic of China (PRC) citizens living abroad, access to energy and other natural resources, and continued access to critical shipping lanes.

PRC leaders perceive a need to both protect global interests and participate in future humanitarian and disaster relief responses. To this end, the PLA has engaged in missions far from its borders, including humanitarian assistance and disaster response, noncombatant evacuation operations, and sea-lines of communication protection. Alongside development of a variety of capabilities necessary to conduct these missions, China's actions to shape the international security environment are accelerating, posing both opportunities and challenges for U.S. policymakers.

PLA Expeditionary Capabilities in Context

While not the primary focus of this testimony, the first step in considering U.S. Asia policy and military implications involves assessing the expeditionary capabilities that the PLA is augmenting or newly developing, and how those capabilities fit into the PLA's overall modernization program. Briefly, I have three key points to underscore about the current state of the PLA that have direct bearing on the development of expeditionary capabilities and how the Chinese military will use them:

¹ The opinions and conclusions expressed in this testimony are the author's alone and should not be interpreted as representing those of RAND or any of the sponsors of its research. This product is part of the RAND Corporation testimony series. RAND testimonies record testimony presented by RAND associates to federal, state, or local legislative committees; government-appointed commissions and panels; and private review and oversight bodies. The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization providing objective analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world. RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors.

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- 1) The PLA is at the beginning of an extensive reorganization involving significant structural, political, and cultural changes, which ultimately will affect both what the PLA can do and how well it can do it.³⁴
- 2) China's military reorganization is occurring in the context of other major national political changes as Xi Jinping further consolidates power and institutes centralization of authority—a move likely designed to assert greater national authority over the PLA and curb corruption in the military leadership.⁴⁵
- 3) Evaluating the PLA's level of capabilities and direction, expeditionary or otherwise, is therefore a moving target that will require continuous assessment and reassessment as the military reorganization unfolds.

Further, what constitutes “expeditionary capabilities” to the PLA? While the PLA has for at least a decade been in the process of acquiring a range of capabilities in order to operate further abroad, potential regional contingencies requiring robust anti-access/area denial or “counter-intervention” capabilities still dominate China's security agenda and constitute the bulk of its military modernization efforts. With tensions on the rise over regional territorial disputes, the recent Taiwan elections, and Chinese concerns about increased U.S. presence in the region as a result of the rebalance to Asia, this focus on regional anti-access/area denial capabilities is unlikely to wane in the near future.

Thus, many of the expeditionary capabilities that the PLA is investing in or improving are what could be considered “overlap” capabilities that are useful across a range of mission sets, including anti-access/area denial, cross-border, and expeditionary missions. Examples of such capabilities include building and upgrading the PLA Navy (PLAN)'s surface warfare and amphibious ship fleets, attack and bomber aircraft, and nuclear attack submarines; investing in rapid reaction forces, such as China's marine, airborne, and special operations forces; honing the PLA's military airlift and sealift capabilities; and investing in long-range strike assets.

In addition to these overlap capabilities, the PLA is newly developing expeditionary capabilities to operate further abroad. These include the ongoing construction of China's aircraft carriers; augmentation of the PLA's at-sea replenishment capabilities, which are necessary to operate abroad on longer missions, given that China lacks overseas bases; and development of a range of space-based capabilities inherent to an “informatized” or networked force, to include communication and navigation satellites for positioning, as well as satellites for providing intelligence, surveillance, and

³ Wang Shibing and An Puzhong, “China's New Central Military Commission Established,” China Military Online, January 11, 2016.

⁴ David Ignatius, “China's Xi Jinping Consolidates Power and Brings Stability,” *Washington Post*, February 28, 2014. As of January 13, 2016: http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/david-ignatius-chinas-xi-jinping-consolidates-power-and-brings-stability/2014/02/28/3280148a-9ff7-11e3-9ba6-800d1192d08b_story.html

reconnaissance to the PLA. Finally, the recent announcement of a planned PLA logistics base in Djibouti, along with ongoing negotiations for greater port access and investment in port and logistics infrastructure around the globe, illustrates that Chinese leaders are building the type of strategic partnerships necessary for global expeditionary operations.⁵

When assessing the PLA's level of expeditionary capability, we must consider that some of the skills that the PLA needs for expeditionary missions have been used for years for nonexpeditionary missions, while other capabilities are relatively new. In addition, the PLA has more practice with some mission sets than others (such as counter-piracy).⁶⁷ The PLA also is still in the process of integrating technologies critical to becoming a modern force—including an ongoing and evolving training program for personnel to operate new weapons and equipment. The outcome is a military with uneven levels of ability in general, and expeditionary capabilities are no exception; the PLA is able to conduct some types of missions better than others, and is still limited overall in what it can do in a global expeditionary capacity.

Two Concerns and Two Opportunities for U.S. Asia Policy

- **How could the development of PLA expeditionary/force projection capabilities affect the U.S. rebalance to Asia and the U.S. Asia-Pacific Maritime Security Strategy?**

The PLA's development of both the "overlap" and "new" capabilities required to focus on regional contingencies and protect global interests presents several concerns and opportunities for U.S. Asia policy.

Concern 1

First, the further development of expeditionary capabilities likely will expand China's military options for responding to both global and regional threats. Augmented sea and airlift, advanced special operations force capabilities, a larger number of surface vessels and aircraft, and overseas military operational experience could lead Beijing to be more willing to consider the use of force, although it is unlikely that it would use force unilaterally outside of the Asia-Pacific region. In addition, greater numbers of PLAN patrols in the South China Sea and beyond mean that U.S. and Chinese forces are operating in closer

⁵ Sam LaGrone, "U.S. AFRICOM Commander Confirms Chinese Logistics Base in Djibouti," USNI News, November 25, 2015. As of January 13, 2016: <http://news.usni.org/2015/11/25/u-s-africom-commander-confirms-chinese-logistics-base-in-djibouti>

⁶ The PLA now has significant experience in counter-piracy operations because of its participation in patrols in the Gulf of Aden. However, learning to conduct and maintain those operations took many years. See Kristen Gunness and Sam Berkowitz, "PLA Navy Planning for Out of Area Deployments," in Andrew Scobell, Arthur S. Ding, Phillip C. Saunders, and Scott W. Harold, eds., *The People's Liberation Army and Contingency Planning in China*, Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2015. As of January 13, 2016: <http://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/Books/PLA-contingency/PLA-Contingency-Planning-China.pdf>

contact than ever before—raising the risk of miscalculation or escalation should an incident occur.

This is particularly concerning because an area of recent policy shift involves PRC leadership's increasingly hardened stance regarding core interests. For example, in 2013, Xi Jinping pledged that China would not “compromise an inch” of any of its territorial and sovereignty claims.⁷⁸ In June 2015, China enacted a sweeping security law intended to protect its core interests, including defending sovereignty claims and territorial integrity.⁸⁹ Beijing also has demonstrated a growing willingness to “impose costs” to deter countries from impinging on PRC core interests. Examples include the PRC restriction on imports of Philippine bananas in response to the Scarborough Reef crisis and the freezing of high-level diplomatic activity for a year in response to British Prime Minister David Cameron's meeting with the Dalai Lama. These activities have so far been primarily nonmilitary in nature and are seen by

China as efforts to manage crises and deter further escalation into the military realm. However, the development of PLA expeditionary capabilities, particularly the “overlap” capabilities that also can be used for anti-access/area denial missions, adds greater tools for potential coercive force.

Concern 2

A second concern for U.S. policymakers on Asia is that China could increasingly use a PLA expeditionary force to shape the security environment, create greater competition for the United States, or involve itself in regional matters (and beyond) that are either counter to or a hindrance to U.S. goals and objectives.

Possible examples of increased influence or competition that could deter nations from closer relations with Washington include Chinese-led multilateral exercises to strengthen Beijing's relations with other countries and port access agreements that provide the host country with tangible financial benefits. While this type of influence tug-of-war already occurs, the development of PLA expeditionary capabilities could create greater competition for the United States in the region and globally.

In addition, China's desire to uphold stability over other factors, such as human rights, may conflict with that of the United States when attempting to influence the security environment with expeditionary capabilities. Beijing's support of Pyongyang despite numerous security and humanitarian concerns is a regional example of this.

⁷ Timothy R. Heath, “Diplomacy Work Forum: Xi Steps Up Efforts to Shape a China-Centered Regional Order,” *China Brief*, Vol. 13, No. 22, November 7, 2013. As of January 13, 2016:

http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=41594&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=688&no_cache=1#.

⁸ Edward Wong, “Security Law Suggests a Broadening of China's Core Interests,” *New York Times*, July 2, 2015. As of January 13, 2016: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/03/world/asia/security-law-suggests-a-broadening-of-chinas-core-interests.html?_r=0

Opportunity 1

A PLA with expeditionary capabilities would be able to increasingly provide services that other global navies deliver, such as rapid humanitarian assistance and disaster response, regional counter-piracy patrols, and protection of regional sea lines of communication. The ability to provide such public goods is important to Beijing as it seeks to enhance its image as a great power and to allay fears and mistrust by reassuring its neighbors of benevolent intent. Additionally, China has interests not to encourage or provoke the formation of balancing coalitions among its neighbors and extra-regional great powers, such as the United States. This creates increased opportunities for U.S. leaders to encourage Chinese involvement in regional cooperative efforts, such as those listed above, as well as presenting more occasions for U.S. and Chinese forces to work together on issues of mutual security concern.

Opportunity 2

Another policy opportunity for the United States relates to the reaction of Asian allies and partners to a more robust PLA expeditionary force. A more assertive China with expeditionary capability could lead nations in the region to be more receptive to supporting U.S. efforts to shape the security environment, and to U.S. objectives in Asia. This could specifically be an opportunity to sway those nations that are leery of fully supporting U.S. efforts because of China's influence—be it monetary, cultural, or military. Nations such as Thailand, Malaysia, and India (should China build a base in Pakistan) potentially fall into this category and could be receptive to increased dialogue with the United States.

Opportunities and Concerns for the U.S. Military

- **What opportunities might exist for emerging PLA expeditionary capabilities to contribute to supporting regional security operations? What expeditionary/force projection capabilities may develop that would pose operational concerns for U.S. presence in the Asia-Pacific area of responsibility?**

PLA expeditionary capabilities allow greater opportunities for the U.S. and Chinese militaries to cooperate on regional issues of mutual security concern. In addition, expeditionary missions—such as counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden, United Nations peacekeeping missions, and noncombatant evacuation operations—allow the PLA to gain critical operational experience that then translates to a more experienced force at home, potentially enabling a greater ability to work alongside more technologically advanced militaries to contribute to security in the Asia region.

Potential regional PLA security missions are mainly maritime in focus and include humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, counter-piracy operations and escort missions (particularly relevant

given the uptick in piracy in Southeast Asia), and contributions to countering drug and human trafficking. The

U.S. Navy and the PLAN are well-positioned to conduct cooperative exercises and security operations on maritime issues, because there is already a relatively robust security dialogue and military-to-military exchange between the two services.

The U.S. Navy and the PLAN already participate in cooperative security efforts elsewhere in the world, which has even led to the occasional low-level military exercise—for example, in the Gulf of Aden, where the two navies conducted an exercise to land helicopters on each other's ships for the first time.⁹ Ongoing dialogue between U.S. Navy and PLAN leadership has focused on creating additional U.S. port visits for PLAN ships, creating additional Chinese port visits for U.S. ships, and extending invitations to participate in each other's exercises, such as the Rim of the Pacific.¹⁰

One of the most significant operational concerns for the U.S. military regarding China's expeditionary capabilities involves the potential for miscalculation given more-numerous encounters between the militaries in the region and abroad, particularly in the maritime domain. In addition, China's assertiveness over regional territorial claims and the likelihood of the U.S. Navy conducting additional Freedom of Navigation operations create a greater possibility of an incident occurring. The U.S. Navy and PLAN are attempting to mitigate these risks by implementing a Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea; however, this will take time to integrate into both navies' operational procedures.¹¹

Another operational concern is the PLA's investment in command, control, communications, computers, and ISR (C4ISR); counter-C4ISR; and space-based capabilities, many of which are necessary in order to be networked and operate over long distances. Specifically, the PLA has increased its ISR range, particularly around the region and over long distances, including locations where territorial disputes exist. The PLA's ISR capabilities are further augmented by the advancement of unmanned aerial vehicles that can conduct reconnaissance over long distances and can be used in regional humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions.¹² While more-robust C4ISR capabilities are a natural outgrowth of the PLA's

⁹ Hendrick Simoes, "U.S. Navy Seeks More Cooperation with China in Counter Piracy Exercise," Stars and Stripes, August 26, 2013. As of January 13, 2016: <http://www.stripes.com/news/navy/us-navy-seeks-more-cooperation-with-china-in-counter-piracy-exercise-1.237354>

¹⁰ Chief of Naval Operations Public Affairs, "CNO's Visit Builds Cooperation for Greater US, PLA Navy Relationship," U.S. Navy, Story Number: NNS140721-03, July 21, 2014. As of January 13, 2016: http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=82324

¹¹ Lauryn Dempsey, "USS Fort Worth Conducts CUES with Chinese Navy," U.S. Navy, Story Number: NNS150226-11, February 26, 2015. As of January 13, 2016: http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=85767

¹² Michael S. Chase, Kristen A. Gunness, Lyle J. Morris, Samuel K. Bekowitz, and Benjamin S. Purser III, Emerging Trends in China's Development of Unmanned Systems, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-990-OSD, 2014. As of January 13, 2016: http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR990.html

modernization and expeditionary capabilities, this also means that U.S. military operations could be under increasing surveillance from the PLA.

Implications for U.S. Policymakers

Focus on Crisis Management: One implication for U.S. Asia policy is the critical need to focus on crisis and escalation management in the Asia-Pacific region. U.S. policymakers should work to develop a broad range of scenarios to support crisis planning. As noted previously, a China with a robust expeditionary capacity may have a higher threshold for risk than the United States or be emboldened by such capabilities, particularly when it comes to defending its territorial interests in the South China Sea or Spratly Islands, for example. U.S. planning for a crisis with China should take this into account. Increased collaboration with China and our allies and partners to study crisis management methods, through either Track 1.5 or Track 2 dialogues, would help to better inform strategic government-to-government dialogue and should be considered a part of our overall Asia security strategy.

Maximize Cooperation on Areas of Mutual Security Concern: Despite the United States and PRC being increasingly at odds with each other on many issues, there remain a host of security concerns on which the two can cooperate as part of the United States' rebalance strategy, particularly as the PLA hones certain expeditionary capabilities. Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief remains an obvious choice for potential joint or multilateral exercises, or cooperation should disaster strike the region. Regional multilateral counter-piracy patrols, as in the Gulf of Aden, could be another area of cooperation, as piracy in Southeast Asia, and specifically the Strait of Malacca, is once again on the rise.¹³¹⁴ These types of cooperative efforts would also contribute to assisting with crisis management, because they would contribute to operational awareness and encourage continued dialogue.

Balance U.S. Presence and Clear Regional Priorities: Increased expeditionary capabilities mean that China will soon be able to deliver some of the public services that the U.S. military traditionally provides in the region. It also means that the PLA is more visible both in the region and abroad. For example, the PLAN's patrols in the South China Sea are now routine, and forays beyond the first island chain and into the Indian Ocean are becoming more frequent.

U.S. policymakers should consider priorities for regional military and nonmilitary engagement in Asia, given that the U.S. military is no longer the sole provider of regional security. In an era of constrained resources, the necessity of maintaining a steady, visible presence in the region, including conducting

¹³ "Malacca Buccaneers," *The Economist*, July 27, 2015. As of January 13, 2016: <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21656237-step-aside-somalia-south-east-asia-new-piracy-capital-world-malacca-buccaneers>

regular exercises with allies and partners (and with the Chinese, if feasible) and potentially more-frequent Freedom of Navigation operations to protect maritime rights, must be balanced with comprehensive soft- power engagement. Clear priorities in both of these areas can greatly contribute to regional stability and help maintain U.S. influence and partnerships.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF DR. THOMAS BICKFORD
SENIOR RESEARCH SCIENTIST, CNA CORPORATION**

DR. BICKFORD: I would like to thank Commissioners Fiedler and Wortzel and the rest of the Commission for giving me the opportunity to speak today. It is indeed a great honor, and I look forward to some very interesting questions.

In my presentation, again, some of the things that I'll be talking about have been touched on today. What I'm going to focus on is the implications for third parties, U.S. allies and partners in the region. I want to talk a little bit about the implications for U.S. relations with those allies and partners and the implications for the U.S.-China relationship.

I want to start off by saying that assuming China is successful in building many of the capabilities that will allow it to project power beyond the Second Island Chain, the countries which are going to have the greatest degree cause for concern are actually those closest to China. So while we're focusing on expeditionary capabilities, I want to remind everybody that an expeditionary navy can fight anywhere, and a far seas navy is not just for the far seas.

So, for example, we talked earlier today about China's reforms, being able to create genuine joint command that can combine cyber and space and maritime and air, you can do that 2,000 miles away, you can do that 100 miles away. And that will significantly increase China's ability to conduct combat operations close to home.

Logistics matters in the South China Sea. We use the term "near seas," but we forget that the South China Sea is actually a very big expanse of water. Sustaining ships at sea helps in that situation as well as in the Indian Ocean.

So since time is short, the more expeditionary China becomes, the greater the gap between China's military capabilities and those of Taiwan, Japan, Philippines, Vietnam and Malaysia, and that is where I believe you'll get the greatest demand concerns from third parties. As treaty allies, the Philippines and Japan will almost certainly want to see greater levels of commitment from the United States, better examples of commitment, greater clarity of when and under what conditions the U.S. will support those countries.

For Vietnam, possibly Malaysia, there likely will be greater interest in help from the U.S. in terms of building capacity, deterring the Chinese, maybe closer working relationships.

Moving farther out, India is another country which is obviously going to have a lot of concerns. Very concerned about Chinese submarine operations in the Indian Ocean. Any connection between the Chinese navy activities in Pakistan and, in general, anything that might happen in the maritime element which is to what was normally just a border issue on the land. So there's a lot of concerns, and India will likely respond in a number of ways, including more defense spending and possibly seeking a closer relationship with the United States in terms of military ties.

More generally, though, for the things that we're talking about and the missions that are currently being defined in today's discussion, that doesn't necessarily cause a threat for many of the other countries. It may raise their unease. They may worry about whether or not the United States is being competed against. They may want to see the United States there as a balance, but it's just generally a sense of unease given China's lack of transparency, and certainly the interlocutors I have really stress they don't want to see too much U.S.-China rivalry because that could lead to regional instability.

In terms of implications for relations with our allies and partners, well, clearly, we're going to be asked to do a lot more. We will face expectations. And things that are really

important for the U.S. to think about carefully include what is a priority between showing a greater commitment and losing flexibility because the more clear and concise our commitments are, the less flexibility future U.S. leaders might have in a crisis.

And all of this, as Kristen mentioned, takes resources. You either have to have more resources to have more ships, or you have to take those ships from somewhere else in the globe. What are the priorities? What are the resources going forward in what will be a resource constrained environment? Those are important considerations.

And the U.S., as was mentioned earlier today, has to get used to the idea that as the Chinese are out and about, they will engage with other countries, they will build relationships, other countries may see an advantage in providing facilities or exercising with the Chinese, and we have to sort of figure out how we want to incorporate that in our relationships. Do nothing, try to prevent it; if so, what are the tools in our tool box?

In terms of our relationships with China, there are a couple of challenges and some opportunities. One of the bigger challenges is how to balance our need to support allies and friends and at the same time not damage our relations with China? That is already a hard task, and it might become more difficult as the gap between Chinese capabilities and those of our allies and partners increases.

They (our partners and allies) have limited resources, and the more we help those countries, the more we risk damaging relations with China, which we may not want to do. That becomes a really important and tricky position for Congress and for future presidents.

There are also obviously opportunities. We've mentioned a number of them. Two things I want to highlight. In addition to things we are doing now, we may very well have to do a NEO with China possibly in a non-permissive environment. That is we'd have to fight to rescue our citizens. That is something we really have to think about. There are a couple of other scenarios. I very much doubt the Chinese would ever join us in, say, an anti-ISIS campaign, but, as was mentioned earlier today, if, in the right circumstances, that too may change.

Overall, one of the things that we also have to think about is we'll have to think about a China as a global actor. It is no longer a PACOM issue. It is no longer a CENTCOM issue or this part is PACOM, this part is CENTCOM. All the U.S. commands are going to have to be dealing with China in some way in in varying contexts, and there has to be some sort of unity in how we approach China in terms of military issues, economic issues, and so forth. So we have to think of China in a very different context than when it was just a regional actor.

Finally, something for Congress to think about, presence doesn't mean just number of ships. Every time Congress and congressional staff go to Asia and interact with Asian partners, , that's presence, that's interacting. That is showing we care, that we have a large stake, and that demonstrating once again we have interests; we have economic interests. If we have economic interests and political interests, military interests will follow. That's a form of reassurance.

And it gives great opportunity, as I think some of the panelists mentioned earlier today, to learn what others think, and that can help inform Congress in its oversight duties.

Thank you.

**PREPARED STATEMENT DR. THOMAS BICKFORD
SENIOR RESEARCH SCIENTIST, CNA CORPORATION**

January 21, 2016

Thomas J. Bickford

Senior Research Scientist, CNA

“Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission”

“Developments in China’s Military Force Projection and Expeditionary Capabilities”

Introduction

Note: The views expressed in this testimony are my own and do not reflect those of CNA or CNA’s sponsors.

The Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is no longer a force that is primarily tasked with a mission to defend the Chinese homeland and support China’s claims of sovereignty over Taiwan and disputed islands in the East and South China Seas. The PLA is developing into a force that can provide the military means to defend China’s political and economic interests in the region and globally.

This can clearly be seen in the PLA Navy’s shift to a new strategy of “nears seas defense and far seas protection.”¹ Near seas refers to the area within the first island chain and far seas to the rest of the world’s oceans. Tasks that come under the term far seas protection include protection of sea lines of communication, protections of Chinese citizens overseas, responding to non-traditional threats such as piracy and natural disasters, international cooperation, and naval diplomacy.² The PLA Navy is also acquiring a range of capabilities to enable it to carry out sustained operations far from home, including logistics ships, multi-mission destroyers, and a second carrier.³

In addition, China is beginning a major series of military reforms—to be completed by 2020—which are aimed, in part, at creating the new command and organizational relationships to conduct joint operations in the maritime domain, both in the Pacific and globally.⁴

¹ China, Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of. *China's Military Strategy*. Beijing 2015. http://eng.mod.gov.cn/DefenseNews/2015-05/26/content_4586748.htm.

² Ibid.; and Military Strategy Research Department of the Academy of Military Science. *The Science of Military Strategy*, 2013. (Zhanlue xue 2013 nianban; 战略学2013年版). Beijing: Academy of Military Science Press, 2013.

³ Office of Naval Intelligence. *The PLA Navy: New Capabilities and Missions for the 21st Century*. Office of Naval Intelligence, 2015; Ronald O'Rourke, *China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Naval Capabilities—Background Issues for Congress*, Congressional Research Service, 21 December 2015; and “China Building Second Aircraft Carrier with Domestic Technology,” *Bloomberg News*, December 31, 2015, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-12-31/china-building-second-aircraft-carrier-with-domestic-technology>.

⁴ For a comprehensive overview of the PLA reforms, see this morning’s written testimony by Dr. David Finkelstein.

Implications for the Security Concerns for Allies, Partners, and Regional Stability

Allies, partners, and others in the region

China's growing expeditionary and force projection capabilities are likely to impact the entire region, though the nature of that impact will vary considerably. Some countries will likely perceive an increased threat—though the nature of that threat will vary—others, however, may not. Some countries may be willing to allow Chinese forces access to port facilities.

In my view, the most important security implications are for those closest to the Chinese mainland. While the focus of this hearing is on the PLA's expeditionary capabilities, it is important to note that the same capabilities that enable Beijing to project power far from home also enhance its ability to conduct operations within and around the first island chain. A "far seas" navy is not only for use in the far seas. For example, the PLA's current organizational reforms are aimed, in part, at effective joint command and control for operations in the maritime domain. If successful, military reform will enhance the PLA's ability to bring together space, air, and maritime forces in a joint fight whether it is 100 nautical miles from shore, or 1500.

To give another example, ships with the endurance for long distance deployments also have the ability to stay out at sea longer than warships designed to operate closer to shore. And the logistics ships that sustain long-distance deployments also enhance the ability to maintain more ships at operating at sea for a longer period of time. This is especially important in the South China Sea where some of the disputed areas are over 1200 nm from the Chinese mainland.

In short, the acquisition of better power projection capabilities will further enhance China's already considerable military capabilities in and around the first island chain. That would further increase the concerns of Japan, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Malaysia, all of which have territorial disputes with China. Taiwan would also perceive a greater risk.

The key point I want to make here is that a PLA that has force projection and expeditionary capabilities is a more capable force than one that is designed to fight only close to home. The potential conflicts in the East and South China Seas are not new. But it does mean that the gap between China's capabilities and those of its maritime neighbors will likely increase. While Vietnam and Malaysia are modernizing their armed forces, they are likely to continue to more engagement with the U.S. and other countries to help counter Chinese growing capabilities. The Philippines and Japan, as treaty allies will likely to continue look for a strong commitment from the U.S. and to seek ways to enhance security cooperation with the U.S.

Looking further out, India is likely to have increased concerns over greater Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean. New Delhi will likely have concerns with the presence of Chinese submarines as well as surface ship activity. India is likely also to worry about any increased naval cooperation between China and Pakistan. China is also likely to seek greater access to port facilities in the Indian Ocean region. It has recently signed an agreement with Djibouti and there may be further such agreements in the coming years. Depending on the nature and scope of future Chinese deployments and the state of Sino-Indian relations, India may increase its own defense spending, especially on its naval forces. India may also engage in diplomatic efforts to dissuade other

countries in the region from access to port facilities. India may also seek a closer military relationship with the U.S.

More generally, there may be some raised concerns about China's long-term intent, and some Asian subject matter experts I have talked to have raised concerns about a future in which China has a greater naval presence in the Indo-Asia-Pacific and U.S. presence is reduced. That suggests that there would be a demand signal for continued U.S. commitment and presence in the region as a balance to China. At the same time, it should be stressed that many subject matter experts in Asia are concerned about the potential for Sino-U.S. competition being a destabilizing factor.⁵

It is important to note, however, that not all countries will see an expeditionary China as a security concern. China's far seas missions include naval diplomacy and humanitarian assistance/disaster relief. An expeditionary PLA that can help with a natural disaster response would have advantages both for China and the recipient of that aid. Naval diplomacy and joint exercises offer opportunities for increased engagement with Beijing. Providing the PLA Navy with access to shore facilities could be seen as economically beneficial by some countries in the region. Djibouti's government sees its agreement with China as an advantage and other such agreements may be signed in the future.⁶ For Pakistan, a greater Chinese naval presence may be seen as useful as a counter to India, though it remains to be seen how far Beijing may be willing to go in this regard.

In sum, there is a wide range of potential responses to China's future expeditionary capabilities, ranging from grave concern, to mild concern, to possibly welcoming. There is no one size fits all policy solution for the U.S. I would suggest that that implies U.S. policy-makers will need to have a good understanding of the range of perceptions across the region, and that the U.S. approach to the region will have to be very flexible.

U.S. relations with allies and partners in the region

The U.S. may experience increased pressure from allies and partners for signs of commitment to the region and that the U.S. is not deterred by increased Chinese military capabilities. This could take several forms. It is likely that some treaty allies might request greater clarity on U.S. commitments and what actions and under what circumstances would the U.S. respond to China's actions. There will likely also be greater military presence—more ships and planes on patrol, maintaining or increasing the number of forces assigned to the Indian Ocean and the Asia-Pacific. There will likely be increased interest in more joint-exercises with the U.S. There will also likely be greater demands for help with building military capacity through training and transfer of U.S. platforms and systems.

How the U.S. responds will depend on a number of factors including the state of Sino-U.S. relations and how the Chinese conduct their "far seas protection" mission. Another important factor is what kinds of new commitments, if any, is the U.S. willing to make and will new commitments reduce flexibility in the event of a crisis? Resources can also be an important factor.

⁵ Interviews

⁶ "China Confirms Military Support Facilities in Djibouti," *China Daily*, November 27, 2015, http://www.china.com.cn/cppcc/2015-11/27/content_37175244.htm.

Will the U.S. military have the resources to provide greater presence and/or engage in more activities with allied and partner militaries? Will demonstrating a greater military commitment to the region require taking resources from other areas? Will grant aid be sufficient to help build partner capacity?

As China's expeditionary capabilities grow, its use of naval diplomacy and other military to military engagement is likely to expand. China may also seek agreements for greater access to facilities (places not bases) for its ships and aircraft in order to better support a presence far from home. U.S. policy towards the region should anticipate that some countries in the Indian Ocean region, Western Pacific and elsewhere will have reasons to want to expand engagement with China on security issues and be willing to grant PLA Navy ships access to facilities. China's recent agreement with Djibouti for shore facilities is part of the new reality.⁷ The U.S. needs to think about how it will respond, or if it should respond.

The U.S. relationship with China

The U.S. relationship with China will likely face both challenges and opportunities if and when China develops greater expeditionary and force projection capabilities.

The U.S. will need to think about how to balance the needs and concerns of allies and partners with its overall approach to China. Reassuring allies, demonstrating commitments, building partner capacity, etc. are all important actions the U.S. is taking and should take in the future. However, some activities aimed at reassuring allies and partners also have the potential to raise China's perceptions of a threat for the U.S. That in turn could lead to a worsening of relations with China and, assuming it develops force projection capabilities, a more dangerous and unstable security environment. Achieving a good balance between commitments to allies and maintaining a positive working relationship with China is a challenge now and may become more difficult in future if the gap between the PLA and the militaries of neighboring countries grows in the future.

There are potential opportunities to work with China on security issues of common concern. Third party threats to shipping, whether from rogue states, extremist groups, or pirates, are a threat to the interests of both the U.S. and China. China already works with the international community in anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. There may be need for more such cooperation elsewhere in the future. Both the U.S. and China may find the need to cooperate in responding to natural disasters and in providing humanitarian assistance. It is also possible that both countries may find it necessary to collaborate in evacuating our citizens from a war zone. Based on my interactions with Asian subject matter experts, I very much doubt you will ever see U.S. and Chinese soldiers working together to combat a threat like ISIS, but I would not exclude that possibility either.

There will be a need to think about relations with China in a global context. Whatever the approach the next administration takes towards China, Beijing is no longer just a security actor in the Asia-Pacific. Nor will it be just an Indo-Asia-Pacific actor. An expeditionary PLA means that Chinese military has a potential role to play wherever Beijing sees its interests at stake.

⁷ "China Confirms Military Support Facilities in Djibouti," *China Daily*, November 27, 2015, http://www.china.com.cn/cppcc/2015-11/27/content_37175244.htm.

Implications for Military Modernization in the Region

There is some potential for Chinese expeditionary capabilities to be a driver of military modernization in some countries. Chinese military modernization and activities are already a factor in the modernization of some armed forces such as Vietnam's acquisition of Kilo class submarines.⁸ The Philippines is also developing its maritime and air capabilities with the acquisition of cutters from the U.S., patrol vessels from Japan, and aircraft from South Korea.⁹ Japan is in the process of reorienting its defense policy with China in mind.¹⁰

As noted above, Australia may take Chinese expeditionary capabilities into account in future defense acquisition and planning. India appears to be the country in the Indian Ocean area most likely to build up its own capabilities in response to an increased Chinese presence. For example, the Indian Navy might improve its antisubmarine warfare capabilities in response to Chinese submarine patrols in the Indian Ocean.¹¹

However, it is unclear how a strong reaction there will be in the region. An expeditionary China is not the only concern that could drive defense spending for many countries. In addition, most countries have limited resources cannot compete with China on defense spending even if they wanted to. As a number of Asian subject matter experts have told me, most countries in the region will rely on diplomatic efforts to counter balance China's growing presence.¹² It remains to be seen whether diplomatic efforts alone will be sufficient.

Implications for U.S. Interests in the Region

The PLA is still in the process of transitioning to a military that has well-developed expeditionary and force projection capabilities and that transition period is likely to last at least to 2020 if not longer. By Beijing's own timeline it will take to 2020 to finish the current reforms and reorganization of its command and control structure that it needs in order to conduct combat operations beyond its borders.¹³ It will take several years for China to finish building its second carrier and fully integrate it into the fleet. China's most recent white paper states that the PLA

⁸ Carl Thayer, "Can Vietnam's Maritime Strategy Counter China?," *The Diplomat*, September 29, 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/09/can-vietnams-maritime-strategy-counter-china/>; Greg Torode, "Vietnamese military grows to face China threat," Reuters, December 15, 2015, reposted to The Japan Times website, http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/12/20/asia-pacific/vietnamese-military-grows-face-china-threat/#.Vp_EYXlIiY0; Lindsay Murdoch, "South China Sea dispute: Vietnamese subs deployed as deterrent to China," *Sidney Morning Herald*, January 7, 2016, <http://www.smh.com.au/world/vietnamese-subs-deployed-to-south-china-sea-20160107-gm0z6a.html>;

⁹ Pedro Uchi, "Philippines shopping for arms to beef up maritime security," Reuters, November 28, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/uk-philippines-military-idUSKBN0TH03O20151128>; Parasanth Parameswaran "US to Deliver Four New Patrol Vessels to the Philippines," *The Diplomat*, September 8, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/09/us-to-deliver-four-new-patrol-vessels-to-the-philippines/>; Manuel Mogato, "Philippines to station warplanes, frigates at former U.S. base facing disputed sea," Reuters, July 15, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-philippines-subic-idUSKCN0PP2NN20150715>.

¹⁰ Defense white paper stresses threat posed by China," *The Japan Times*, July 21, 2015, http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/07/21/national/politics-diplomacy/defense-white-paper-stresses-threat-posed-china/#.Vp_LMXlIiY0.

¹¹ For an example see Rajat Pandit, "To Fight China's Andaman and Nicobar Forays, India Deploys Submarine Hunters," *Times of India*, January 19, 2016. <http://timesofindia.com/india/To-fight-Chinas-Andaman-andNicobar-forays-India-deploys-submarine-hunters/articleshow/50632020.cms>.

¹² Interviews

¹³ See Dr. Finkelstein's written testimony from earlier today.

Navy “will transition” to a strategy of near seas defense and far seas protection,¹⁴ suggesting that naval strategy is still in development. China’s military capabilities will likely continue to grow but there will be no dramatic transformation in the short term.

By 2030, assuming the PLA is successful in its reform and modernization efforts, the strategic environment facing the United States in the region might be very different. Beijing could have significant military capability to pursue its interests not just in the Pacific and Indian Oceans but globally as well. As noted above, that capability also has the potential to threaten the interests of some U.S. allies and partners and possibly impede the ability of the U.S. to secure its own interests.

It is important to think now about how the U.S. can continue to secure its interests in the region, how it can best support its allies and partners, and how to respond to China. There is a need to develop a better understanding of what kind of expeditionary capabilities Beijing wants to build, how it may use them, and what are the challenges the PLA is facing in its military modernization efforts. Are there opportunities to influence Beijing?

Implications for Congress

Meetings with counterparts from the region are always opportunities to communicate U.S. interest and commitment. As one Asian diplomat once told me, “we don’t measure the strength of your commitment by the number of ships in the Pacific, but by your economic interests.” His point being that ships and planes can easily be moved elsewhere, but economic ties show long-term interests and commitment. Meeting with legislators from the region are an opportunity to underline that the U.S. has long-term interests at stake in the region and that there is a commitment to peace and stability in the region. Meetings with counterparts in the region are also opportunities to gather insights that can help inform Congress in its oversight of defense policy.

¹⁴ China, Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of. *China's Military Strategy*. Beijing 2015. http://eng.mod.gov.cn/DefenseNews/2015-05/26/content_4586748.htm.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF REAR ADMIRAL MICHAEL MCDEVITT,
U.S. NAVY (RET.)
SENIOR FELLOW, CNA CORPORATION**

RADM McDEVITT: Well, as always, I'm delighted to be back before the Security and Economic Review Commission, and thank you for inviting me.

I define expeditionary operations as military operations abroad, and they are executed by military forces specifically trained and equipped to fight a long distance from home.

Hence, Chinese expeditionary capabilities are forces optimized for use beyond the Second Island Chain, what the Chinese sometimes call distant seas or far seas. Obviously, as Tom pointed out, these forces can also be used in the near seas.

China has coined a term that showed up in their latest defense white paper to characterize distant seas combat, a distant seas combat mission. It is called "open seas protection," and it's focused on protecting China's sea lanes and China's overseas interests, including Chinese citizens working and traveling abroad.

For the purposes of this paper and for this panel, I equate open seas protection with expeditionary operations.

Now, the 2015 defense white paper provided very important information related to the importance of expeditionary operations. Quote: "The PLA Navy will gradually shift its focus from offshore waters defense"--in other words, defending China proper--"to a combination of offshore waters defense and open seas protection and build combined, multifunctional and efficient marine combat force structure." End quote.

This is very significant. It suggests that protecting overseas interests and sea lanes is achieving a pride of place almost--almost--as important to China's leadership as defending China itself. While expeditionary operations are likely to affect all of the PLA military branches except perhaps the new Rocket Force, I'm going to focus on the navy because of the importance the white paper places on protecting sea lanes.

Now, the PLA open seas protection, i.e., expeditionary or distant seas navy, is already being built. Much of it is in the water today. In fact, by 2020, China is going to have the world's second largest expeditionary navy. Let me explain what I mean by that.

If you look at the great navies of the world and then compare capabilities that are specifically useful in distant seas operations, such as aircraft carriers, AEGIS-like destroyers, large frigates, nuclear-powered submarines, large amphibious ships, and then you look where the PLA Navy is going to be in 2020, for example, may have between 18 and 20 AEGIS-like destroyers, and then you look across, the United Kingdom will have six or eight, the French will have two, Japan will have eight, India will have five or six; modern high-end frigates, 30 to 32 in the PLA Navy, the United Kingdom, one or two, six for the French, four for the Japanese, and so on.

Attack submarines, nuclear powered attack submarines, estimate of six to seven in the PLA Navy. That's going to be the same number as the British and the French have.

SSBNs, while not literally an expeditionary, they can operate expeditionarily. In short, a long way from home. The PLAN will have five or six SSBNs in the PLA Navy by 2020; the UK and the French have four each. So just to make the point, the PLA expeditionary navy is going to be quite capable in just four or five years.

So what are the implications? China is essentially constructing a "Mini-Me" of the U.S. Navy. When you look at the forces they're putting together, it has the same balance across the

spectrum of capabilities that the U.S. Navy has.

So the obvious question is how are they going to use this? And I would argue that we already have seen evidence that China is going to begin to use their navy just like we use our navy. They're going to do peacetime presence, showing the flag, naval diplomacy, emergency evacuations, and disaster relief exercises with friendly navies.

What we haven't seen yet is traditional power projection. For now. But the China's navy is assembling power projection components: carrier air; land attack cruise missiles; amphibious forces that are very credible.

Another implication of this is going to be their prestige is going to grow globally. It's going to be a formidable far seas navy challenge. As Xinhua commented in May of 2015 when the PLA Navy went into the eastern Mediterranean, "People should get used to seeing China's warships out in the sea."

And so the question is whether they're going to have the ability to militarily influence events abroad, i.e., project power. By 2020, China is going to have the second-largest modern amphibious capability in the world after the U.S. Navy. It could potentially embark somewhere between 5,500 and 7,000 PLA marines for operations anywhere in the world. When you combine that with modern destroyers as escorts and an aircraft carrier to provide air defense, China will have a distant seas power projection capability for the first time since Admiral Zheng He's last voyage in 1431.

So what are the implications? I'm going to skip a couple of the implications here in the interest of time. Certainly it's going to attenuate the perception of U.S. power, but let me just mention the one implication for Congress that I have here. If you assume two terms, the next president of the United States is going to face a challenge that was last faced by Franklin Roosevelt. That challenge is that by around 2020 in times of crisis or conflict of having to actually have to fight to gain sea control or to maintain sea control along the Pacific or Indian Ocean littorals.

Since 1945, the United States has been able to employ its expeditionary capabilities in pursuit of interests on the far shores of these bodies of water with little or no concern regarding America's ability to arrive and stay wherever it thought best for as long as it thought best.

Over the next eight years, this ability is going to be in jeopardy, and Congress needs to get involved in thinking about this future and what to do, if anything, about it.

Thank you.

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF REAR ADMIRAL MICHAEL MCDEVITT,
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“Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission”

Hearing on Developments in China’s Military Force projection and Expeditionary Capabilities

Introduction:

I define expeditionary operations as:

Military operations abroad. They are executed by military forces specifically trained and equipped to fight a long distance from home.

Hence, Chinese expeditionary capabilities are forces optimized for use beyond the second island chain...the distant seas. These forces can also be used in near seas operations.

The Chinese have coined a term to characterize a distant seas combat mission; as opposed to a peacetime MOOTW mission. It is called “open seas protection.”

For purposes of clarity, I judge that:

“Open seas protection” = expeditionary missions

The Demand Signal

Beijing has been remarkably transparent in disclosing its expeditionary ambitions. Ambitions dictated by the perceived need to protect China’s sea lanes and its many political and economic overseas interests—including of course the hundreds of thousands of Chinese citizens working or travelling abroad.

This was explicitly spelled out in the latest (2015) Chinese defense white paper entitled *China’s Military Strategy*.¹ According to the white paper²:

With the growth of China’s national interests...the security of overseas interests

¹ The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, *China’s Military Strategy*, May 2015, <http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Database/WhitePapers/index.htm>

² Ibid, 3, 8, 9

concerning energy and resources, strategic sea lines of communication (SLOCs), as well as institutions, personnel and assets abroad, has become an imminent issue. ...

In line with the strategic requirement of offshore waters defense and open seas protection, the PLA Navy (PLAN) will gradually shift its focus from “offshore waters defense” to the combination of “offshore waters defense” with “open seas protection,” and build a combined, multi-functional and efficient marine combat force structure.

It is necessary for China to develop a modern maritime military force structure commensurate with its national security and development interests, safeguard its national sovereignty and maritime rights and interests, protect the security of strategic SLOCs and overseas interests, and participate in international maritime cooperation, so as to provide strategic support for building itself into a maritime power.

Very Important Guidance related to Expeditionary Operations

The White Paper announces that “the PLA Navy (PLAN) will gradually *shift its focus from* ‘offshore waters defense’ (geographically near seas) to *the combination of* ‘offshore waters defense’ with ‘open seas protection,’ (a new term; geographically far seas) and build a combined, multi-functional and efficient marine combat force structure.”³ This is very significant. This passage suggests that protecting overseas interests and sea lanes is becoming as important to China’s leadership as defending China itself. It is too soon to judge if the overseas interests alluded to in the white paper could be characterized as another of China’s “core” interests; but in terms of PLA strategic thinking it is clear that they are very significant—strategically significant to be sure, but also significant because of the budgetary implications associated with procurement and fielding of new capabilities.

While expeditionary operations are likely to affect all of the PLA military branches (accept perhaps the new Rocket Force), I will focus on the PLAN because of the importance the white paper placed on protecting sea lanes. The nature of this emphasis is new and is different than the now almost decade old guidance found in earlier white papers that was focused on the *peacetime* uses of the navy. To capture the concept of peacetime operations, the PLA borrowed an old U.S. military acronym—MOOTW (military operations other than war).⁴ China’s 2008 Defense White Paper described MOOTW as playing an important role for China’s armed forces, and noted that the PLA is developing MOOTW capabilities.⁵

In the 2015 white paper the enumeration of peacetime MOOTW missions no longer includes any reference to sea lanes upon which China relies. These are addressed in separate sections within the context of “protection,” which suggests to me that thinking regarding open seas has shifted from conceptually framing those operations as strictly peacetime, to a broader framework that

³ Ibid., p. 8

⁴ *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other than War*, (Joint Pub 3-07), 16 June 1995, http://www.bits.de/NRANEU/others/jp-doctrine/jp3_07.pdf

⁵ Information Office of the State Council, *China’s National Defense in 2008*, available at: http://www.china.org.cn/government/central_government/2009-01/20/content_17155577.htm

takes into account having to protect “strategic SLOCS” in wartime. This has obvious long-term implications for expeditionary operations in general and PLAN force structure in particular since protecting crucial sea lanes which originate at the Indian Ocean’s far western reaches requires a mix of ships, aircraft and submarines that can credibly accomplish such a mission thousands of miles from Chinese territory.

“Open Seas Protection”... on the road to a global navy

It is important to appreciate that “open seas protection” did not materialize overnight; it rather represents the latest iteration in Chinese thinking about how to use of the PLAN beyond China’s seaward approaches. It can be traced in official pronouncements to 2004⁶ when the PLA was for the first time assigned responsibilities well beyond China and proximate waters. This was official recognition that China’s national interests now extended beyond its borders; and that the PLA’s missions were to be based on those expanding interests, not just geography.⁷ For instance, the 2008 Defense White Paper states that China continues to develop its ability to conduct “offshore” operations *while gradually building its ability to conduct operations in “distant seas.”*⁸

The “open seas protection” mission also makes sense within the context of Xi’s much-ballyhooed 21st Century Maritime Silk Road that will run from China’s major ports through Indonesian Straits, then along the Indian Ocean’s northern littoral, grazing East Africa, before transiting the Red Sea and Suez Canal into the Eastern Mediterranean. This “road” is already heavily travel by China’s shipping, but if promised Chinese investments in infrastructure along the route actually come true, the need to look after those investments will also grow.

Finally, we cannot overlook the influence of outside voices have had on the generation of the “open seas protection” mission. If China has had doubts regarding dependence of its economy, and as result the survival of the regime, on its sea lanes, that uncertainty has long since been removed by a number of Western “strategists” writing that in time of conflict the way to bring China to its knees is to cut its sea lanes.⁹

The PLA Navy “Open Seas Protection” is Already Being Built

China does not need a “distant seas” navy to execute a near seas A2/AD operation, but it does if it hopes to accomplish the mission set associated with open seas protection.¹⁰ This requires a

⁶ Hu Jintao, “Understand the New Historic Missions of our Military in the New Period of the New Century,” available on the National Defense Education website of Jiangxi Province, <http://gfjy.jiangxi.gov.cn/yl.asp?did+11349.htm>

⁷ The *New Historic Missions* speech triggered a discussion among Chinese strategists in and out of uniform over security interests well beyond China’s near seas. The geographical characterization of this emerging issues was *yuanhai* in Chinese, translated as either “open seas” or “distant seas” The term *yuanhai* can also be translated as “distant oceans.” Some English sources translate the term as “blue water”.

⁸ *China’s National Defense in 2008* (Beijing: Information Office of the State Council, 2009). (Emphasis added) , available at: http://www.china.org.cn/government/central_government/2009-01/20/content_17155577.htm

⁹ See for example, Douglas C. Peifer, “China, the German Analogy, and the New Air-Sea Operational Concept,” *Orbis*, Vol.55, No.1, Winter 2001, T.X. Hammes, “Offshore Control: A Proposed Strategy for an Unlikely Conflict,” *Strategic Forum* 278 (Washington, DC: NDU Press, June 2012), Geoff Dyer, *The Contest of the Century: The New Era of Competition with China and How America Can Win*, (New York, Knopf, 2014), Chapter 2, and Sean Mirski, “Stranglehold: Context, Conduct and Consequences of an American Blockade of China,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol 36, No 3, 2013.

¹⁰ Needed capabilities shift to surface ships rather than land-based air and submarines, although recent PLAN submarine deployments to the Indian Ocean do indicate that submarines, especially nuclear powered attack submarines (SSN) and modern AIP equipped conventional submarines also factor into PLAN calculations regarding open seas protection. For an Indian

different mix of naval capabilities than needed for wartime defense of China proper. Far seas operations demand multi-product logistics support ships, amphibious ships with helicopter facilities, larger multi-mission destroyers and frigates with better endurance, reliable propulsion systems, helicopter facilities, improved anti-submarine systems, and especially longer-range air defenses. Submarines have an important role to play. Nuclear power attack submarines (SSN) are best suited for far seas deployments because of their endurance, but even in this case, as the USN has long realized, a submarine tender forward deployed in Guam or Diego Garcia is a necessary logistic requirement for support and repair when SSNs are on sustained deployments thousands of miles from a traditional support base.

Lacking land-based air cover, a credible distant seas navy must be able to defend itself from air attack. Destroyers with long-range surface-to-air missiles can accomplish where the air threat is limited, but most of China's most important SLOCs—e.g., in the Northern Arabian Sea/Gulf of Aden—face a more substantial air threat. I believe this was a very important (although not the only) factor in the China's decision to build a modest aircraft carrier force.¹¹ Although the ski-jump take-off used on *Liaoning* imposes weight penalties on the type and amount of ordnance the aircraft can launch with, its jets can provide PLAN open seas protection operations air cover. Looking ahead, all indications are that around the years 2020-22, the PLAN will likely operate two *Liaoning*-style aircraft carriers.

The air wing is, of course, the reason for an aircraft carrier. Details regarding the composition of *Liaoning*'s air wing remain sketchy, probably because the PLAN itself has not finally decided. Informed speculation suggests the air wing will include, 24 J-15 fighters, 4-6 ASW helicopters, four helicopters dedicated to airborne early warning (putting an air-search radar in the sky), and two helicopters dedicated to pilot rescue during flight operations (“plane guard” in USN-speak).¹²

The backbone of these “distant seas” forces will be the multi-mission *Luyang* II/III (type 052C and 052D) class destroyers (DDG). They are likely to form the bulk of the warship escorts for *Liaoning*, any follow-on carriers, and expeditionary amphibious forces. These 8000 ton destroyers are also formidable warships when operating independently; they are roughly the size of the US DDG-51 class, and will have phased-array radars and a long-range SAM system which provides the PLAN with its first credible *area* air-defense capability (the ability to defend more than just oneself). Because these ships are fitted with a multi-purpose 64-cell vertical launch system, they will also be able to load land-attack cruise missiles.

On paper, these are state of the art multi-mission warships; the phased array radar, also known as active electronically scanned array (AESA), is similar in technical approach to the radar in the USN-developed AEGIS combat system. When combined with long-range surface-to-air missiles housed in vertical launch cells, this radar system provides the ship with tremendous anti-air firepower—the ability to engage multiple targets simultaneously. These types of destroyers are expensive warships to build; only a few navies in the world can afford them. For example, Japan

perspective see, P.K. Ghosh, “Game Changers? Chinese Submarines in the Indian Ocean,” *The Diplomat*, July 6, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/07/game-changers-chinese-submarines-in-the-indian-ocean/>

¹¹ Li, Nan and Christopher Weuve, “China's Aircraft Carrier Ambitions: An Update,” *Naval War College Review*, Winter 2010, p. 15. www.usnwc.edu/publications/Naval-War-College-Review/2010---Winter.aspx

¹² <https://medium.com/war-is-boring/chinas-got-an-aircraft-carrier-what-about-the-air-wing-c95283bc0279>

has six, and by 2020 will have eight; whereas today China already has ten built or building, and by 2020 will likely have 18-20.¹³

If the Type 052D is intended as the backbone, the Type 054A guided-missile frigate (FFG) has for the past six years been the workhorse the PLAN far seas anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden and follow-on presence operations spanning the Indian Ocean littoral, Eastern Mediterranean, and Black Sea. At 4,100 tons, this large frigate is well-armed with long-range ASCMs, a 32-cell VLS launcher with medium-range SAMs, and a helicopter with hanger. Their ASW suite is likely to be improved with the addition of a towed array and variable-depth sonar that is already being fitted on China's Type 56 corvettes.¹⁴ China operates 17 of these ships today, and by 2020 is expected to have approximately 24 Type 54A and around 6 of improved Type 054B frigates in commission.

The PLAN has mastered the logistics of sustaining small task groups on distant stations. The advantage of a state-owned enterprise that is in the logistics services business worldwide (COSCO) means that China enjoys built-in shore-based support structure at virtually all the major ports along the Pacific and Indian Oceans. When combined with its modern multi-product replenishment ships that have developed significant skill in at sea support; this has become a successful approach to logistic sustainment halfway around the world from Chinese homeports. One of the main lessons the PLAN has learned from its anti-piracy deployments is the absolute importance of having enough multi-purpose replenishment ships. American experts have long opined that the most important indication of PLAN out of area ambitions would be construction of replenishment ships. That is exactly what China is doing. PLAN inventory of 22,000-ton *Fuchi*-class AORs is being increased to seven today, with as many as 10 major replenishment ships probably operating by 2020, more than enough to support continuous far seas operations in addition to the counter-piracy patrols.¹⁵

For years, the focus on PLAN amphibious shipping has focused on assessing the PLA's ability to invade Taiwan. While that contingency requires continued attention; the PLAN is in the process of assembling an impressive "far seas" expeditionary capability. It now has four 20,000-ton amphibious ships classified as LPDs (Type 071). Each ship can embark between 800-1,000 marines or soldiers; four air-cushion landing craft and several helicopters. Forecasts suggest even more of these ships as well as perhaps a larger LHA type ship will be built.¹⁶

China's submarine force has correctly been seen as primarily focused on "near seas defense." As mentioned nuclear powered attack submarines (SSN) are considered the most suitable type of submarine for long-range, long-endurance out of area operations for any navy. The PLAN has long had a small SSN force, but in the past few years China has created a modern SSN force of six Shang-class (Type 093) boats, and is expected to introduce a new class that could result in a

¹³ ONI, *The PLA Navy*, p15-16, Andrew Tate, "China Commissions second Type 052D DDG, pushes ahead with frigate, corvette launches, *IHS Jane's 360*, 21 July 2015, <http://www.janes.com/article/53139/china-commissions-second-type-052d-ddg-pushes-ahead-with-frigate-corvette-launches> and [Deagel.com](http://www.deagel.com/Destroyers-and-Cruisers/Type-052D_a001828004.aspx) Type 052D http://www.deagel.com/Destroyers-and-Cruisers/Type-052D_a001828004.aspx

¹⁴ Andrew Tate, "China commissions fourth ASW-capable Type 056 corvette," *IHS Jane's Navy International*, <http://www.janes.com/article/51341/china-commissions-fourth-asw-capable-type-056-corvette>

¹⁵ Bernard D. Cole, "China's navy expands it replenishment-at-sea capability," *The Interpreter*, 26 August 2015, <http://www.lowyinterpreter.org/post/2015/08/26/Chinas-Navy-Expands-Replenishment-Capability.aspx>

¹⁶ Office of Naval Intelligence, *The PLA Navy: New Capabilities and Missions for the 21st Century*, Washington DC, p. 18.

2020 inventory of 7-8 SSNs, which would exceed the United Kingdom and French SSN forces and place China third globally in operational nuclear powered attack submarines, behind the United States and Russia.

The PLAN's most modern conventionally powered submarine is the AIP-equipped Yuan-class (Type 039A/B).¹⁷ It has been in series production since 2004, with as many as 20 expected by 2020. Conventionally-powered submarines would not normally be considered as capabilities associated with Chinese "open seas protection" missions because of their important role in A2/AD, except for the fact that this large conventional submarine was sent to the Indian Ocean, calling at Karachi, Pakistan in April 2015. This was the third submarine the PLAN has deployed to the Indian Ocean in the past two years; the earlier deployments were by a Type 093 class SSN and a Song class conventional boat; much to Indian observers' dismay.¹⁸ These deployments, a sort of proof of concept operation, suggest that PLAN submarines may also be earmarked for routine far seas operations just as the Soviet Navy did when it maintained routine submarine presence in the Northern Arabian Sea during the final decade of the Cold War.¹⁹

It is important to emphasize how essential seven-plus years of uninterrupted anti-piracy operations in the Arabian Sea have been in teaching the PLAN how to conduct distant seas operations. One reason they have learned so quickly is because the anti-piracy patrols are a real world "battle-laboratory."²⁰

Looking Ahead: World's Second Largest Distant Seas Navy by 2020

To help to appreciate the magnitude of PLAN's development of "open ocean protection" capabilities, it is useful to compare them to the other "great" navies of the world. **Exhibit 1** is a forecast that attempts to compare ships with the capabilities necessary to conduct sustained deployments very far away from waters. This specifically compares the PLA Navy classes of ships discussed in the preceding section with ships of similar capabilities from other navies routinely operating in far seas. This comparison is NOT intended to be an order of battle inventory where every ship of every class is counted; rather it is an attempt to be a comparison of Chinese "far seas" apples to other nations "far seas" apples, projected to around the year 2020.

¹⁷ Christopher P. Carlson, "Essay: Inside the Design of China's Yuan-class submarine," USNI News, August 31, 2015, <http://news.usni.org/2015/08/31/essay-inside-the-design-of-chinas-yuan-class-submarine>

¹⁸ DOD, *Annual Report 2015*, 19 and Rajat Pandit, "Chinese submarine in Karachi, India alarmed," The Times of India, June, 27, 2015, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Chinese-submarine-in-Karachi-India-alarmed/articleshow/47845930.cms>

¹⁹ Need foot note on Sov out of area submarine deployments.

²⁰ Michael McDevitt, 'PLA Naval Exercises with International Partners,' p 102, in Roy Kamphausen, et al, *Learning by Doing: The PLA Trains at Home and Abroad*, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, Pa, 2012, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/files/pub1135.pdf>

Exhibit 1: Far Seas Navies' Major Ships ca. 2020²¹

	PLA Navy	UK	France	Japan	India	Russia
Carriers	2	2	1	0	2	1
Aegis-like Destroyer	18-20	6-8	2	8	5-6	0
Modern high end Frigate	30-32	1-2	6 (FREMM)	4	3-10	9-11
Large Amphibious	6-7	6	3	3	0-3	0
AOR	8-10	3	4	5	0-3	4 very old
SSN	6-7	7	6	0	1-2	8-9 +6 SSGN
SS (AIP)	20			22	6	9-11
SSBN	5-6	4	4	0	1-2	10-12

For perspective, **Exhibit 2** also compares the PLAN classes that have been discussed with similar classes in the United States Navy. Again, this is NOT on “order of battle” ship counting exercise, it is an attempt to show that while the PLAN’s far seas capabilities are very impressive when measured against the rest of the world, there is still no comparison when measured against America’s far seas naval forces. But, all of China’s ships are homeported in East Asia whereas most the US Navy is homeported thousands of miles away. There is little doubt that by the beginning of the next decade the PLAN will have a substantial capability advantage in East Asia. When one combines the forces of Japan and the U.S. Seventh Fleet a rough equivalency in “far seas” ships will exist. However, a contribution from Japan is not assured in contingencies when the security of Japan is not directly threatened.

Exhibit 2: Major Far Seas Ships ca. 2020, PLAN vs. USN

	USN Overall	PLAN Far Seas	US 7 th Fleet	Japan
Carriers	11	2	1 to 1.5	0
Aegis-like destroyer	88-91	18-20	10	8
Frigate (FFG)	0	30-32	0	4
Large Amphibious ship	33	6-8	3-4	3
AOR (replenishment at sea)	30	8	rotational	5
SSN	48+4 SSGN	6-7	3+rotational	0

²¹ AEGIS like DDGs include UK Type 045 Daring class, the French Horizon class, the Japanese Kongo and Atago classes, and the Indian Kolkata and Visakhapatnam classes.

Modern SS (AIP)	0	20	0	22
SSBN	14	5-6	0	0

Implications for China

China is constructing a “mini-me” of the United States Navy

Virtually all of the PLAN ships discussed in proceeding paragraphs have been commissioned over the last decade; the obvious conclusion is that China’s “open ocean protection” mission will be executed by a new/modern far seas force. This force, clearly well-balanced across the board in capabilities and ship classes, and increasingly resembles nothing more than a smaller version of the USN.

The question is: will Beijing employ this microcosm of the USN the way Washington uses the USN? So far, trends are moving in that direction. Like the USN, when on distant seas operations the PLAN conducts the whole range of activities associated with what is normally characterized as “peacetime presence”: naval diplomacy, emergency evacuations, disaster relief, and exercises with friendly navies. What has not been seen is traditional power projection—yet. China’s far seas navy is assembling power projection components—carrier air, land attack cruise missiles, and amphibious forces—that are very credible.

China’s global prestige will grow

It is likely that by 2020, China will have the second most capable “distant seas” navy in the world. Certainly in terms of numbers of relevant ship classes it will be in that position. Its “ranking” among the world’s great navies is greatly facilitated by fact that while the PLAN was expanding, virtually all of the other traditional maritime powers were reducing major warship production. Nonetheless, today the PLAN is not only a formidable “near seas” challenge thanks mainly to its submarine contribution to A2/AD operations, it is becoming a well-rounded (balanced) and very capable expeditionary navy. As Xinhua reported on 12 May 2015,

“This is the first time that [China] has conducted naval exercises in the Mediterranean Sea. It is a new challenge for the Chinese Navy. It also showed that [China] is expanding its national interests and security interests to waters further away from China. People should get used to seeing China’s warships out in the sea.”

China’s ability to militarily influence events abroad (project power) will grow

By 2020 China will have the second-largest modern amphibious capability in the world (after the USN), and could potentially embark at a minimum 5,500-6,500 marines for operations anywhere in the world. When combined with modern destroyers as escorts and an aircraft carrier to provide air defense, China will have a distant seas power projection capability for the first time since Admiral Zheng He’s last voyage (1431-1433).²²

²² For the most accurate account of Zheng He’s “power projection” voyages see Edward Dreyer, *Zheng He: China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty, 1405-1433*, Pearson, 2006.

Chinese National expectations—supporting Chinese abroad

Every indication is that the people of China are, and will continue to be, delighted with China's growing global naval capabilities. The Government of China in general and the PLAN in particular have done a terrific job in publicizing the success of counterpiracy operations in protecting China merchant ships or evacuating Chinese nationals from hot spots in the Middle East. The fact that the PLAN was able to help Chinese citizens as well as other foreign nationals, as it did with the Yemen evacuations of civilians in April 2015, or with its counterpiracy operations that provide escort protection to any ships that requests same, highlight the PLA's ability to become a net provider of humanitarian aid in times of crisis.²³

Chinese National expectations—acting like a world power

Recognition of China's status in the world is also an important national expectation. There appears to be a wide spread impression among many Chinese elites that historically major powers have also been maritime powers. Chinese writers note the Netherlands, Spain and Portugal were major powers in the past due to their maritime capabilities. Later powers—Britain, the US, Japan, and for a short period Germany and the Soviet Union, also depended on maritime power.²⁴ While it is important to not over stress this element, it implies that a Chinese expeditionary capability would reinforce perceptions to China is a world power and an actor of consequence on the global stage.

Implications for the United States

Cooperative PLAN operations in CENTCOM, AFRICOM and EUCOM

Seeing Chinese warships in the far reaches of the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean Sea is likely to become routine. U.S. Combatant Commanders responsible for those regions may have different perspectives on PLAN presence than their Pacific compatriots, and in some cases (e.g., anti-piracy patrols) welcome PLAN presence.

There may be far more opportunities for USN-PLAN cooperation the farther from China's proximate claims that naval interactions occur; although if Sino-Russian naval activities in the Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea assume the appearance of being counter to American interests, that could quickly change.

Potential anxiety in India

Certainly, should the PLAN begin to maintain a routine naval presence in the Indian Ocean in addition to its anti-piracy operations that will become even more of a red flag to India than it already is. That will increase the incentives, certainly from Delhi's point of view, for an even closer Indian-American naval relationship. The pace of that relationship will naturally be dictated by the overall state of Sino-Indian relations; but it is conceivable that an increase in PLAN presence, especially submarines, could result in some sort of a combined Indo-U.S. ASW

²³ Ankit Panda. "China Evacuates Foreign Nationals from Yemen," *The Diplomat*, April 6, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/04/china-evacuates-foreign-nationals-from-yemen/>

²⁴ Peng Kehui. "Discussing the Historical Evolution of New China's Maritime Strategy." *Luelun xin zhongguo haiyang zhanlue de lishi yanjin. Social Sciences Review Shehui Kexue Luntun*, no. 10 (2012); Xu Sheng, "Follow the Path of Maritime Power."

organization dedicated to tracking PLAN submarines in-region.

PLA places and maybe bases along the Indian Ocean Littoral and beyond

Naturally, the potential for PLAN facilities along the Indian Ocean littoral has been an issue of sometimes-heated commentary. Since the PLAN is already evolving toward a “places not bases” approach in the Indian Ocean region; it is not farfetched to speculate that the “open seas protection mission” helps to rationalize Chinese logistics “outposts” in the western portion of the Indian Ocean. A Chinese facility in Djibouti seems to be in the offing,²⁵ and Gwadar, Pakistan is also a possibility.²⁶

Introducing “friction” to U.S. crisis responses

The combination of “places” along with future deployments of PLAN distant seas forces means that in a few years U.S. authorities may no longer be able to assume sea control off Middle East and East African hotspots if Chinese interests are involved, and differ from Washington’s.

Impact on global perceptions of US power

The image of a Chinese “global” expeditionary navy could over time attenuate perceptions of American power, especially in maritime regions where only the USN or its friends have operated freely since the end of the Cold War.

Impact on U.S. maritime resources of distant sea SSN and SSBN operations

Closer to home, keeping track of far seas-deployed PLAN submarines could create new capacity challenges for U.S.—especially in U.S. EEZs. During the Cold War a USN that was at least twice the size of today’s navy, with almost a third of its force structure dedicated to the primary mission of ASW, invested considerable operational effort into keeping track of Soviet submarines operating near American coasts. Will the U.S. be willing and able to do the same today?

How big will China’s “Open Ocean Protection” Navy become?

Unlike every other country with a major naval establishment, China is unique in that it does not reveal how many ships and submarines of each class it intends to build. In all other countries with any sort of credible navy this information is available: building warships is expensive, and involves seeking funds from legislative bodies. This process naturally involves public information specifying what a government actually intends to buy.

Because of this lack of Chinese transparency, reaching judgements about the future size and capability of a “far seas” PLA Navy (PLAN) requires a blend of information from: semi-authoritative comments from the Chinese themselves, open-source space-based photography that

²⁵ John Lee, “China Comes to Djibouti: Why Washington Should be Worried,” Foreign Affairs Snapshot, April 23, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/east-africa/2015-04-23/china-comes-djibouti>

²⁶ Saibal Dasgupta, “China gets 40-year management rights on Pak’s Gwadra port, access to Arabian Sea,” *The Times of India*, April 14, 2015 <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/china/China-gets-40-year-management-rights-on-Paks-Gwadar-port-and-access-to-Arabian-Sea/articleshow/46923252.cms> , and Angela Yu, China leases 800 ha land at Gwadar port, “IHS Maritime 360, 9 September 2015, <http://www.ihsmaritime360.com/article/19228/china-leases-800-ha-land-at-gwadar-port>

take photos of Chinese shipyards, and commentary from official U.S. government sources such as the 2015 Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) report on the PLA²⁷ or the Defense Department's annual reports to Congress on the PLA.²⁸

As a result there is great uncertainty over how large will the “distant seas” PLAN become? If one takes seriously the words in the 18th Party Work report that, “Building strong national defense and powerful armed forces that are *commensurate with China's international standing* and meet the needs of its security and development interests is a strategic task of China's modernization drive...” it could become very large indeed.

Several years ago in a paper written for a Naval War College conference I asserted that China was not trying to replicate the Imperial Japanese Navy and build a force aimed at having a climactic battle for sea control somewhere in the Philippine Sea. I still believe this to be true, but the image of a regional navy as capable as the IJN was in 1941—it was a formidable force: 10 battleships; 12 aircraft carriers; 18 heavy cruisers; 20 light cruisers; 126 destroyers; and 68 submarines—reminds us of what an Asian regional navy could become.²⁹

Implications for Congress

If you assume two terms, the next U.S. President will face a challenge last faced by FDR. That challenge is that in times of crisis or conflict of having to actually fight to either gain or maintain sea control along the Pacific or Indian Ocean littorals. Since 1945, the United States has been able to employ its expeditionary capabilities in the pursuit of interests on the far shores of those bodies of water with little or no concern regarding the country's ability to arrive and stay wherever it thought best, for as long as it thought best. Over the next 8 years this ability will be in jeopardy. Congress needs to get involved in thinking about this future and what to do, if anything, about it.

²⁷ Office of Naval Intelligence, *The PLA Navy: New Capabilities and Missions for the 21st Century*, Washington DC. <https://www.hdiac.org/islandora/object/hdiac%3A328473>, hereafter ONI, *The PLA Navy*.

²⁸ The latest such report is, Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, April 2015*, http://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2015_China_Military_Power_Report.pdf

²⁹ David C. Evans and Mark R. Peattie, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887-1941*. U.S. Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Maryland, 1997

PANEL III QUESTION AND ANSWER

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Larry.

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: I want to thank all three of you for those presentations. The transition to global responsibility and to a force projection will mean some changes in military strategic culture in China, and I'd invite all three of you to make any comments you may have on how you see the changes and how difficult that may be.

When can we expect to see a navy that and really a political structure that accepts the fact that those changes have to come about? And then if there are areas of mutual security concern between China and the U.S. in the Asia-Pacific, what are they?

RADM McDEVITT: Who did you direct that to?

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: All of them. Well, that last one really goes to Kristen because she's the one that said it but the others are for everybody.

MRS. GUNNESS: I'll start then. Okay. So in terms of your last question, I do think that we have areas of mutual security concern in terms of disaster, especially disaster relief and disaster response in the Asia-Pacific region. I think it would actually look bad for us if there was a disaster and we did not participate with the Chinese if they choose to go to someone's aid.

I think it would be the right thing to do so that would be the main area of concern. But there are also areas of opportunity in terms of counterpiracy. The Straits of Malacca have become, you know, the piracy hot spot. We do some very low level exercises right now together in the Gulf of Aden occasionally and maybe expanding on that.

I mean I know there's operational concerns, but I would also say that I've spent a good amount of time with the U.S. Navy talking about these issues with sailors and admirals, and I feel like the Navy is very careful about what they choose to do with other countries, and it goes through a real process. And so in terms of things like HADR, counterpiracy operations, counterterrorist operations, there's a process before someone decides to do an exercise with somebody, and so I think the level of risk for exposing operational capability the Chinese either don't already know about or don't already have is pretty low.

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: Well, the National Defense Authorization Act, I think it is, of 2000 is pretty restrictive, and I mean, for instance, they don't want to use--I would suggest you have to be careful about using the most advanced destroyers we have. I mean you want to watch out for collection of signatures that could be used to program torpedoes, electronic emissions. I mean you really need to think this through, and I guess the question is, is the NDAA as written fine-tuned enough to permit what you are suggesting?

MRS. GUNNESS: I think it's probably not quite there. If anything, though, the NDAA, the number of activities that might have been okay for us to do together that got denied under the NDAA was actually quite significant, too, so, yeah, this is probably not quite developed enough, let's say.

RADM McDEVITT: Let me comment on strategic culture, and then I'll opine on the NDAA. I think if you think of strategic culture, there's three aspects of it that apply to the PLA. First of all, the continental versus maritime strategic culture.

Obviously, China has traditionally been a continental power, and over the last 15 or 20 years has gradually been developing into a blend of a continental and maritime power, and I think the latest defense white paper makes that perfectly clear with commentary about the water is as important as the land, and it suggests that the senior leadership of the PLA understands that China's overseas interests are growing in importance, and therefore that aspect of strategic

culture and the military capabilities that go along with it, have to change and evolve and they are. They've been putting money behind this for several years now.

The second aspect of strategic culture is a change from an Army-dominated PLA to a PLA in which the other services are beginning to have more of a voice, and I think the best evidence of that evolution in strategic culture is, in fact, the latest announced changes to the whole command and control organization. You don't turn the PLA on its head and change structure that existed before if you think everything is just fine.

You do that if you think you need to make improvements to be able to reflect the changes in China's strategic circumstances, which include overseas, and so the need to improve jointness, the need to get the army out of running everything, I think that's the second aspect of evolving strategic culture.

And then, of course, the last aspect of strategic culture is, in fact, at least the navy, and to a degree the air force, have been out doing things thousands of miles away from home, and they've been doing that for eight years now, and so all of those different escort missions, who had flag officers in charge and officers on ships from the CO on down who are getting expeditionary experience. These people are the future of the PLAN. , They're coming back and getting promoted and moving into other positions so they've--you're developing a cadre of senior naval officers for sure who have been out and about and abroad and understand the necessity to change China's strategic culture, and I might add they've been painfully aware that when they're out in the northern Arabian Sea, they're operating under potentially enemy air, and they have very little to deal with that. Hence, the need for an aircraft carrier.

Turning now to the NDAA. Most of the commanders of the Pacific Command who have been in charge with the engagement with China, I think, either seeing what they have written or hearing them speak or talking to them specifically, think the NDAA prohibitions with regard to mil-to-mil are more than adequate and perhaps onerous in some cases, and I'm sure that--I don't want to put words in their mouth--I would guess that they would not be interested in making their ability to execute engagement more constrained than it is already.

DR. BICKFORD: I would just add a couple of additional points that show in my view a sort of slow but steady evolution towards more of a maritime strategic culture, one of which is at the 12th Party Congress, there was a call for China to be a strong maritime nation. So it is, to me, that says it's not just something within the PLA or the PLA Navy. That is the political leadership buying into the importance of the maritime element as part of national power.

And I think what's also interesting about that is when I talk about maritime power, obviously the navy is really important, but they're also talking about coast guard, they're talking about oceanographic science. There's even a call in China that their research will exceed what we have at Woods Hole, world-class research, world-class merchant marine, and on down the line.

So there really is a large chunk of political and even economic elites buying into that maritime element. I think that's an important marker, which of course reinforces the effort to build a strong navy. It's not just the military pushing for this. Civilian leadership is pushing for this.

And then I think you also have a number of events that help drive this. For example, it's really striking looking at how much attention the Chinese citizens had when China sent ships looking for the Malaysian airline, down into the south Indian Ocean for the first time.

And I think you'll see a lot more incidents like this where people in China at a grass-roots level and at a leadership level and everything in between are really aware that national security is

ted to elements of maritime power, and, lastly, the thing that a lot of us have been hammering at today, which is most of the contingencies for which the PLA has to prepare are in the maritime domain, especially Taiwan.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Carolyn.

VICE CHAIRMAN BARTHOLOMEW: Carolyn. Is that me?

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Yeah, that's you.

VICE CHAIRMAN BARTHOLOMEW: Thank you. I know, but you looked towards Katherine.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: I did.

VICE CHAIRMAN BARTHOLOMEW: I thought you were just mixing up all the women on the panel again, Jeff.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Oh, no, no, no.

[Laughter.]

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: He gets confused.

VICE CHAIRMAN BARTHOLOMEW: Thank you. Thank you to all of our witnesses.

It's very interesting. I guess I get concerned about what I hear, even if people don't necessarily mean it, but what I hear is sort of the reality or the necessity of the U.S. ceding ground, C-E-D, ceding ground, as the Chinese are seeding ground, S-E-E-D-I-N-G, in the Asia-Pacific region in particular.

So when I look at HADR, for example, I think that in addition to it being the right thing for the U.S. to do, it's also been a really smart thing. The pride with which we watched our Navy participating, our Navy and our marines participating, in response to the tsunami in the Indian Ocean, we could not have bought more better PR with Indonesia, for example, if we had gone out looking for an opportunity, and again that's not why we do it, but it's an important thing.

The response to Tohoku earthquake, I think, is another example of how important it is. So while we are encouraging Chinese activity, greater participation in these, I think it's really important that we continue our leadership role on that front, and so, Dr. Bickford, as I hear you, you are saying that we have to think about how we support--this is separate from HADR--but how we support our friends, our allies, and our partners, and we have to think about the consequences of that support for our relationship with China, which I see as a rising meme--I'm going to use that word--in policy debates.

Now there have been a couple of pieces that have been written lately by people at CSIS that are saying essentially the same thing, and that, again, really troubles me because we are not friends, allies, and partners if we are willing to say to these countries China is more important, and, in fact, that is what the Chinese government wants us to do, to send the message to other countries that you can't count on the U.S. because, look, they've walked away from those countries.

So I'd like to hear a little bit more about your reasoning about that.

And then, Admiral McDevitt, I think I'm going to put myself in the Dr. Finkelstein category of China's activities in the South China Sea are expeditionary, and so I don't want us to get into semantics, but I wonder how we are supposed to think about China, how it's defining what China proper is? I mean is it simply a matter that they get to say, okay, this is ours, and then we say, okay, so that's China, it's yours, and we don't, therefore, have a right to be concerned or to act about what's going on? What do we do? I'm not asking that very clearly, but what do we do in a context like this where the Chinese sort of self-proclaim, okay, this is going to be part of China now, and then what does that mean?

And another piece in the South China Sea is don't you think that sort of the platforms that they are building in the South China Sea are actually a form of power projection?

So it's thoughts. There are some questions in there, but those are the issues that I'm just struggling with listening, listening to all of you. Dr. Bickford, can you talk a little bit more about this sort of balancing the interests of our friends, allies and partners with the concern that they might raise?

DR. BICKFORD: Certainly. So let me do more for clarification as much as an elaboration. So I think that is a challenge. There's always a tension between helping our allies and partners, especially when the object is China, and other goals.

Let me just be very, very clear. I don't think our allies or partners should be given second shift. Let me just clarify that. What I was driving at is to understand, , really clear understanding that there's a fundamental tension there, and then the challenge is how far are we willing to put stress on our relationship with China? There's a lot of different ways we can do it, and we'll be interested to see what the next administration does on that one.

If we decide in the end that the relationship with--and by us, I mean, , Congress and future administrations--the allies and partners outweigh any benefits from a relationship with China, then that's a perfectly legitimate issue. There's nothing wrong with that as long as the people making that decision understand, that there are costs, if we can live with the costs, that's fine.

So that was the point I was trying to make, just there is--now for the near-term future, which is in my written statement, I think in the next five years, I don't think there's going to be much change. You know, China will add a few new ships, a few new capabilities, but we're talking about something that's down more to the 2030 time frame, in my view. It gives you plenty of time to decide.

So I think that does give a better opportunity to decide what the payoff structure is between certain actions, and, you know, by no means was that suggestion that we should cede ground to China. I think actually all three of us either implicitly or explicitly have stated that one of the worries out there is that's exactly what will happen, and one of the reasons why I mentioned the value of Congress going over there is that's one way to counter that problem.

We don't need--it's not just simply a number of ships. Ships cost money, and in a resource constrained environment, PACOM and CENTCOM may not have all the ships and planes they need to show, do a FONOPS or whatever, but there's lots of other ways that we could do it, and those are the things that we can explore, but, yes, I just want to make it clear, I did not say, no, we should make that concession. We may do that by accident or default or not being on the ball, but that is not something to do because that has implications not just for East Asia but for all our relationships all over the world.

MRS. GUNNESS: May I just--sorry--may I just jump in? Because that's a really, really good question, and it's a question that's being debated in many, many government agencies right now. But another issue complicating that decision about building partner capacity and who to give what to is the U.S. stance on territorial disputes.

Right now it's not ambiguous, but there's an ambiguity there that I think has in some ways benefited us that people are reluctant to give up, and you run the risk of giving someone something where they maybe misconstrue that and say, oh, now, you know, we'll get into a fight with China and the U.S. will support us. And I think that there's a real worry about something like that happening.

RADM McDEVITT: China has been in the Spratly Islands since 1988, and they have

built small platforms on those features that they are on over the past 20 years, and so what they have done by building these artificial islands on those small rocks and low-tide elevations is create small bases, three of them will have airfields, as you know, and they'll all have harbors that accommodate small warships, as well as coast guard cutters and what have you.

Is that power projection? I don't know. It's in, I guess, the eyes of the beholder. I would say they're building bases, and certainly they are changing, they have changed the strategic balance in the Spratlys. They already have-- everything north of 12 degrees latitude is already, all of those land features are in Chinese hands, and they're not going to ever give them back.

And I don't think anybody is going to try to take them away from them, and what they've done is change the strategic balance in the Spratlys. Before they were disadvantaged in terms of the features that they could occupy. The Vietnamese and the Filipinos and the Malaysians all beat them to the punch in the '80s. Well, they've flipped that scenario. Now they have more potentially capable facilities there than any of these other countries do.

So what do we do about that? Well, I think we probably have to play what I would call the dual-deterrence card. On the one hand, as this administration has done, is continue to publicly say things, like both the Secretary of Defense and the President have said, is our security alliance with the Philippines is "ironclad" to make sure the Chinese know that if they kill any Philippine sailors or airmen or soldiers or shoot down any Philippine airplanes or sink any Philippine navy ships or coast guard shipsthat the treaty language suggests that the Mutual Defense Treaty would apply.

The other thing we have to do is talk to the Vietnamese who are sitting on about 25 features, not seven, and instead of encouraging them to stop building, to encourage them to start building. In other words, if the strategic balance has been changed by China's building, the only way to restore the strategic balance is make sure that the Vietnamese are in a position where they can't be run off their islands.

And we to ask the Vietnamese , will you fight? Are you going to fight if China tries to force you off or not? And hopefully they will say yes. At least the ones I've talked to have said "ABSOLUTELY." But the point is, if China then is faced with a deterrent problem with if you push the Filipinos around, you have the U.S. to worry about, and if you push the Vietnamese around, you have a pretty strong capable Vietnamese capability that you're going to have to deal with.

To me is the best way to restore stability. That's not going to solve the ongoing territorial disputes nor is it going to convince the Chinese that they don't own all those islands because they are convinced they do. But it will restore stability. So that's how I would deal with the South China Sea.

Now, one point on the question you asked Tom is the implication is by us encouraging China to do HADR and do other things, it was like the scales fell from their eyes, and they should somehow do these things. They know. We don't have to encourage them to do any of that stuff. They do it because it's in their own interest, and they've been watching other navies, not only the U.S. Navy, but everybody else. They've been watching very closely how navies operate in a global scenario to, one, contribute to the common good, but also to improve your own, how you're perceived amongst countries around the world that you're interested in influencing. And so they would have come upon this on their own, I suspect, without having any encouragement whatsoever from the United States.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Thank you.

VICE CHAIRMAN BARTHOLOMEW: Just a quick, which is I agree completely, the

Chinese are doing what's in their interest. I just want to make sure that we don't lose sight of the fact that HADR is in our interest too--our participation. Thanks.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Senator Dorgan.

COMMISSIONER DORGAN: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

Admiral, I think we spend something on defense expenditures about triple the Chinese expenditure based on a number of sources. In 2020, would the Chinese Navy, as the second-largest navy in the world, be a navy that's triple, that's one-third the size of the U.S. Navy; would that be a fair conclusion?

RADM McDEVITT: I didn't say this in my testimony. It's in the paper. I was at pains to avoid doing an order of battle ship count. I only counted specific capabilities. When you count all of the, all of the stuff, including the junk that the PLA Navy has, they are already larger than we are, and so what you have to count is what I consider to be distant seas capabilities, and I didn't--quite frankly I didn't add it all up. It won't be as large as our navy. We're going to have a hell of a lot more nuclear powered submarines. We're going to have something like 88 or 90 AEGIS destroyers to their 18 or 20.. We're going to have 11 aircraft carriers to their two, et cetera.

So we're going to have a much more substantial global operating navy. Are they going to outnumber us in East Asia? Of course. That's where their home is.

COMMISSIONER DORGAN: Yeah. I'm just trying to get an assessment because when we talk about defense expenditures by the U.S. vis-a-vis other countries, you know, when someone says a country is in second or third place, the question is where does it rank in terms of expenditure and, most importantly, capability?

What we discovered when we found the inside of the Soviet Union and their capabilities, both on water and in the air, we discovered it wasn't such a giant after all in terms of capability. You know one of the things that we've talked about forever in this country and in Congress is the disproportionate burden sharing by the U.S. taxpayer for keeping the sea lanes open so that trade and commerce between countries can continue to exist without fear of interdiction and so on.

And so the answer to burden sharing is to ask others to have the capability and be available to do so. It seems to me that the creation of an expeditionary force by the Chinese, the kind of force we've described today with now three panels, is one that potentially answers some of that question, but it is also the case that building that capability also is generally building the capability for warfighting, and that's a different description of the same force that is needed to keep the sea lanes open.

So in this day and age where I mentioned earlier China is such an important part of the global economy and the global community, I welcome what China might be willing to do in terms of adding capability to an overburdened American taxpayer with respect to the funds that we spend to keep the sea lanes open.

On the other hand, I share a lot of interest and concern about what does this expeditionary force mean in the future vis-a-vis a range of raw, interesting, complex and difficult circumstances on this planet Earth. So I think you all have contributed, not just this panel, but this panel and the other two have contributed a lot of interesting notions about how we ought to construct and think about expeditionary force in China, what it might mean for this country, and also for our allies around the world.

So I just want to make the point about burden sharing because I think you've touched on it here, and it's something that goes back decades in the Congress, complaining about burden sharing. This might be a partial answer, but, you know, it is accompanied by concerns as well.

RADM McDEVITT: Could I just make a couple quick points here. You mentioned capability. Nobody knows for sure how good this PLAN far seas navy, or distant seas navy, is. We don't know how we would actually operate in combat. In peacetime, they seem to be doing quite well. They've had a pretty remarkable reliability record and what have you so when the chips are down, who knows? We don't know yet.

Are they well-armed with weapons? They seem to be. They seem--those weapons, those that have been exported seem to work. The anti-ship cruise missile that Hezbollah hit an Israeli frigate with a few years ago was Chinese made, and not only did one of them hit the Israeli frigate, but the one that missed flew down range 60 miles and hit a Panamanian freighter. And so, their weapons seem to be, from everything I've seen, seem to be state-of-the-art.

In terms of burden sharing, absolutely. I think the reason that the U.S. responded so positively to the Chinese decision to join in the anti-piracy campaign was because they were contributing to a global good, and they've been welcomed and embraced and been made a partner as far as they were willing to go in terms of operations and coordination there in the northern Arabian Sea. So certainly it's not unreasonable to expect that they would be able to cooperate with us around the world on different things.

But it's also not unreasonable to expect that let's say that we have an issue with Zimbabwe, for example, and we want to show some muscle by having a carrier or some ships operating offshore just to make a point as we have done many times in the use of the Navy. Well, all of a sudden, we're going to potentially have a PLA Navy showing up there at the same place, and it's going to be maybe a replay of 1967 when you had the Soviets and the U.S. Sixth Fleet mustering up off of Israel--the Chief of Naval Operations at the time apparently said I think we've lost sea control if things go bad here.

So that's the implication of global expeditionary PLA Navy that has to be in the back of our minds. If we and China have an interest in a country, but our interests are mutually contradictory, and both countries want to use the navy as a show of strength or to make a point, we, we can't count on absolute sea control.

COMMISSIONER DORGAN: Just an observation. I noticed, Admiral, that you commanded an aircraft carrier battle group, and that, this room used to be where we did the defense appropriations subcommittee work, and that, that aircraft carrier battle group, I don't know what it's like to command one, but I can imagine.

RADM McDEVITT: Fun.

[Laughter.]

COMMISSIONER DORGAN: I'm sure it is. But that is the ultimate capability on this planet. It's quite extraordinary so--but thanks to all three of you, really excellent comments and thoughts about the subject of this hearing.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Chairman Shea.

CHAIRMAN SHEA: Yes. It's been great testimony. Thank you. And I think my question builds off Commissioner Bartholomew's and Senator Dorgan's question. As I listened today, I've been pondering what circumstance would U.S. interests be implicated through the expression of Chinese open seas protection capability, and you just gave the Zimbabwe example so that you gave me an example.

But as I think about this, it seems to me that the U.S. concern about Chinese expeditionary capabilities is a less, is not as great as our concern about Chinese actions to inhibit our ability to have expeditionary capabilities vis-a-vis specifically the South China Sea. Is that a fair way of looking at it? Is that a--I have in a very inarticulate way tried to express a point of

view, but it seems that is the great immediate concern. It's not Chinese expeditionary capabilities but our ability to project power into the South China Sea and elsewhere.

RADM McDEVITT: I would say they're two different things. They're two different things. Our ability to defend our interests and our allies in East Asia is at issue I guess because of China's capabilities to deny access.

CHAIRMAN SHEA: Right.

RADM McDEVITT: What I was speaking about, first of all, I'm not sure that the United States is concerned yet or maybe never will be about Chinese expeditionary capabilities beyond, I'm talking about not the South China Sea.

CHAIRMAN SHEA: Yes, Venezuela or--

RADM McDEVITT: In the Indian Ocean.

CHAIRMAN SHEA: --yeah.

RADM McDEVITT: But that's, I think that's a different sort of a problem. Then you're talking, if you talk to the Australians or the Indians, what their concern is, is Chinese submarines operating in the Indian Ocean. Submarines by their nature create uncertainty, and so the desire for navies is to keep track of them so that you change uncertainty into certainty and so you know where they are.

And it's really hard and very difficult to do that, and it's very resource intensive. So as they see the PLA Navy showing up in their neighborhood with submarines, and we need to think about a PLA SSBN operating somewhere between Hawaii and the west coast of the United States so it can target this building, for example, it's going to be a replay potentially--I'm not saying it will be--potentially of the Cold War when we had Soviet submarines operating off our coast, and we invested huge amounts of effort to keep track of those guys.

And so that's, I think, that's the kind of expeditionary--

CHAIRMAN SHEA: Ripple effect, yeah. Are Chinese subs and naval vessels, my understanding is that the Andaman and Nicobar Islands create EEZs, and are Chinese naval vessels collecting intelligence as they traverse those EEZs?

RADM McDEVITT: I don't know that for a fact. I would assume so. I mean they have their electronic--I mean they've got the vacuum cleaner turned on, and so when they go through there, they're going to pick up signals and what have you so--

DR. BICKFORD: Yeah, I think there was an article in the Indian press just yesterday making that claim. I have no idea about the veracity of those claims.

RADM McDEVITT: I mean it would be silly not to assume that they would do what other navies do in terms of at least collecting the electronic--

CHAIRMAN SHEA: Well, if consistency were what we're searching for, we should not complain about Chinese subs operating in our EEZ collecting intelligence or patrolling because that's what we do to China. But the Chinese should not be collecting intelligence in the EEZ of another country if they're going to be consistent with their publicly stated position that that is against--

RADM McDEVITT: You assume that they have a desire to be consistent, intellectually consistent.

[Laughter.]

CHAIRMAN SHEA: Right. I've learned enough not to expect that, but--

MRS. GUNNESS: Can I just make a quick comment about--

CHAIRMAN SHEA: Sure.

MRS. GUNNESS: --capabilities? It goes back to the Senator's earlier question because I

feel like there's been a lot of emphasis on Chinese capability, expeditionary and otherwise, as being just focused on numbers of ships and weapons, but capabilities are people too, and I think we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that the PLA has an enormous task on its hands for training personnel that in order to sustain a global expeditionary force, they require a lot more educated and trained personnel.

And Oriana Mastro mentioned earlier that the PLA has yet to meet its quota for number of graduate students that it can--

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: College graduates.

MRS. GUNNESS: Yeah, into the PLA. And so I think that this is a really important trend to watch, and as the reorganization unfolds, we should really be looking at types of training programs that they may be changing or implementing, how they're exercising, and the types of institutions that are involved. I think that's a really key indicator for where they're headed in terms of their expeditionary capabilities.

CHAIRMAN SHEA: Thank you.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Katherine.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: Great. I always admire our witnesses when we ask you, our staff asks you and our co-chairs ask these big questions, and somehow you distill your responses into seven minutes. So what I'm going to say now is going to give you a few more minutes.

I was glad, Admiral, that you mentioned this is an election year, and the good news about an election year is it should elevate the country's focus on this bilateral relationship.

So you said, Dr. Bickford, that China is no longer a PACOM issue; China is a global player. Tell me more. What would you expect and since that statement entails both the executive branch and Congress, if you could speak to both?

And then, Admiral, you drew a parallel to the fact that the next president is going to face, much like FDR faced, some very significant, different circumstances security-wise and economically with the U.S. and China.

And Mrs. Gunness, if you would, think through that, too, and feel free to comment after they've given their thoughts. Basically, I'd like you to go a little bit further on your statements, please.

DR. BICKFORD: Yeah. I mean it's still very nascent, but--and I think most of where you'll be seeing Chinese Navy in coming years is in the Pacific and the Indian Ocean because that's where the most important sea lines of communication are.

But as has been pointed out by a number of witnesses today, navy is a tool; it's a diplomatic tool. There's a lot of prestige that goes along with the navy. The Chinese have looked at how the U.S., Britain, other countries have used their navies as symbols of national power. So at a minimum, Southern Command, European Command, Africa Command, you're going to see Chinese navy showing up, other Chinese forces possibly as well, though the navy is obviously the most expeditionary, showing up for exercises, showing the flag presence, diplomatic. It's going to be an element.

So it's not to say it's going to be--the European Command has got to have the same sort of consideration as PACOM commander. But it's all one, and then it's not just going to be forces stationed in the Pacific that have to think about China.

U.S. sailors are going to be encountering the Chinese ships in the Mediterranean. There's already been several.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: I know that's going to happen, but what are the--what would be the recommendation you might make from that?

DR. BICKFORD: So the recommendation I would make is that I think the U.S. Navy and DoD in general have to think about having a commonality of approaches. You know back in the Cold War, one thing you said, there was a common education about the Soviet navy that was a U.S. Navy wide thing.

And things like that are things that the DoD, I believe, already is thinking about and should continue to consider. And while we focus on the navy, they have built an expeditionary PLA Air Force. I believe somebody talked about special forces. So there's a lot of different ways in which it's really important for military personnel, whether they be stationed in Europe or in South America, to have some understanding, know how to engage the Chinese when that happens. You can't just like run around the corner because you don't know how to talk to a PLA officer. So things like that.

For Congress specifically, I think one of the things that comes, and many, many things that Congress overlooks is, is the administration having a coherent, you know, policy? It's no longer sufficient to have a good East Asia policy when the White House puts out its various standard documents.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: Right.

DR. BICKFORD: Are you thinking about the consequences? Are they reasonable conclusions because not every relationship the Chinese have with Europe is necessarily harmful to our issues? It doesn't even matter in some cases. But that consistency, and I would also think that since military expeditionary forces is tied to Chinese economic and political interests, you know, as the first panel really hammered home, the military capabilities follow political and economic objectives.

So when thinking about responses to China globally, are future administrations understanding how Chinese political and economic objectives are limited to military capabilities and in what ways do they interact with U.S. interests and the interests of our allies? I mean that's a very broad--

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: Yes, I understand.

DR. BICKFORD: --thing, but there needs to be some coherency, and we don't necessarily, we don't want as part of oversight to see an administration that is not making that thinking because that leads to problems later.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: I was very glad to hear you making that statement because when we, some of us, were in central Asia this last year--

DR. BICKFORD: Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: --and before going and while there, it was said again and again that Congress and the executive branch needs to go visit central Asia--

DR. BICKFORD: Yes.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: --at the same time hot sites were demanding full attention in other parts of the world and, lo and behold, Secretary Kerry did get to all the countries of central Asia, God bless him, and people thought that wasn't going to happen, and the President did meet with the president of Kazakhstan at the U.N. Global Summit. So that's great.

Thank you very much. Admiral?

DR. BICKFORD: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: So?

RADM McDEVITT: Essentially, I think the key point is that there is the potential, and I don't want to--I don't want to be accused of painting the PLA Navy in the next five or six years as being 20 feet tall, but there is the potential now with a naval, a navy that has the ability to sail

anywhere in the world and stay, which is an important point.

It's one thing to go from Point A to Point B. It's another thing to be able to remain on station, and they have that ability. They've demonstrated that. So it can go somewhere and stay, that it could have an impact on U.S. freedom of action in pursuing our interests in the same areas. And happily, our interests, the farther away from the China seas that we get, the differences with China tend to attenuate and get smaller and smaller, and so there are fewer of those potential flashpoints that exist in East Asia that are not anywhere else.

So I may be building a straw man, I'm willing to admit, in terms of this argument, but there is going to be another major navy at sea out and about in areas where we have generally, if it wasn't us, it was one of our friends.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: Yes.

RADM McDEVITT: Because all the other great navies of the world, save the Russians, are our friends and allies. Now, we're going to have a Chinese navy out there that may not be our friend in certain circumstances, and so that, I just think that that's something that is a long-range issue, long-range in the sense of it's going to be upon us in the next five or six years in a way that will get everybody's attention that we have to take into account.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: Thank you.

Mrs. Gunness.

MRS. GUNNESS: I just have two points to add to that excellent commentary. The first is following Admiral McDevitt's point that the PLA Navy being out and about may impact our interests in other parts of the world. I think it's also an opportunity to shape and influence. I think having, for example, the PLA logistics base in Djibouti that they're building, I think it's very close to the American base.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: Right.

MRS. GUNNESS: Next to it. But I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing. I think that gives us a chance to shape and influence, and I think we shouldn't be afraid to--we shouldn't shy away from those kinds of opportunities.

The second point I wanted to make, Tom mentioned, Dr. Bickford mentioned that we should have a coherent Asia policy, I think as a corollary to that, we should really think hard about our strategic messaging.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: Yes.

MRS. GUNNESS: And try to get, at least get things relatively clear between various agencies and departments and services as to what messages to send allies, what messages we want to send our allies and partners, and also China and various audiences, and it's not an easy task. I realize that, but I think that it's a necessary task especially as the PLA continues to go abroad.

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: Thank you. There was an editorial this week in the Washington Post somewhat along that line. Thank you.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Thank you.

So we haven't talked a lot about Japan today, and if--the Senator talked about burden sharing. If I'm the Japanese, I'm a little more worried than I am as an American. You know, I'm not Taiwan, but I am pretty serious national obsession of the Chinese. And I'm not so sure that in the equation of U.S. interests that we don't subordinate some of Japanese interests in that dynamic. So if I'm Japan, I think I'd want to build a bigger navy.

Am I wrong about that?

RADM McDEVITT: No, Japan is, in fact, slowly increasing the size of its navy in terms

of their submarine force. This is kind of old news now, but it's going from 16 to 22, and they're building more AEGIS destroyers. They've just recently commissioned what they euphemistically call helicopter destroyers, or DDHs, that look suspiciously like aircraft carriers.

And so, and I think if you talk to most Maritime Self-Defense Force officers, they're hoping that once the Marine Corps, our Marine Corps learns how to make sure that the F-35B, the vertical takeoff version of the F-35 actually works, I think the Japanese will be getting in line to try to buy some of those to fly off of these helicopter destroyers that I just mentioned.

And Japan, as you probably know, is building a small amphibious capability. They have a regiment of the Army that they're training in terms of how to conduct an amphibious assault. They're buying JV-22s and the LCACs and other things so that, in fact, they have the ability, if necessary, presumably to either re seize the Senkakus or, in a very worst-case scenario, if one of the Ryukyus has been invaded by China or someone else to take it back. So they're slowly but surely building a bigger capability.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: And if I sit back and I'm, you look at India, seriously concerned, dancing a little differently with us and others, and then you say to yourself, I'm the Chinese and on one side I have a growing Japanese military, and I have enlivened India, and I have the United States. Maybe I better watch out.

RADM McDEVITT: Well, see, everybody should chime in on this one, but, I worry that we're whistling past the graveyard when we talk about all of our friends and allies because the implication, for example, of what you said is that all of these countries would be willing to join us in an anti-Chinese coalition.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: No, no, no, no. I actually wasn't going there as much as I was going to two working together in any set of circumstances.

RADM McDEVITT: Okay. If you're talking about bilaterals--

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: I'm talking, I mean, I'm not so sure that Japan and the United States would sit idly by when the Chinese did something serious with India, given its position in the world and the need to go through the South--I mean the Indian Ocean. So but I don't see any formal alliance arrangement. That would just scare everybody.

And I actually don't think it's possible. But short of that, there's a lot of working together that is finally going on that has never been going on before.

RADM McDEVITT: Absolutely true, and we are, we, the U.S. government is certainly encouraging that across the board.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: I think we're behind it, yeah. Any other? Larry.

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: Our theater commands have specific geographic focus that translates into global coverage, and what we don't know is how the new Chinese theater commands may translate, and it seems to me it means one thing if the Western Command is interested in the Shanghai Cooperative Organization and Pakistan and India and something completely different if the theater commander, the theater war commander, would have responsibility all way to the Africa.

And we probably expect the Eastern Command to handle Japan and, you know, going out a little ways, Bonin Island. But we don't know yet that, as you pointed out, Admiral, he may be handling those submarines between Hawaii and California or Washington.

So I guess what would it say to you if we found out that those theater commands that the Chinese have created have far greater responsibilities than we may think, and I guess the second point I'd give you to respond to is that there's kind of debate going on in policy circles in Washington. We've got people from Carnegie Foundation and CSIS calling for almost ceding

sea space, regional space, to China and giving China a condominium of influence in the Pacific.

And I'd like your comments on whether operating in the Western Pacific and having influence there has to be a zero sum game?

DR. BICKFORD: Small question.

RADM McDEVITT: The issue of how far afield their new war zone command or whatever they finally decide to call them will be will certainly be interesting, and how that will mesh with this expedition--by the way, expeditionary I think is our term to characterize what they're doing, not their term, but how they'll sort that out in terms of who's the command element for expeditionary operations or maybe it will just--maybe they'll just go right to the CMC. For that, stay tuned. But I mean it would be interesting to find out if, in fact, these new boundaries keep going, you know, around the world just like our boundaries do so that they--

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: Or above.

RADM McDEVITT: Or above. Exactly. So I think a lot of that will be very important for us to eventually find out. I'm not sure. I guess we'll find out. Maybe the Chinese haven't even decided for sure how that's all going to sort out.

In terms of the condominium of the Pacific, I've always thought that that was--and including the commentary about Hugh White or Mike Swaine and others who have argued about let's face facts. Well, I will. Okay. But--

DR. BICKFORD: We know who you're talking about.

RADM McDEVITT: We knew who you were talking about. Anyway, so that we're suggesting that we, we take up Xi Jinping's offer to--the Pacific is big enough for the two of us. I keep saying what about the rest of them, like the Japanese and what have you? And so I just think that that's silly, first of all, because short of war, there is nobody who can run us out of East Asia.

In fact, the countries that have the most leverage to get us out of Asia are the Japanese and then the South Koreans. If they asked us to go home, it would be awfully hard to maintain any kind of a presence without the bases in Japan and Korea. But short of using force, China or nobody else can run us out of East Asia. We can stay there and go where we choose and do what we please in peacetime.

Now, in wartime, different argument, and then again it all depends on what the circumstances are on whether we certainly would have to fight--as I suggested, we would have to fight to gain sea control, and then we'd have to fight to sustain sea control, and as long as you have--as long as you're sitting in a place that has a latitude and longitude that doesn't change, i.e., an airfield or something like that, you can be hit in a GPS-enabled weapons world. And so those are realities we have to take into account, but I'm not for any condominiums yet.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Except old-age condos. Is that--

[Laughter.]

MRS. GUNNESS: Yeah, I'll just make a quick comment. I think Tim Heath said earlier that the relationship is cooperative and competitive, and I think that's not going to change. It's always going to be reality. So the key is obviously how to balance the various issues and the various efforts, and I actually think we do a pretty job of that. I'm not sure that looking at the region today is a whole lot different from a few years ago in terms of--I know that there's island building activity going on and what not, but I still don't think--I think Admiral McDevitt is right that the U.S. is there to stay. The nations in Asia know we're there to stay, and the key is really how to manage the tensions so that it doesn't interrupt into a crisis.

And I'll make another plug for increased focus on crisis management and confidence

building measures between all the militaries in the region. I think it's important.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: You have something?

VICE CHAIRMAN BARTHOLOMEW: Yeah. Sorry, we have a few more minutes, and so we'll take advantage of that. But it's interesting to me, and, you know, it's obviously a reflection of my own views, that it always feels like somehow the onus of maintaining stability in the region is on us and not on the Chinese, that they do a very good job of--or they're trying to do a very good job of perception management.

That if there is anybody that, you know, their argument is it's the United States that's destabilizing things when again you look at the South China Sea, and it's not us that's doing it. And so I always think we have to resist in our own analysis, too, that somehow the burden for maintaining stability, it should be equally on both, on both parties in this relationship, and it somehow never feels that way.

It feels like somehow we take that responsibility more seriously which always puts us in that position of how do we respond when they do something? So, again, it's a comment more than a question. But I'm sure the Chinese view it differently, but I think we need to be careful about that.

RADM McDEVITT: Well, certainly, they're doing their best to undermine their own, the latest iteration of smile diplomacy, by being very heavy-handed with regard to their interpretation of how they're going to redress their sovereignty issues. And so they've managed to frighten their neighbors and, of course, as a result, all of the neighbors are clamoring to have the U.S. be a friend.

I have an old saying that many people have heard before, but if you're a country that the PLA Army can drive to your border or walk to your border, you have a real inherent security problem.

If you have the buffer of water, you have a little more flexibility. But all of these countries live in the shadow of China. All of these countries China is their largest trading partner. All of these countries need China more than China needs them. All of these countries recognize that China has the ability to wreck their economy. And so they're all going to be very circumspect in how they relate to Beijing. I mean certainly we should not be surprised by that.

VICE CHAIRMAN BARTHOLOMEW: Admiral McDevitt, though, it's interesting that we have traveled to different countries in the region over the course of the past ten years, that their circumspection--I'm not sure--but their willingness to be circumspect I think has changed. I mean I think that we are perhaps just at this point of time seeing them move away a little bit from hedging. You know that's what we heard when we were in India five years ago, when we were in Vietnam. There was more of an emphasis on hedging.

Now, I think there's a recognition that they all have needs in dealing with China, but I at least have seen that we don't want to have to choose sides. Nobody wants to have to choose sides, and yet wanting to have a closer relationship, is, you know, I think probably for the Chinese an unsavory byproduct of the way that they have moved.

I mean it provides opportunities for us so it's that whole classic there are many challenges, but we have opportunities because of the way the Chinese are behaving, and it's incumbent on our policymakers to see that we can take advantage of those opportunities.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Well, I think we're done.

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: Thank you all very much. It has really been--

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: A good day.

HEARING CO-CHAIR WORTZEL: --a good day, a great day, and I think we have a lot

here we'll be able to use as we frame an annual report to Congress.

HEARING CO-CHAIR FIEDLER: Thank you. Thank you again.

CHAIRMAN SHEA: Thank you.

VICE CHAIRMAN BARTHOLOMEW: Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 2:52 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]