

## CHAPTER 7

### A GLOBAL EXPEDITIONARY PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY: 2025-30

**Oriana Skylar Mastro**

Dr. Oriana Skylar Mastro would like to thank Mariangela Taylor, Xingjun Ye, and Elaine Li for their excellent and timely research assistance.

#### INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980s, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been undergoing a comprehensive reform process to move from a personnel-heavy, low-tech force designed to expel invaders to one that is technology-intensive and focused on operating beyond China's coasts. The PLA is currently focused on traditional warfighting missions, with an emphasis on winning local wars under informationized conditions shaping its military preparedness.<sup>1</sup> While China's ability to project conventional military power beyond its periphery remains limited<sup>2</sup> as China gains greater influence within the international community, it is becoming increasingly focused on modernizing its military capabilities to include "a wider range of missions beyond its immediate territorial concerns, including counterpiracy, peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HADR), and regional military operations."<sup>3</sup>

Since 2004, China has increasingly focused on coping with nontraditional security threats and safeguarding the state's development and overseas interests.<sup>4</sup>

This has inspired the Chinese military to increasingly conduct missions beyond its immediate territory, in particular to handle threats to Chinese citizens and economic interests abroad.<sup>5</sup> Chinese armed forces are already emphasizing how they would be employed during peacetime for military operations other than war (MOOTW) to:

strengthen overseas operational capabilities such as emergency response and rescue, merchant vessel protection at sea and evacuation of Chinese nationals, and provide reliable security support for China's interests overseas.<sup>6</sup>

The PLA's experience to date with such expeditionary operations is limited, but expanding rapidly. Since 2002, the PLA has undertaken 36 urgent international humanitarian aid missions.<sup>7</sup> Chinese naval vessels have engaged in expeditionary goodwill tours such as the 2012 voyage of the PLAN ship *Zheng He* and the 2010-13 "Harmonious Missions" of a hospital ship to provide medical aid in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.<sup>8</sup> To date, China's participation in the anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden is the most notable example of the PLA conducting expeditionary operations. As one Chinese Rear Admiral notes, the main point of the operation was not to combat pirates, as the Chinese navy's main mission was not to attack or detain them, but to protect Chinese overseas economic interests.<sup>9</sup> The mission began in January 2009 when a Chinese naval flotilla consisting of a replenishment ship and two destroyers arrived in the Gulf of Aden off Somalia to protect merchant ships from pirates.<sup>10</sup> Over the course of 500 operations, this force has protected more than 5,000 commercial vessels.<sup>11</sup> The humanitarian aspect of the operation allowed the

PLA to operate outside China and gain valuable deployment experience, without being seen as a threat.<sup>12</sup>

The amount of resources China dedicates to its global missions will be influenced by a number of variables, including the U.S. response to this evolution, and China's relations with regional states such as Japan, North Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam and the Philippines. But domestic and international imperatives could ensure that China develops power projection capabilities regardless. Furthermore, the Chinese leadership is likely to believe that the capabilities necessary for such expeditionary capabilities could also be employed in regional contingencies, thereby increasing the political support for their development. In this chapter, I will outline what doctrine, force structure, and organization and training would most likely characterize a globally expeditionary PLA. The chapter then addresses the implications of a global expeditionary PLA capable of operating to a limited degree overseas for regional and global security.

## **FUTURE NATURE AND DIRECTION OF CHINESE MILITARY MODERNIZATION**

A range of domestic and international factors—from the need to protect overseas Chinese interests to the status of regional issues—could, by 2025-30, compel the PLA to act increasingly globally. A global expeditionary PLA is not inevitable, but one of three possible scenarios of the PLA's development covered in this volume. In this alternative future, by 2025-30 a global expeditionary PLA could be able to project limited power in a limited area for a short duration anywhere in the world. This global expeditionary capability will allow China to play a role in peacekeep-

ing, HADR, and stability operations regionally and globally. China could also develop capabilities such as expeditionary strike groups and special operations to conduct raids, noncombatant evacuation operations (NEOs), security operations, counterblockades, strikes, and amphibious exercises. If the Party leadership mandates the PLA to modernize and train to operate beyond the first and second island chain, the majority of those efforts would be undertaken by the PLA Navy (PLAN) and PLA Air Force (PLAAF). This section addresses the likely developments in doctrine, force posture, and organization and training of a PLA capable of projecting power globally.

#### **DOCTRINE, STRATEGIC GUIDELINES, AND OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS**

Doctrinal changes would likely accompany any changes in the direction and focus of Chinese military evolution to account for the addition of global expeditionary missions. Since 1949, China's doctrine has evolved as the Party leadership's threat perceptions and China's ability to meet them have changed.<sup>13</sup> In this future scenario, the state of the international environment, potential threats to China, the most likely type of war and the best ways to fight that war will shift significantly, calling for an addition to the current formulation of "local war under informationized conditions." In terms of equipment, integration, and training, China plans to have the process of mechanization (the deployment of advanced military platforms) and informatization (bringing them together as a network) completed by 2020. Around this time, in this scenario, President Xi Jinping would announce a corollary to local war, win-win global operations,

asserting that China must also develop the skills and platforms necessary to project power globally to be a responsible great power. Within the top echelons of government, there would be more discussion and formalization of the basis for MOOTW and a focus on creating the ability to conduct simultaneous operations in different locations globally, in addition to joint operations.

Additionally, Chinese operational concepts will likely evolve to account for shifting priorities and frequency of certain types of missions. For obvious reasons, the joint island landing campaign is the most prominent operation currently found in publicly available Chinese writings. This campaign objective's would be:

to break through or circumvent shore defense, establish and build a beachhead, transport personnel and material to designated landing sites in the north or south of Taiwan's western coastline, and launch attacks to seize and occupy key targets and/or the entire island.<sup>14</sup>

Strategic air raids designed to leverage the PLA's asymmetric advantages over potential adversaries to achieve localized air superiority is another type of campaign currently at the top of Beijing's priorities.<sup>15</sup> But as the PLA begins to operate farther from China's shores, ensuring its own ability to conduct operations may take precedence over capabilities designed to degrade an adversary's capability. A reprioritization of campaigns coupled with the addition of new campaigns could shift the focus from defense-oriented campaigns to security operations and strikes. By 2025-30, Chinese strike capability could move beyond the Second Artillery to give equal strategic weight to

strikes conducted by the PLA, PLAN and PLAAF – a doctrinal change that has institutional and strategic implications.

Lastly, Chinese leaders would begin to consider the framework needed to build the type of strategic partnerships necessary for expeditionary operations. To date, China has been focused on developing relationships that will help it improve its capabilities and increase its political power. China has already begun this process, though to a limited degree. For example, in February 2014, China signed a security and defense agreement with Djibouti to promote regional stability in the Gulf of Aden region.<sup>16</sup> China participated in RIMPAC 2014, the biennial naval exercise hosted by the United States that involves 23 nations. Within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), China and other SCO member states have conducted a total of nine bilateral and multilateral exercises.<sup>17</sup> China has also conducted joint exercises with Thailand, Singapore, Romania, Indonesia, Pakistan, Belarus, Venezuela, Colombia, Russia, Australia, New Zealand and Turkey since 2010.<sup>18</sup>

While Chinese leaders have been adamantly against formal alliances, given the operational necessity of this global expeditionary scenario, a debate could ensue in China about changing its approach, akin to the way China changed its approach to peacekeeping operations in the 1990s. Chinese strategists are currently ideologically averse to overseas bases partly due to the national narrative that only hegemonic powers seek such arrangements.<sup>19</sup> Though useful in operations, establishing overseas bases or hubs are in direct conflict with Chinese foreign policy, defense policy, and military strategy.<sup>20</sup> Mutual defense treaties and permanent bases are therefore unlikely at this stage, but Beijing's

ideology is elastic, and could be reshaped to fit pragmatic realities if required. China could begin to pursue formal treaties to institutionalize arrangements to use facilities in other countries. To maintain the appearance of consistency, Beijing would retain its rhetoric against alliances and put forth strategic guidance that describes these arrangements as win-win agreements between equal partners seeking to enhance stability and security in the region. According to one Chinese naval officer, if China were to go this route, first experts would have to posit and discuss the idea, then revisions would have to be made to the white paper, supported by diplomatic efforts. But he noted it was unlikely China would station troops overseas or operate from overseas bases, because such a change would require major changes to Chinese defense and grand strategy, in addition to a major diplomatic undertaking.<sup>21</sup> Increased multilateral exercises and operations would likely follow to reassure countries that China will not unilaterally pursue changes in the status quo through the use of force.

## **FORCE POSTURE**

In order to conduct global operations, the PLA would start to develop the ability to force open denied air and sea space far from Chinese territory in order to be able to operate beyond immediate periphery and in hostile environments away from friendly ports.<sup>22</sup> In addition to building the relevant air, naval, and ground forces, the PLA will prioritize the systems and skills necessary for joint operations. For any type of expeditionary operation, conducted in peacetime or in war, China will need to make major advances in information warfare – space, cyber, and electronic warfare.

Chinese writings suggest that the PLA believes these three types of technologies not only enable operations, but should also be treated as separate domains that must be seized and denied to an adversary.<sup>23</sup>

In terms of space assets, China will be able to call upon communication and navigation satellites, and a robust, space-based ocean surveillance system in particular for its operations. The PLA also understands that in order to be effective in modern conflicts and MOOTW, it must have the Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (C4ISR) capacity to carry out joint operations. By 2025-30, a global expeditionary PLA must have made great strides in C4ISR integration including creating a model system to facilitate interoperability of its information technology systems.<sup>24</sup> Digital C4ISR connectivity will revolutionize the PLA's ability to conduct modern combined arms military operations.<sup>25</sup> The incorporation of improved C4ISR networks into training will ensure that the forces are consistently provided with real-time data transmission within and between units, enabling better command and control during operations.<sup>26</sup>

Cyber and electronic warfare capabilities will also enhance China's ability to conduct global operations, especially in contested environments. Currently, China is more focused on cyber warfare as a means to exfiltrate data from vulnerable networks, to serve as a force multiplier when coupled with kinetic attacks, and to target an adversary's networks to constrain its actions or slow its response time.<sup>27</sup> As the Chinese military begins to operate abroad, cyber warfare will become a critical tool in gathering intelligence on potential areas in which the PLA may be required to operate, known as intelligence preparation of the



operational environment (IPOE). The PLA will also work to expand their electronic warfare capabilities, which consist of technologies that weaken and destroy electronic equipment and systems and protect one's own electronic equipment and systems. During air operations, these systems would be employed against communication nodes, radars, command centers, and air-defense weapon control systems in particular. If conducting operations at sea, such as a counter blockade campaign, electronic warfare forces would be used against enemy ships and airborne and sea-based anti-missile systems.<sup>28</sup>

While this section focuses on the assets needed to sustain operations far from China's shores, the PLA will simultaneously continue to improve its warfighting capabilities with a focus on regional contingencies. Current plans suggest that by 2020, China will be able to employ satellites and reconnaissance drones; thousands of surface-to-surface and anti-ship missiles; more than 60 stealthy conventional submarines and at least six nuclear attack submarines; increasingly stealthy surface combatants and stealthy manned and unmanned combat aircraft; and space and cyber warfare capabilities. It is also possible that China will invest in additional aircraft carriers.<sup>29</sup> But even as the PLA prepares to fight local wars under high-tech conditions within the region, it will expand its attention on expeditionary capabilities in the air, on the sea, and on the ground.

### **Air.**

China will invest in large fleets of tankers and long-range large transport aircraft for various missions such as NEOs. China has ordered but not taken

delivery of four IL-78/MIDAS tankers, but even these can support at most a squadron of Su-30s in combat operations, so the PLA would look to use a more advanced platform by 2025-30.<sup>30</sup> China will be looking to expand its inventory of large transport airplanes capable of carrying large cargo for long-range flights. This may include more IL-76s from Russia, but more likely the advanced models of the indigenously manufactured Y-20 aircraft. The Y-20 should give China the ability to quickly ship troops, vehicles, and supplies over long distances, though the PLA may need to upgrade the engines at some point for the Y-20 to be able to do so efficiently.<sup>31</sup> The PLAAF will also continue to progress in its Airborne Early Warning (AEW), Electronic Warfare, and command and control systems, including significant unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) development.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to developing and acquiring systems designed to sustain operations abroad, the PLA will continue to progress in traditional warfighting capabilities. The PLAAF will likely phase out its aging H6 fleet.<sup>33</sup> The new H-6K, which was unveiled in 2013, is likely only a stopgap measure. Though China's intentions are unclear at this point, the PLA will likely have a stealthier platform by 2025-30.<sup>34</sup> The PLAAF's 2025-30 inventory will include a low-observable aircraft derived from either the J-20 or J-31.

UAV development over the next 15 years will be significant; the PLA will likely have several massive fleets of mostly cheap drones operated by the ground forces, the General Staff Department (GSD), PLAN, PLAAF, Second Artillery, and Coast Guard.<sup>35</sup> Each will bolster the operational requirements of the respective service or unit they serve.<sup>36</sup> These assets will

probably be truck-launched to keep them operationally flexible and survivable, or some could be based on carriers. While most will be used regionally, larger drones could serve as long-range reconnaissance platforms or focus on decoy, jamming, and swarming tactics for penetrating enemy air defense systems in expeditionary operations. However, China will likely continue to suffer from a lack of bases outside China.

### **Sea.**

China's defense white paper articulates the desire to develop blue water navy capabilities for conducting operations, carrying out international cooperation and countering nontraditional security threats, and enhancing capabilities of strategic deterrence and counterattack.<sup>37</sup> But currently, strategic sealift beyond Taiwan is quite limited. China has never possessed a robust capability to transport and land troops under combat conditions.<sup>38</sup> China has three Yuzhao class landing platform dock (LPD) ships, each capable of transporting one battalion of marines and their vehicles and two large multiproduct replenishment ships that carry fuel, water, ammunition, and other supplies.<sup>39</sup> But to be a global expeditionary PLAN, the service will need to increase the number of LPDs as well as the number of large, multiproduct replenishment ships to support long-range patrols.<sup>40</sup> China would also have to address the limitations of inadequate air defense, lack of experience in formation steaming, and lack of ability and training in cross-beach movement of forces to enhance its amphibious assault capabilities.<sup>41</sup> The Chinese navy may also invest to a greater degree in a marine corps as an offshore expeditionary force given the increased need to prepare for

amphibious landings and assaults. China's marines will have to expand from the current two brigades of 6,000 men each, but the ultimate level of forces depends on the type of amphibious operations the PLA stresses in 2025-30 and the forces of surrounding countries.<sup>42</sup> China may also put off such investments given the extraordinarily difficult nature of amphibious operations—at this point, only the United States has a robust capability. Even now, China currently has more marines than naval powers such as Australia, Great Britain, and Japan.

Currently the PLAN possesses approximately 77 principal surface combatants, more than 60 submarines, 55 medium and large amphibious ships and roughly 85 missile-equipped small combatants.<sup>43</sup> The PLAN would develop the capabilities and assets needed to protect the sea lines of communication (SLOCs) and engage in operations far from its shores. To that end, the PLAN has already begun the process of retiring legacy combatants in favor of larger, multi-mission ships, equipped with advanced anti-ship, anti-air, and anti-submarine weapons and sensors.<sup>44</sup> China may also commission more carriers, along with their aircraft and UAVs, with the justification that carriers are useful in maritime security operations and operations other than war. These carriers, plus 18 air defense destroyers with Aegis-like anti-air warfare systems, and 36 frigates and corvettes equipped primarily for anti-submarine warfare (ASW), will be tasked with defending the SLOCs.<sup>45</sup>

China may expand the number of attack submarines (SSNs) for sustained patrols in distant waters or to conduct counterblockade operations, though China will rely heavily on conventionally powered submarines equipped with air-independent-propulsion to

patrol out to the first and eventually the second island chains. China's economic growth relies heavily on its access to natural resources, and its petroleum comes primarily from the Middle East, which has to pass through a number of vulnerable chokepoints including the Luzon and Taiwan straits and the Strait of Malacca and Strait of Hormuz. China currently cannot project naval control over these chokepoints, but future capabilities may be developed to address this vulnerability. To date, China has stressed anti-surface warfare over ASW. But China may start to focus on developing counterblockade capabilities to protect vital SLOCs, such as more advanced sonar operations and airborne ASW.

### **Ground.**

As China's focus expands from homeland defense to regional contingencies, to global expeditions, the relative role of the PLA Army (PLAA) with respect to the other services will decrease. By 2025-30, the number of active and reserve soldiers in the PLAA will likely be reduced to fewer than two million, unless there is a conventional flare up with India, Vietnam, Russia, or instability on the border with North Korea. The PLAA, however, will still have critical missions within a global expeditionary PLA. The PLAA is reorienting itself already from theater operations to trans-theater mobility focusing on army aviation troops, light mechanized units and special operations forces (SOF), and enhancing building of digitized units, making its units small, modular, and multi-functional to enhance capabilities for air-ground integrated operations, long-distance maneuvers, rapid assaults, and special operations.

China's reluctance to get involved globally on a large scale may translate to a prioritization of development of China's special operations capabilities. China created its elite special forces and Rapid Reaction Units (RRU) in the 1980s. Today, their training extends into more unconventional warfighting missions such as sabotage, and no-contact long range warfare (indirect attacks against an enemy from beyond the line of sight), with the United States and Japan as potential enemies. According to the *PLA Army Daily*:

Special forces warfare includes detailed battle theories, such as special forces reconnaissance, attacks and sabotage, and comprehensive battle theories, such as integrated land-sea-air-space-electronic combat, all-dimensional simultaneous attacks, nonlinear combat, no-contact long-range warfare, asymmetrical combat, large-scale night combat and 'surgical' strikes.<sup>46</sup>

According to *On Military Campaigns*, one of several special operations missions include:

raids to kill or capture enemy command personnel (including military and government leaders), or destroy small units in the enemy's rear area or key command and control, intelligence, or logistics systems.<sup>47</sup>

China's Rapid Reaction Forces (RRF) currently consist of army special forces, army aviation units, the marine corps, and airborne troops. They focus primarily on border defense, internal armed conflict, maintaining public order, and conducting disaster relief missions.<sup>48</sup> While all "rapid reaction," the army special forces and airborne troops would split off and develop the core SOF mission, while the marine corps

and army aviation will progress to address more traditional warfighting tasks. Chinese writings suggest a traditional understanding of SOF in that they would be used for special reconnaissance, decapitation, counterterrorism, hostage rescue, and also have a psychological effect that will impose caution by increasing the risk of war.<sup>49</sup> Some specific missions include: “prisoner snatch operations; raids on enemy missile sites, CPs, and communications facilities; harassment and interdiction operations to prevent or delay enemy movements; strategic reconnaissance; anti-terrorist operations.”<sup>50</sup> The PLA may heavily rely on types of special operations forces to accomplish their goals overseas partly because of the small footprint, but primarily because training and readiness of regular troops will continue to be a weakness of their military forces.<sup>51</sup>

By 2025-30, joint use of special forces with the PLA’s amphibious and airborne forces, expected improvements in sealift and airlift capabilities, coupled with the increasing mechanization of airborne and army and marine amphibious units will increase the reach and effectiveness of these forces. By the end of that decade, PLA forces may be capable of capturing ports and airfields in neighboring states, leading to a victorious campaign on land.<sup>52</sup>

## **ORGANIZATION, TRAINING, AND LOGISTICS**

Reforms beyond hardware in terms of organization, training, and readiness must be undertaken as well for the PLA to expand its operational reach. First, China will need to improve the movement of military units within China. The PLA still conducts long distance maneuver training at speeds measured by

how fast the next available cargo train can transport its tanks and guns forward.<sup>53</sup> To improve its air and sealift, China will have to mobilize the civilian sector, especially in the area of aviation. Furthermore, the Chinese Communist Party will have to move to strengthened interior ground, air, and waterway lines of communication. The PLA will also have to consider the logistics needed to deploy globally and sustain operations abroad. A reorganization of the current Military Region (MR) system is a necessary step to improve mobility. Since 2010, the PLA has attempted to improve its trans-MR maneuvers by carrying out a series of campaign level exercises and drills, codenamed Mission Action.<sup>54</sup> China could reduce the number of MRs from seven to perhaps four and implement a joint operational command structure.<sup>55</sup> Given the new importance of the PLAN, PLAAF, and Second Artillery, another major step toward “jointness” would be assigning a navy or air force officer as an MR commander.<sup>56</sup>

The PLA will have to consider how to fit global logistics into this MR system; given its diverse set of tasks and missions, the PLA will need to improve its logistical system so that it is flexible, distributed, and nimble.<sup>57</sup> Analysis of past operations such as the PLAN’s deployment to the Gulf of Aden demonstrates that the issue of preparedness during emergency, the problem of preserving consumables over long periods of time, and the lack of nearby Chinese facilities/bases to which it can send vessels for maintenance and repair continue to plague long-distance PLAN operations.<sup>58</sup> Because the PLA’s ability to force open denied air and sea space far from Chinese territory will likely still be constrained in 2025-30, it will still be challenging to operate beyond its immediate periphery and



in hostile environments away from friendly ports.<sup>59</sup> Bringing along military supply ships with 3 months' worth of fuel, food, fresh water, and spare parts, as China did in the Gulf of Aden, will not be a viable strategy if China is to conduct larger, more prolonged, or contested, operations.<sup>60</sup> Overseas bases may be the only way for China to be able to deploy and fight on the high seas; the lack of such resources is one of the major differences between major and minor naval powers.<sup>61</sup> China may need them as forward operating bases and logistics platforms, as well as to conduct amphibious assaults.<sup>62</sup>

Some believe that China wants to build a series of bases in the Indian Ocean to support naval operations along the routes linking China to Persian Gulf oil sources. There, Beijing can pursue access in countries such as Oman, Pakistan, and Burma that are politically insulated from Indian and U.S. pressure. Others believe that the PLAN only wants to have places in the Indian Ocean where it can restock and refuel, rather than its own bases.<sup>63</sup> The latter is probably the more likely scenario, especially given the lessons learned from the Soviet Union's overextension, and the priority of concerns closer to home.<sup>64</sup> Leaving aside China's ideological aversion to overseas bases, it is also important to keep in mind that in these areas, facilities are difficult to defend and host nations may not be sufficiently stable to support operations.<sup>65</sup> Given these obstacles, for China to start prepositioning supplies overseas or establishing institutional arrangements to allow operations from other countries, the driver would have to be more than just the need to operate escort vessels like in a Gulf of Aden type of operation.<sup>66</sup>

The PLA will need to improve training to enhance the ability to conduct multiple joint operations

simultaneously. China currently conducts exercises frequently; for example, during the month of January 2014, a three-ship flotilla from the Nanhai Fleet began combat exercises in the West Pacific Ocean and East Indian Ocean.<sup>67</sup> Additionally, nearly 100,000 Chinese soldiers and thousands of vehicles from the 16th and 39th Army Groups of the Shenyang MR mobilized for a winter exercise to prepare for a potential crisis over the Korean peninsula.<sup>68</sup>

However, despite the scale and frequency of these exercises, PLA individual and unit training standards remain low, and are improving only gradually. Currently, PLAAF pilots typically get less than 10 hours of flight time a month and only last year began to submit their own flight plans.<sup>69</sup> China's naval infantry and other amphibious warfare units train by landing on big sandy beaches, an unrealistic environment to train for conflict over disputed islands.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, in recent exercises, PLA troops have lacked the emotional fortitude to succeed in high-pressure situations, possibly one of the reasons for President Xi Jinping's focus on enhancing combat readiness among the PLA.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, Chinese exercises will need to become larger and more complicated coupled with training that is more frequent, intense and realistic for the PLA to become a global expeditionary force by 2025-30.

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter presents how the PLA may evolve with respect to doctrine, force structure, organization, and training if it were to transition to a force capable of conducting global expeditionary operations. However, such new and expansive PLA capabilities will have significant implications for China's willingness to use force as well as regional stability.

### **Propensity to Use Force.**

The breadth of capabilities the PLA would acquire to conduct global expeditionary operations could also augment Beijing's options in resolving both global and regional disputes. 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 support alone with the backing of its people.

While China may currently have no intention of becoming a global hegemon, the introduction of new capabilities in turn could drive changes in Chinese grand strategy away from limited regional aims. 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.<sup>72</sup> But influential thinkers such as Colonel Liu Mingfu, a former professor at the PLA National Defense University, writes in his book *China Dream* that China should aim to surpass the United States as the world's top military power.<sup>73</sup> In a March 2010 newspaper poll, 80 percent 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.<sup>74</sup>

## **Stability and Balance of Power.**

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. This could create balancing backlash in Asia and instability as incentives for preventive war increase with the rapid shifts in the regional balance of power. However, this future scenario could also create a more assertive China that is positioned to provide public goods to the international community and region, further enmeshing Beijing into the current world order, and reducing the incentives to use force to resolve disputes.

Globally, increased expeditionary capabilities could increase the potential for Chinese interference in issues in which the United States may prefer China's traditional hands-off approach. Chinese interests in the Middle East, Africa, and South America, as well as Beijing's preference for stability over other factors such as human rights, may clash with those of the United States. With increased capabilities, China may take actions in countries around the world that have negative second order effects for U.S. national interests. Furthermore, because Chinese actions are not transparent, Washington has limited sense about what exactly China is doing. This makes it difficult for the United States to adjust its policies accordingly to minimize any potential damage to U.S. interests and maximize its ability to achieve its foreign policy goals.<sup>75</sup>

A number of factors could divert the PLA from developing a global expeditionary force. For example, if China were to engage in a war, even a limited one,

retrenchment and rebuilding may follow, delaying the unfolding of this scenario. Furthermore, flare-ups closer to home or the emergence of significant threats to its near-seas interests may make it difficult for Beijing to sustain far seas operations.<sup>76</sup> But as long as China continues to spend a double-digit percentage of GDP on defense spending, and GDP growth continues, even on a more conservative level, China should be able to simultaneously develop traditional warfighting capabilities to address regional challenges and global expeditionary capabilities to confront threats farther from home. In this way, flare-ups or resolutions of persistent regional issues may delay or accelerate this future scenario, but not necessarily prevent it.

## ENDNOTES - CHAPTER 7

1. For more on this, see Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, "The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces: V. Safeguarding World Peace and Regional Stability," Beijing, China, 2013, available from [www.china.org.cn/government/whitepaper/2013-04/16/content\\_28556977.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/government/whitepaper/2013-04/16/content_28556977.htm), accessed on May 12, 2014.

2. Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: The Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2005*, Washington, DC: DoD, Executive Summary, available from [www.defense.gov/news/jul2005/d20050719china.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/news/jul2005/d20050719china.pdf).

3. Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2013*, Washington, DC: DoD, Executive Summary, available from [www.defense.gov/pubs/2013\\_china\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/pubs/2013_china_report_final.pdf). Hereafter cited as DoD China Report 2013.

4. Chen Zhou, *An Analysis of Defensive National Defense Policy of China for Safeguarding Peace and Development*, China Military Science, Beijing, China: Academy of Military Sciences, 2007.

5. *DoD China Report 2013*.

6. "Diversified Employment."

7. *Ibid.*

8. It visited five countries in Asia and Africa and four in Latin America and completed 193 days of voyage, covering 42,000 nautical miles, providing nearly 50,000 people with medical supplies. See Lieutenant Commander Jeff W. Benson, "China: Birth of a Global Force?" *USNI News*, January 7, 2013, available from [news.usni.org/2013/01/07/china-birth-global-force](http://news.usni.org/2013/01/07/china-birth-global-force), accessed on March 25, 2015.

9. Zhang Zhaozhong (张召忠) "中国在海外建军事基地的可能性不大" ("It Is Unlikely for China to Establish Military Bases Abroad"), *Tengxun Xinwen*, January 19, 2010, available from [news.qq.com/a/20100119/002913.htm](http://news.qq.com/a/20100119/002913.htm), accessed on March 25, 2015.

10. "Chinese Naval Fleet Carries Out First Escort Mission Off Somalia," *People's Daily*, January 6, 2009, available from [english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6568232.html](http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6568232.html), accessed on May 30, 2014.

11. Andrew S. Erickson and Austin M. Strange, "No Substitute for Experience Chinese Antipiracy Operations in the Gulf of Aden," *U.S. Naval War College China Maritime Studies*, Vol. 10, 2013, p. 1.

12. Richard Weitz, "Operation Somalia: China's First Expeditionary Force?" *China Security*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2009, p. 31.

13. While Chinese strategists would not term this doctrine, but use terms like military thought, national military strategy, and strategic guidelines, these concepts can be understood as the codification of what military institutions hold as fundamental principles for guiding their actions in pursuit of national objectives.

14. *DoD China Report 2013*, p. 57.

15. For more on the strategic air raid campaign, see Peng Guangqian and Yao Youzhi (eds.), *The Science of Military Strategy* Beijing, China: Military Science Publishing House, 2005, p. 21.

16. Clint Richards, "Could China and Japan Work Together in East Africa?" *The Diplomat*, March 20, 2014, available from [thediplomat.com/2014/03/could-china-and-japan-work-together-in-east-africa](http://thediplomat.com/2014/03/could-china-and-japan-work-together-in-east-africa), accessed on May 30, 2014.

17. "Diversified Employment."

18. *Ibid.*

19. Huang Yingxu, (黄迎旭), "未来中国需要什么样的军事力量?" ("What Kind of Military Power Does China Need in the Future?"), *学习时报* (*Xuexi Shiba*, [*The Study Times*]), available from [www.people.com.cn](http://www.people.com.cn), accessed on May 12, 2014.

20. Zhang 2010.

21. *Ibid.*

22. Abraham M. Denmark, "PLA Logistics 2004-11: Lessons Learned in the Field," Roy Kamphausen, David Lai, and Travis Tanner, eds., *Learning by Doing The PLA Trains at Home and Abroad*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2012, p. 317.

23. Peng Guangqian and Yao Youzhi, *战略学*, *The Science of Strategy*, Beijing, China: Military Science Press, 2001, p. 358. For more on Chinese recent advancements in information warfare, see Kevin Pollpeter, "Controlling the Information Domain: Space, Cyber, and Electronic Warfare," Ashley Tellis and Travis Tanner, eds, *Strategic Asia 2012-2013: China's Military Challenge*, Washington, DC: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2012.

24. Daniel Alderman, *The PLA at Home and Abroad: Assessing the Operational Capabilities of China's Military*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, June 2010, pp. 2-4.

25. Richard D. Fisher, *China's Military Modernization Building for Regional and Global Reach*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010, p. 113.

26. China is starting to do this, but given limited realistic training and space systems, the force is far from informationalized. See *DoD China Report 2013*, p. 58.

27. Pollpeter, p. 172.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 177-179.

29. "China's Military Rise, The Dragon's New Teeth, A Rare Look Inside the World's Biggest Military Expansion," *The Economist*, August 9, 2013.

30. M. Taylor Fravel, "China's Search for Military Power," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 3, 2008, p. 135.

31. David Axe, "China's Air Power Future Is Visible in These Two Photos," *Medium*, January 5, 2014, available from <https://medium.com/war-is-boring/645be6841203>, accessed on May 30, 2014.

32. For more on trends in PLAAF modernization, see Lee Fuell, "Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic & Security Review Commissions," Department of the Air Force, January 30, 2014, available from [www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Lee%20Fuell\\_Testimony1.30.14.pdf](http://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Lee%20Fuell_Testimony1.30.14.pdf), accessed on May 30, 2014.

33. Fravel, p. 139.

34. Wendell Minnick, "China's Future Bomber Requirements Murky," *Defense News*, January 31, 2013, available from [www.defensenews.com/article/20130131/DEFREG03/301310016/China-8217-s-Future-Bomber-Requirements-Murky](http://www.defensenews.com/article/20130131/DEFREG03/301310016/China-8217-s-Future-Bomber-Requirements-Murky), accessed on May 30, 2014.

35. The following discussion on UAVs is based on author's correspondence with Ian Easton, a Research Fellow at the Project 2049 Institute and author with L.C. Russell Hsiao of "The Chinese People's Liberation Army Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Project: Organizational Capacities and Operational Capabilities," Arlington, VA: Project 2049 Institute, March 11, 2013, available from [project2049.net/documents/uav\\_easton\\_hsiao.pdf](http://project2049.net/documents/uav_easton_hsiao.pdf).



36. For example, Second Artillery would invest in strategic strike UAVs, GSD in national intelligence collecting UAVs, PLAAF in air defense and land attack UAVs, PLAN for anti-ship UAVs, etc.

37. "Diversified Employment."

38. Bernard D. Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea*, 2nd Ed., Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2010, p. 152.

39. Fravel, p. 135.

40. Sources suggest that the PLAN currently plans on building a total of five. This would allow Beijing to assign one or more to each of its three fleets—North Sea, East Sea, and South Sea. See *Ibid.*

41. Cole, p. 135.

42. Christopher P. Isajiw, "China's PLA Marines an Emerging Force," *The Diplomat*, October 17, 2013, available from [www.thediplomat.com/2013/10/chinas-pla-marines-an-emerging-force/](http://www.thediplomat.com/2013/10/chinas-pla-marines-an-emerging-force/), accessed on May 1, 2014.

43. Jesse L. Karotkin, "Trends in China's Naval Modernization: U.S. China Economic and Security Review Commission Testimony," January 30, 2014, available from [www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Karotkin\\_Testimony1.30.14.pdf](http://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Karotkin_Testimony1.30.14.pdf), accessed May 30, 2014.

44. *Ibid.*

45. For more on the future modernization of the PLAN, see *Ibid.*

46. Scott J. Henderson, "In the Shadow: Chinese Special Forces Build a 21st-Century Fighting Force," *Foreign Military Studies Office*, July-August 2006, p. 30.

47. Dennis J. Blasko, *The Chinese Army Today: Tradition and Transformation for the 21st Century*, 2nd Ed., New York: Routledge, 2012, p. 132.

48. Andrew N. D. Yang and Colonel Milton Wen-Chung Liao, "PLA Rapid Reaction Forces: Concept, Training, and Preliminary Assessment," James C. Mulvenon and Richard H. Yang, eds., *The People's Liberation Army in the Information Age*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1999, p. 49.

49. Yuan Lin and Li Chengfeng, "中国特种部队素描" ("A sketch of Chinese Special Forces"), *Conmilit*, Vol. 2, 1998, p. 23; Luo Maofu, Wang Shupeng and Jiang Linfang, "浅谈特种部队战士财务保障" ("Tentatively on Wartime Financial Support for Task Forces"), *Military Economic Research*, Vol. 3, 1996; Zhang Mihua, Zhang Quanli and Ma Chuangang, "提升特种部队完成多样化军事任务能力的几点思考" ("The Instructions of Enhancing the Special Force's Capability to Accomplish Diverse Military Tasks"), *National Defense Science & Technology*, Vol. 5, 2009.

50. Blasko, p. 192.

51. One article articulates the dangerous belief that Special Forces alone can accomplish the critical wartime tasks. Luo Wang and Jiang.

52. Stephen J. Blank, "China's Military Power: Shadow Over Central Asia," *Lexington Institute*, August 2006, p. 8.

53. Ian Easton, "China's Deceptively Weak (and Dangerous) Military," *The Diplomat*, January 31, 2014, available from [thediplomat.com/2014/01/chinas-deceptively-weak-and-dangerous-military/](http://thediplomat.com/2014/01/chinas-deceptively-weak-and-dangerous-military/), accessed May 30, 2014.

54. "Diversified Employment."

55. MR reduction was most recently discussed in the wake of the third plenum. A Japanese news source claims China will reduce the number of MRs to five to enhance its ability to respond swiftly in a crisis. See "China considers revamping military regions: report," *The Japan Times*, January 1, 2014, available from [www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/01/01/asia-pacific/china-considers-revamping-military-regions-report/#.UvAX\\_Xkywgg](http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/01/01/asia-pacific/china-considers-revamping-military-regions-report/#.UvAX_Xkywgg), accessed May 30, 2014. Chinese sources deny any planned change. See Bai Tian-tian and Liu Yang, "No Joint Command," *Global Times*, January 6, 2014, available from [www.globaltimes.cn/content/835937.shtml#.UtLDV44aU00](http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/835937.shtml#.UtLDV44aU00), accessed May 30, 2014.

56. Blasko, pp. 38-39.

57. Denmark, p. 327.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 310.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 317.

60. According to one Chinese RADM, food and water supply were not a problem, the biggest issue was repair and maintenance of the ships (维修设施). Zhang.

61. Wei Tian (卫天), “突破远洋的束缚：中国远洋补给能力及未来发展” (“The PLA-Navy’s Deep-Sea Replenishment Capability and its Future”), 舰载武器 (*Shipborne Weapons*), Vol. 10, 2010, pp. 20-35.

62. Chen Chuanming (传明), “中国海军的未来海上基地战略” (“Strategy for China’s Future Sea Base”), 现代舰船 (*Modern Ships*), Vol. 10, 2011, pp. 20-23.

63. Ronald O’Rourke, *China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities – Background and Issues for Congress*, RL-33153, Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, April 10, 2014, p. 35.

64. Andrew Erickson, *China’s Modernization of Its Naval and Air Power Capabilities*, Seattle, WA, and Washington, DC: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2012, p. 96.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 87. The ideological constraints also permeate strategic thinking; Chinese publications on sustaining naval operations abroad in general put forth more arguments against rather than for overseas basing.

66. Zhang.

67. “Chinese Navy Starts Open Sea Drill,” *Sina English*, January 20, 2014, available from [english.sina.com/china/2014/0120/664926.html](http://english.sina.com/china/2014/0120/664926.html), accessed May 30, 2014.

68. "PLA's New Tank Deployed in N Korea Border Exercise," *WantChinaTimes*, January 21, 2014, available from [www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?cid=1101&MainCatID=11&id=20140121000012](http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?cid=1101&MainCatID=11&id=20140121000012), accessed May 30, 2014. For more on current annual exercises, see *DoD China Report 2013*, p. 11.

69. Previously, staff officers assigned pilots their flight plans and would not even allow them to taxi and takeoff on the runways by themselves. See Easton, "China's Deceptively Weak."

70. "Chinese troops conduct Normandy style amphibious landing exercise for future military conflicts over islands," *LiveLeak*, September 20, 2013, available from [www.liveleak.com/view?i=ad1\\_1379695188](http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=ad1_1379695188), accessed May 30, 2014.

71. Easton, "China's Deceptively Weak."

72. For example, one TV show discusses whether the aircraft carrier would be useful in dealing with the Japanese in the island dispute: available from [v.ifeng.com/mil/mainland/201210/dfd13f3a-8f39-4168-bdbc-2ef0067db861.shtml](http://v.ifeng.com/mil/mainland/201210/dfd13f3a-8f39-4168-bdbc-2ef0067db861.shtml), accessed May 30, 2014.

73. For an interview with Col Liu on the topic, see Cheng Gang, "解放军大校主张中国世界第一军事强国" ("PLA Senior Colonel Suggests China to be World's Top Military Power"), *Global Times*, March 2, 2010.

74. *Ibid.*

75. For more on the evolution and drivers of China's noninterference principle, see Oriana Skylar Mastro, "Noninterference in Contemporary Chinese Foreign Policy: Fact or Fiction?" Donovan Chau and Thomas Kane eds., *China and International Security: History, Strategy, and 21st Century Policy*, Vol. 2, Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2014, pp. 95-114.

76. Erickson, *China's Modernization*, p. 96.