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Chinese base on Mischief Reef

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In a Fortnight

By L.C. Russell Hsiao

PLA GENERAL ADVISES BUILDING BASES IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

The sixth meeting of the 11th National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference’s (CPPCC) Standing Committee, the highest-level advisory body of the People’s Republic of China, met ahead of the general plenary that is taking place in Beijing from June 22 to 27. During one of the committee’s working group meetings on June 18, the former deputy chief of the General Staff of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) and standing committee member of the CPPCC, General Zhang Li, recommended that China build an airport and seaport on Mischief Reef located in the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea. The additional facilities, Zhang said, would enable China to conduct aircraft patrol of the area, support Chinese fishing vessels and demonstrate the country’s sovereignty over the disputed islands (*Ming Pao* [Hong Kong], June 22). The call for building military installations on the disputed islets by General Zhang, a senior high-ranking military officer, may be signs of China’s increased willingness to use force in resolving territorial disputes as tension between China and ASEAN-member states (i.e. Philippines, Vietnam) boil over the contested islets in the region.

A Chinese media source reported that the PLA Navy, under the direct order of the Central Military Commission (CMC) under President Hu Jintao, recently conducted a large scale naval exercise in the South China Sea to demonstrate Chinese sovereignty over the islands. China officially imposed a fishing ban in the South China Sea on May 16 to reportedly prevent “over fishing,” and sent eight patrol ships to monitor 128,000 square kilometers of the region (China Review News, June 19, Xinhua News Agency, June 9).

In recent months, tensions flared between China and Vietnam, which is one of the

claimants contesting sovereignty over the islands, and Hanoi reportedly signed a \$1.8 billion deal with Russia for six Kilo-class submarines in what analysts say appears to be the strongest response sent by Hanoi toward Beijing for what it increasingly sees as China's encroachment on the South China Sea islands (Ria Novosti, April 27). The submarines, which are designed for anti-sub and anti-ship warfare, could help protect Vietnamese claims in the South China Sea by denying access to its more than 2,000 miles of coastline. The submarine has a displacement of 2,300 tons, a maximum depth of 350 meters (1,200 feet), a range of 6,000 miles, and is equipped with six 533-mm torpedo tubes (Ria Novosti, April 27).

In his remarks at the committee meeting, Zhang described the situation in the South China Sea as "very grim," and recommended that the Chinese navy add vessels and boats that have a displacement of 3,000 tons or higher for the navy and naval police that operate in the disputed area (*Ta Kung Pao* [Hong Kong], June 18). According to Zhang, the PLAN only has eight operational naval vessels that are deployable to the region, and these vessels are usually executing other missions in different areas, thus their capability to respond to any contingency that develops in the South China Sea is very limited (*Ta Kung Pao*, June 18). If the airport and seaport are constructed, Zhang said that China will then be able to control the Spratlys and provide a platform for Chinese naval vessels to bypass the Straits of Malacca, which Chinese military strategists consider a strategic choke point for the country's national security.

The Spratly Islands are comprised of over 500 islets, while Vietnam occupies 29 of these islets; the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei occupy three or more islets each, and the General noted that China only controls four of these islets (*Ta Kung Pao*, June 18). Moreover, according to Zhang, China does not possess a single oil well in the area, but other countries have more than 1,000 wells that extract from 5,000 to 1 hundred million barrels of oil per year. In response, Zhang advised Beijing to increase its investment in naval surface ships, satellite surveillance, intelligence facilities and basing construction in the region, while expanding oil exploration and production in the South China Sea (China Review News, June 19).

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CCP Campaign for a New Generation of "Red and Expert" Officials

By Willy Lam

While the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) must have heaved a sigh of relief over the relatively uneventful 20th anniversary of the June 4, 1989 crackdown, central party authorities are adopting extra measures to defuse tension between local officials and the masses. Widespread anger at the callousness, corruption and other misdemeanors of cadres, particularly those at the level of counties and below, is deemed a main factor behind the tens of thousands of riots and protests that occur every year. The latest such disaster, where some 10,000 peasants from Shishou town, Hubei Province clashed last week with police due to the latter's alleged cover-up of the suspicious death of a local resident, has followed upon the heels of similar incidents in Hainan, Guizhou and Yunnan the past year. In all these cases, law officers and other grassroots personnel offered protection to the rich and powerful instead of helping citizens who were victimized by corrupt cadres or triad elements (Reuters, June 21; *Ming Pao* [Hong Kong], June 22; *Outlook Weekly* [Beijing] January 6). Starting in the spring, the CCP Organization Department (CCPOD) and other high-level departments have launched an unprecedentedly large-scale campaign to "retrain" grassroots-level personnel ranging from civil servants to police officers and judges. The goal is apparently to nurture a new generation of officials who are "both red and expert," meaning that they are politically correct, morally above-board and professionally competent.

In early summer, the CCPOD dispatched around 10,000 inspectors to local-level administrations to check on the livelihood of peasants as well as the "governance capability" of grassroots officials. As Organization Chief and Politburo member Li Yuanhao indicated, CCPOD cadres must "have a better grip on the situation and a deeper understanding of the grassroots." While Beijing has not disclosed the number of corrupt or incompetent cadres who have been sacked, it seems clear that these CCPOD "plenipotentiaries" are eager to flush out the bad apples. More significantly, Li has passed along his mentor, President Hu Jintao's concern for propagating officials who can better handle the increasingly complex "social contradictions" at the level of villages, towns and counties. This was behind the decision earlier this year to send several thousand county chiefs for short- and long-term programs at Central Party School centers in Beijing, Shanghai and Jingtangshan, Jiangxi Province. The CCPOD has also boosted the number of fresh college graduates who are being recruited as *cunguan*, or "village cadres." In Yunnan Province alone, more than 60,000 college graduates are

ving for 10,000 *cunguan* positions. Henan Province Party Secretary Xu Guangchun indicated last month that it might be a good idea for universities to offer more courses on different aspects of village-level administration so that graduates can seek a rewarding career as *cunguan* (Xinhua News Agency, June 4; *People's Daily*, January 9; *China Youth Daily*, June 5; Collegenews.cn, May 17).

Even more unusual is the simultaneous training of grassroots police and prison officers, prosecutors, judges, as well as cadres working in the disciplinary inspection committees of counties and other local governments. In China, the Central Commission for Disciplinary Inspection (CCDI), which is headed by Politburo Standing Committee member He Guoqiang, is the highest anti-graft agency. The CCDI has branches in all provinces, cities and counties. For example, 3,080 county-level police officers have just finished refresher classes in the Beijing headquarters of the Ministry of Public Security. Apart from boning up on the law and latest developments in information technology, the senior cops took courses on “the construction of harmonious relationship between the police and the people.” Similarly, judges and judicial personnel based in intermediate and lower-level courts will, starting in July, undertake a year-long program at legal and administrative institutes in the capital. The slogan of this gargantuan re-education campaign is: “the people’s judges must work for the people” (*People's Daily*, June 5; Xinhua News Agency, June 8).

Owing to the ever-increasing cases of confrontation—and sometimes outright battles—between the police and disadvantaged groups such as poor peasants, the re-education of public security officers has drawn the most attention from the Chinese media. Police chiefs have waxed eloquent on the fact that their staff should have acquired “five major capabilities” after their half-year training in Beijing. These include the ability “to build up harmonious ties with masses”; “to implement the law in a rational, peaceful, civilized and regulated manner”; “to strengthen and improve ways to provide guidance to the media”; “to raise IT standards and to boost their capacity to put [theories] into practice at local levels”; and “to better prevent and adequately handle emergency incidents.” According to Minister of Public Security Meng Jianzhu, who is personally in charge of the training, “police officers should avoid being carried away and becoming emotional when facing complicated situations.” Meng, also a State Councillor, added that “police should avoid using excessively strong language or employing undue force” in tackling suspects (CCTV news, February 27; Xinhua News Agency, February 19).

In a similar vein, the President of the Supreme People’s

Court (SPC) Wang Shengjun expressed confidence that more training will boost the political as well as professional standards of the nation’s judges. In the past couple of years, the reputation of the judicial system has been dented by corruption scandals involving senior judges such as former SPC vice president Huang Songyou. Huang, together with a number of associates, was detained late last year for allegedly accepting millions of yuan worth of bribes and kickbacks. In a recent speech on the “construction of judicial human resources,” Wang noted that judicial personnel must be imbued with the spirit of “running the courts with seriousness, boosting the credibility of and popular support for the courts, and strengthening the courts with science and technology.” “We must have a corps of judicial staff who is politically reliable, professionally up to scratch, devoted to the people, as well as fair and uncorrupt,” he added (Chinacourt.org, April 29; Xinhua News Agency, June 17).

While training of this unprecedented magnitude is a step forward for boosting administrative effectiveness, there are doubts as to whether the lofty objectives envisaged by the likes of Politburo member Li or Chief Judge Wang can be realized. One problem is that excessive premium seems to have been placed on “redness” as opposed to “expertise.” Take for example, the pronouncements of Vice President Xi Jinping, who, as President of the Central Party School, is a key mastermind behind the nationwide re-education exercise. In speeches on criteria for promoting cadres, Xi has reiterated that “while we emphasize that cadres must pass muster in both morality and [professional] competence, morality comes first” (*People's Daily*, June 12; Xinhua News Agency, March 30). In his admonishments for judges, Chief Justice Wang has invariably urged them to follow this hierarchy of values: “giving top priority to the [Communist] Party’s enterprise, the people’s interests and [the sanctity of] the Constitution and the law.” “Let’s diligently build up a corps of high-quality judicial personnel that can reassure the Party and let the people be satisfied” (Xinhua News Agency, April 29). Loyalty to the party, then, is clearly considered by the CCP to be more important than the officials’ professional standards as well as their ability to meet the demands of the populace.

Moreover, at least a good part of the re-education campaign is centered on *baowen*, or “safeguarding stability”—codeword for defusing challenges to the CCP—rather than promoting good governance as such. During the training of the 3,000-odd police officers, senior instructors repeated President Hu’s mantra for what party leaders consider to be a trouble-prone 2009: “We must ensure economic growth, safeguard the people’s livelihood, and preserve stability.” Another favorite slogan cited during courses for grassroots cops was that of State Councillor Meng: “A

minor incident should be solved within the village; even a major incident should be tackled within [the parameters of] towns and townships. Do not let [social] contradictions go all the way up to the central authorities” (China.com.cn, February 26; *Yangcheng Evening Post* [Guangdong], February 18). In other words, what central authorities are looking for in local-level officials are superb fire-fighting skills rather than exceptional dedication to or capability for public service.

Moreover, training or re-training cannot be a substitute for the wholesale professionalization of the Chinese cadre and civil service. The State Council or Central Government has, since the start of the reform era, been generous with capital projects, particularly the building of infrastructure ranging from highways and railways to industrial parks. For example, much of the 4 trillion yuan (about \$570 billion) that Premier Wen Jiabao approved last November for resuscitating the economy has been earmarked for infrastructure improvement. Yet, relatively little government expenditure has gone into boosting professional education. A recent report by the Ministry of Land and Natural Resources, which has also embarked on a massive re-training of its staff, revealed that only 12 percent of its 122,000 grassroots officials have professional qualifications in fields such as land surveying or mining administration, and each of the ministry’s 25,000 local-level offices boasts less than one professional staff (*People’s Daily*, June 21).

The insufficient weight given to professionalism is evident even in the critical field of justice. While more than 300,000 students are studying in China’s 634 law schools, a sizable number of courts and prosecutors’ offices, particularly those in the central and western provinces, have had difficulties hiring qualified personnel. In a much-noted speech earlier this year, Politburo Standing Committee Member Zhou Yongkang pointed out that to make up for the shortfall of qualified legal personnel in the heartland regions, relevant judicial departments can recruit reliable high school graduates among soldiers or People’s Armed Police officers—and then send them to a selected number of legal institutions for special intensive training. Particularly for police, prosecutors and judges serving in trouble-prone spots in Tibet and Xinjiang, more emphasis seems to be placed on their ability to toe Beijing’s line than either professional qualification or competence (Xinhua News Agency, February 1; *Beijing Evening Post*, March 9; Xinhua News Agency, June 5).

On October 1, the CCP authorities will be hosting a big party, including a gargantuan military parade at Tiananmen Square, to celebrate the 60th birthday of the People’s Republic of China. Ensuring that no “destabilizing

factors” such as peasant riots will mar national spectacles of this nature—which are deemed essential to boosting nationalism and bolstering the party’s legitimacy—is one factor behind the Hu-Wen leadership’s anxiety to improve the political rectitude and crisis-management skills of civil servants. Yet, while training programs that prioritize values such as prolonging the CCP’s mandate of heaven or “nipping factors of instability in the bud” could buy the administration some time, it is unlikely that they will effectively eradicate endemic corruption and misrule at the party’s grassroots.

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Chinese ASBM Development: Knowns and Unknowns

By Andrew S. Erickson

China wants to achieve the ability, or at minimum the appearance of the ability, to prevent a U.S. carrier strike group (CSG) from intervening in the event of a future Taiwan Strait crisis. China may be closer than ever to achieving this capability with land-based anti-ship homing ballistic missiles. There have been many Western reports that China is developing an anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM). Increasingly, technical and operationally-focused discussions are found in a widening array of Chinese sources, some authoritative. These factors suggest that China may be close to fielding, testing, or employing an ASBM—a weapon that no other country possesses. According to U.S. Government sources, Beijing is pursuing an ASBM based on its CSS-5/DF-21D solid propellant medium-range ballistic missile. The CSS-5’s 1,500 km+ range could hold ships at risk in a large maritime area—far beyond the Taiwan theatre into the Western Pacific [1]. Yet there remain considerable unknowns about China’s ASBM capability, which could profoundly affect U.S. deterrence, military operations and the balance of power in the Western Pacific.

TAIWAN AS THE CATALYST

For the past several decades, the U.S. Navy has used aircraft carriers to project power around the world, including in and around the Taiwan Strait. The deployment of the USS *Nimitz* and *Independence* carrier battle groups in response to China's 1995-1996 missile tests and military exercises in the Taiwan Strait was a move that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) could not counter. The impetus behind Chinese efforts to develop ASBMs may be to prevent similar U.S. carrier operations in the future.

KEYSTONE OF 'ANTI-ACCESS' STRATEGY?

If fielded, the ASBM would be just one of the many new platforms and weapons systems that China has been buying and building since the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis. These systems, collectively, will allow China to assert unprecedented control over its contested maritime periphery, in part by attempting to deny U.S. forces 'access' to critical areas in times of crisis or conflict. They do so by matching Chinese strengths with U.S. weaknesses, thereby placing U.S. platforms on the 'wrong end of physics.' An ASBM, however, stands above the quiet submarines, lethal anti-ship cruise missiles, and copious sea mines that China has been adding to its arsenal in its potential strategic impact on regional allies of the United States and U.S. interests in maintaining regional peace and security.

Firstly, the development of an ASBM would draw on over half a century of Chinese experience with ballistic missiles. Secondly, it would be fired from mobile, highly concealable land-based platforms. Thirdly, it would have the range to strike targets hundreds of kilometers from China's shores. These factors suggest that China is likely to succeed in achieving a capability that is extremely difficult to counter and could impose 'access denial' in strategically vital sea areas well beyond its 200-nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

U.S. TECHNOLOGICAL INFLUENCE?

The United States does not have an ASBM. It did have a distantly related capability, in the form of the *Pershing II* ground-to-ground theater-ballistic missile, but Washington relinquished this capability when it ratified the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty with Moscow in 1988. Interestingly, some Chinese sources state that previous advances in the now-abandoned *Pershing II* program inspired Chinese research and development relevant to an ASBM [2]. The *Pershing II* has adjustable second stage control fins for terminal maneuver. U.S. Government sources, and many Chinese sources, state that a Chinese ASBM would be based on the CSS-5. While positively

identified photos of a CSS-5 outside its launch canister are not known to exist, at least one version of China's related CSS-6/DF-15 missile has a reentry vehicle virtually identical in appearance to the *Pershing II*'s [3]. Based on this strong visual resemblance, it is possible that the CSS-6 employs terminal maneuvering technology similar to that of the *Pershing II*, and it is reasonable to assume that the CSS-5 does too. This is because the reentry vehicle that China obviously has could easily be mated with the CSS-5 booster, which might then produce an effective ASBM, assuming that its radar has the ability to track moving targets at sea.

MAKING AN ASBM WORK

Chinese schematic diagrams show an ASBM flight trajectory with mid-course and terminal guidance [4]. Second stage control fins would be critical to steering the ASBM through terminal maneuvers to evade countermeasures and home in on a moving target. This makes an ASBM different from most ballistic missiles, which have a fixed trajectory.

Yet how do Chinese experts envision the "kill chain"—the sequence of events that must occur for a missile to successfully engage and destroy or disable its target (e.g. an aircraft carrier)—beyond the five steps that they commonly list: 1) detection, 2) tracking, 3) penetration of target defenses, 4) hitting a moving target, and 5) causing sufficient damage? A single broken link would render an attack incomplete, and hence ineffective. What would work based on what is known about China's capabilities today, and in the future?

China has also been working on a sophisticated network of ground-and-space-based sensors, including over-the-horizon (OTH) radars and electronic signals detection equipment, which can assist ASBM detection and targeting [5]. While locating an aircraft carrier has been likened to finding a needle in a haystack, this particular needle has a large radar cross section, emits radio waves, and is surrounded by airplanes. Active radar is the most likely ASBM sensor, since its signals can penetrate through clouds. Simply looking for the biggest reflection will tend to locate the largest ship as a target, and the largest ship will usually be an aircraft carrier (if the pre-launch targeting was good).

AND PROVING THAT IT IS WORKABLE

Critical questions remain with respect to missile sensors, however. Does China have multiple sensors that it is currently capable of applying to ASBM detection and targeting? Even in the absence of relevant space-based intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), is there

another way to cue the missile accurately enough so that the possible parameters of where the carrier could move in the missile's brief flight time can be accounted for within the "window" of its seeker? As for the seeker, how would it work? How would it accomplish target discrimination? Is this a challenging issue? Does it hinge on the large size of a carrier? Could smaller ships also be targeted effectively?

What do Chinese experts fear could go wrong, and perhaps even render an ASBM unusable? Missile defense? Other things? Considerable Chinese research on irregular ("wavy") ASBM/ballistic missile trajectories and penetration aids (PENAIDS) to defeat missile defense suggests that this is an area of ongoing concern.

With respect to testing, what would be the bare minimum necessary to make the PLA feel that it had some rudimentary operational capability—and hence, perhaps, some deterrence ability? Are there any testing/targeting plans? Demonstration plans? What is the target audience (domestic/foreign public vs. PLA/foreign military's eyes only)? The U.S./Taiwan/Japanese military, public, or all of the above?

THE SERVICE IN CHARGE

The Second Artillery, China's strategic rocket force, already responsible for China's land-based nuclear and conventional missiles (the latter since 1993), would likely control any ASBMs that China develops. Relatively small, technologically-focused and extremely secretive, the service is ideally suited to such a mission. It has been studying the ASBM issue for some time, having published what appears to be a conceptual feasibility study in 2003, and a major doctrinal publication the following year [6].

This still leaves critical questions of joint operations, and bureaucratic coordination, however. How are sensors prioritized and coordinated? Which organization(s) control which sensors (e.g. OTH radar), and how are they used? Is there a risk of seams between services (e.g. Second Artillery, Navy, etc.)? What about problems with bureaucratic "stovepipes," particularly during general wartime crisis management? How to overlap areas of "uncertainty" from different sensors, and thereby accomplish data/sensor fusion? How to accomplish bureaucratic "data fusion"—a task beyond even the most competent engineers? Finally, which authorities would need to be in the decision-making loop, and what are the time-to-launch implications?

DOCTRINAL GUIDANCE

How does the second artillery conceive of using ASBMs in operational scenarios? The service's authoritative high-

level handbook, *Science of Second Artillery Campaigns*, describes in some detail the use of ASBMs against carriers. It in no way suggests that such an approach is merely aspirational or beset with insurmountable technical difficulties. In fact, in introducing the section describing their potential employment, it states that "conventional missile strike groups" should be used as an "assassin's mace" (silver bullet), a term commonly used to describe weapons that match Chinese strengths against an enemy's weaknesses.

According to its handbook, the Second Artillery is thinking seriously about at least five ways to use ASBMs against U.S. CSGs, at least at the conceptual level:

- "Firepower harassment [strikes]" (*huoli xirao*) involve hitting carrier strike groups.
 - "Frontal firepower deterrence" (*qianfang huoli shezu*) involves firing intimidation salvos in front of a carrier strike group "to serve as a warning."
 - "Flank firepower expulsion" (*yice huoli qugan*) combines interception of a carrier strike group by Chinese naval forces with intimidation salvos designed to direct it away from the areas where China feels most threatened.
 - "Concentrated fire assault" (*jihuo tuji*) involves striking the enemy's core carrier as with a 'heavy hammer.'
 - "Information assault" (*xinxi gongji*) entails attacking the carrier strike group's command and control system electromagnetically to disable it [7].
- All this does not mean that China necessarily has an ASBM capability already, but it strongly suggests that related research and development has high-level approval from China's military and civilian leadership.

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS?

The above document offers general insights into the Second Artillery's conception of conventional deterrence. It adds that the Second Artillery will work with the PLAN to "execute focused naval blockades" and "achieve command of the seas." Approaching enemy CSGs are envisioned to be the principal maritime targets, but "large vessels or large ship formations" more broadly are mentioned as well. Coordination and precision are seen as essential for "detering and blocking enemy carrier strike groups"; such "operational activities need to be coordinated without the slightest difference in time." Coordination with the PLAN is also emphasized in the location of sea targets, as well as with regard to the notification and demarcation of blockade areas: "the naval intelligence department

should ‘relay promptly’ the information obtained by its reconnaissance about enemy ship activities to the Second Artillery campaign large formation.” In particular, “information regarding carrier battle groups ... should be gathered on a real time basis.” Potential sources of “real-time target intelligence” include “military reconnaissance satellites, domestic and foreign remote sensing satellites, and established satellite reconnaissance target image information processing systems.”

Still, this leaves critical questions unanswered concerning how the PLA might envision the basing location, number, employment, and strategic effects of any ASBMs:

- *Base of operations.* Where would the ASBMs themselves be based? What would be the expected range from the target?
- *Nature of arsenal.* What would be the relative size of the ASBM inventory? Size might have implications for operational possibilities and willingness to expend ASBMs in conflict.
- *Concept of operations.* It is one thing to call for ASBM capabilities, but how would they be realized in practice? What would an ASBM firing doctrine look like, and what would be the objective? Target destruction or mission kill (the equivalent of ‘slashing the tires’ on carrier aircraft)? What to shoot at, and when? Would the PLA fire on a carrier if it knew the planes were off of it? Would it rely on a first strike? Would the PLA plan to fire one ASBM, several, or a large salvo? If a salvo, then some combination of saturation (many shots in the same space, to overload missile defense), precision (firing many shots in a pattern to compensate for locating error on the target and to get the CSG in the seeker window of at least one of the missiles), or both? What type of warhead: unitary, EMP, or sub-munitions? How might salvo attacks, or multi-axis attack coordination, be envisioned? Do Chinese planners think that the Second Artillery could handle the mission by itself, or would it be part of a high-low, time-on-target attack with both ASBMs and cruise missiles?
- *Concept of deterrence.* Deterrence would seem to be a clear purpose of any ASBM development, but what does one have to show to deter? PLA doctrinal publications mention firing ‘warning shots’ in front of carriers—how does the Second Artillery think the United States would respond? How would the United States know it was a warning shot and not just a miss? What if the United States did know and called China’s bluff? Finally, from a technical

perspective, how to actually fire a warning shot and miss by an intentional margin (versus having the seeker home in on the actual target)?

CONCLUSION

From Chinese sources, it can be inferred that Chinese leaders seek not to attack the United States, but to deter it. They want to defend what they perceive to be their state’s core territorial interests and to ensure a stable environment for domestic economic development. If they develop an ASBM, they would likely hope that it could prevent U.S. projection of military power in ways that are inimical to China’s security interests, which appear to be expanding beyond the First Island Chain. Yet the strength of Chinese equities, combined with vital U.S. interests in East Asia, make ASBM development for this purpose a complex and risky proposition. Should Beijing pursue such a course to its logical conclusion—a demonstrated ASBM capability—only robust strategic dialogue could hope to alleviate the substantial tensions that are certain to ensue. Until Beijing is willing to discuss in detail its progress and intentions in this area, however, it will be essential to search for answers to the questions outlined above—not just for a select group of government bureaucrats and the leaders they advise, but also for the publics in Taiwan, Japan, and the United States, who fund military development and who must ultimately live with its consequences. Regional peace and stability, and mutual strategic trust, demand no less.

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NOTES

1. Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Military Power of the People’s Republic of China 2009*, Annual Report to Congress, pp. 21, 48.
2. Qiu Zhenwei, “A Discussion of China’s Development of an Anti-Ship Ballistic Missile,” <http://blog.huanqiu.com/?uid-6885-action-viewspace-itemid-2009>; “Special Dispatch: ‘Aces’ in ‘Dongfeng’ Family—Miniaturization, Solidification, and Mobility,” *Ta Kung Pao*, 2 October 1999, p. A11, OSC FTS19991114000862.
3. See <http://www.sinodefence.com/strategic/missile/df15.asp>. This could be a case of convergent evolution; it is possible that the RVs look alike because they solve similar problems.
4. Tan Shoulin and Zhang Daqiao, Second Artillery Engineering College, Diao Guoxiu, PLA Unit 96311, Huaihua; “Determination and Evaluation of Effective

Range for Terminal Guidance for a Ballistic Missile Attacking an Aircraft Carrier,” *Command Control & Simulation*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (August 2006), p. 6.

5. Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Military Power of the People’s Republic of China 2009*, Annual Report to Congress, pp. 21, 48; Sean O’Connor, “OTH Radar and the ASBM Threat,” *Information Dissemination*, <http://geimint.blogspot.com/2008/11/oth-radar-and-asbm-threat.html>.

6. Huang Hongfu, “Conception of Using Conventional Ballistic Missiles to Strike Aircraft Carrier Formation,” Scientific and Technological Research, Scientific and Technological Committee of the Second Artillery Corps, 2003, No. 1, pp. 6-8; Yu Jixun, chief editor, People’s Liberation Army Second Artillery Corps, *The Science of Second Artillery Campaigns* (Beijing: PLA Press, 2004).

7. Yu Jixun, chief editor, People’s Liberation Army Second Artillery Corps, *The Science of Second Artillery Campaigns* (Beijing: PLA Press, 2004), pp. 401-402.

A Chinese Turn to Mahan?

By James R. Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara

Robert Kaplan proclaims that “the Chinese are the Mahanians now,” enamored with the *fin de siècle* American sea captain who exhorted seafaring nations to amass international commerce, merchant and naval fleets, and forward bases (*The Atlantic*, November 2007). By those measures, China is progressing swiftly toward sea power. It depends on a steady flow of seaborne cargoes of oil, natural gas, and other raw materials from Africa and the Persian Gulf region, and it relies on the oceans as a thoroughfare by which Chinese export wares reach foreign consumers. Chinese shipyards are bolting together merchantmen at a helter-skelter pace. In April 2009, the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) held a naval review to mark the sixtieth anniversary of its founding and—after years of studied denials—the PLA leadership has more or less openly stated that it wants to acquire aircraft carriers. The PLAN has built a base on Hainan Island capable of berthing nuclear submarines, thereby extending its reach toward the Strait of Malacca, and Chinese diplomats have negotiated basing rights throughout the Indian Ocean.

Does this add up to a Mahanian strategy? Perhaps. A columnist for *The Economist* recalls that whenever he “prodded a military man from India or China” at the May 2009 meeting of the Shangri-La Dialogue, “out leapt a Mahanite” [1]. Even so, the jury remains out on the nature and scope of Alfred Thayer Mahan’s influence in China. Yale professor Paul Kennedy and King’s College London

professor Geoffrey Till observe that European sea powers appear to be deserting the oceans while Asians are building up powerful navies. The United States finds itself caught in between. Taken at face value, this notion suggests that Western powers are abandoning their command of the sea even as Asian powers are entering a neo-Mahanian age. Determining what that means for China—and by extension for the Asia-Pacific region as a whole—constitutes a matter of major importance for the United States’ standing as a Pacific power.

WHAT GUIDANCE DO CHINESE THINKERS DRAW FROM MAHAN?

Long stigmatized in China for advocating imperialism and colonialism, Mahan has inspired a flurry of interest in Chinese scholarly and policy circles. Studies parsing terms like “command of the sea” (*zhihaiquan*) and “command of communications” (*zhijiaotongquan*) have proliferated. Some neo-Mahanians appear spellbound by the American theorist’s oft-cited description of command of the sea as “that overbearing power on the sea which drives the enemy’s flag from it, or allows it to appear only as a fugitive.” Indeed, this bellicose-sounding phrase is by far the most common Mahan quotation to appear in Chinese commentary.

Strikingly, Imperial Japan has emerged as a model for PLAN development. Ni Lexiong, a professor of political science at the Shanghai Institute of Political Science and Law, faults the Qing Dynasty for being insufficiently Mahanian in its 1894-1895 naval tilt against Japan. China, says Ni, should bear in mind that Mahan “believed that whoever could control the sea would win the war and change history; that command of the sea is achieved through decisive naval battles on the seas; that the outcome of decisive naval battles is determined by the strength of fire power on each side of the engagement” [2]. That distinguished analysts now pay tribute to Japanese sea power marks a stunning reversal in Chinese strategic thought.

Like Mahan, Chinese thinkers connect thriving commerce with naval primacy. In the respected *Zhongguo Junshi Kexue*, Major (Ret.) General Jiang Shiliang, then chief of the PLA General Logistics Department, invokes him to justify Chinese control of “strategic passages” traversed by vital goods. For Jiang, the contest for “absolute command” is a fact of life in international politics [3]. In a similar vein, Beijing’s 2004 Defense White Paper instructs the armed forces to “strengthen the capabilities for winning both command of the sea and command of the air” [4]. This remains the clearest statement of China’s Mahanian outlook.

Numerous Chinese analysts cite Mahanian-sounding principles when appraising the value of Taiwan, the midpoint of the first island chain, and occasionally Guam, America's naval stronghold in the second island chain [5]. They view Taiwan as the single geographic asset, once returned to Beijing's possession, which would grant China direct access to the Pacific. On the other hand, if Taiwan maintained *de facto* independence, the mainland would remain hemmed behind the inner island chain, which runs southward from the Japanese home islands to the Indonesian archipelago. The authoritative *Science of Military Strategy* declares, "If Taiwan should be alienated from the mainland ... China will forever be locked to the west side of the first chain of islands in the West Pacific." If so, "the essential strategic space for China's rejuvenation will be lost" [6].

The Mahanian notion that sea power is inseparable from national greatness, moreover, resonates with many Chinese strategists. None other than Admiral Wu Shengli, the commander of the PLAN, sounds a Mahanian note, proclaiming that China is an "oceanic nation" endowed by nature with a long coastline, many islands, and a massive sea area under its jurisdiction. Wu calls on Chinese citizens to raise their collective consciousness of the seas in order to achieve "the great revitalization of the Chinese nation" (*zhonghua minzu weida fuxing*) [7]. The interplay he depicts between destiny and choice in China's maritime future would have been instantly recognizable to Mahan.

HOW MAHANIAN IS THE PLAN?

Many Chinese experts read Mahan attentively and quote him as an authority for their views. Yet they offer few specifics about the lessons they draw from him. To date, Chinese commentary has seldom gone beyond the claim that Mahan urged nations to build navies able to settle economic disputes through force of arms [8]. This borders on caricature. There are at least two possible explanations for this apparent superficiality. First, PLAN thinkers may still be translating, reading, and digesting his theories and considering how to apply them to Chinese foreign policy goals. If so, they will find there is far more to Mahan than combat between symmetrical battle fleets. The sea power evangelist insisted that commerce came first. Since "commerce thrives by peace and suffers by war," he maintained, "it follows that peace is the superior interest" of seagoing nations.

If this hypothesis is correct, mentions of Mahan will appear more and more frequently in Chinese discourses. They will become more varied, expanding beyond Mahan's most influential work, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783*, to encompass more geopolitically

mindful books like *The Problem of Asia* and *The Interest of America in Sea Power*. As Chinese thinkers enrich their understanding of Mahanian theory—integrating not only the operational, tactical, and force-structure dimensions but also his views of international relations—they may well modulate their attitudes toward the proper uses of sea power. The primacy of peaceful commercial competition would be a welcome addition to China's Mahanian discourses. Western analysts should monitor for signs of a deeper, richer grasp of sea-power theory.

Close study will reveal that Mahan never counseled naval war for its own sake. Far from espousing an open-ended American naval buildup, he urged the U.S. Navy to assume the strategic defensive in vital waters—chiefly the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico—expanses that would provide America its "gateway to the Pacific" once the Panama Canal opened. The United States had little need for a battle fleet able to outgun entire European navies; it merely needed enough to defeat the largest contingent likely to venture into the Americas. In Mahan's estimate, a modest twenty battleships would allow for offensive operations within the strategic defensive. American strategy might—but need not—culminate in a latter-day Trafalgar or Tsushima.

If prosecuted in Mahan's spirit, China's "offshore defense" strategy, which traces its lineage to former PLAN commander Admiral Liu Huaqing (commonly dubbed "China's Mahan"), would assert sea control for a finite time up to several hundred miles off the mainland's coast. Indeed, some Chinese neo-Mahanians urge Beijing to exercise a version of "limited sea power" (*youxian haiquan*) that remains geographically circumscribed within the first island chain [9]. A Mahanian PLAN would concentrate its efforts on seaways critical to trade and on defending China's maritime sovereignty. Beijing would content itself with an adequate—but not overbearing—fleet.

Encouraging analytical trends, then, are starting to emerge among Chinese thinkers. China's University of Maritime Sciences Professor Liu Zhongmin's three-part series on sea power theory, for instance, demonstrates a far more comprehensive reading of Mahan's voluminous writings, representing a discernible advance in scholarship. Beijing has also been analyzing the rise and fall of past great powers, sorting through history for guidance on how to manage its own ascent. Some Chinese scholars are beginning to acknowledge the singular importance that Mahan attached to peacetime commerce [10]. How much momentum this more nuanced, more accurate interpretation of sea power theory will gain in Beijing remains to be seen.

Second, Chinese navalists may simply be using Mahan to lobby for a big navy composed of expensive, high-tech

platforms. They do not need to read Mahan's works widely or deeply to hype the threat to Chinese maritime interests, building the case for a strong fleet. By no means would the PLAN be the first navy to use Mahan as a rallying cry. Mahan himself recalled that the Imperial Japanese were his most ardent admirers. No one showed "closer or more interested attention to the general subject," he wrote; "how fruitfully, has been demonstrated both by their preparation and their accomplishments in the recent war," namely the Russo-Japanese War, which culminated in a decisive fleet clash at Tsushima Strait. It remains a standard quip that U.S. Navy leaders use Mahan to justify building a big fleet, but otherwise leave his books on the shelf.

The notion that there is a sloganeering aspect to the PLAN's use of Mahan remains doubtless. Like other works of strategic theory—Sun Tzu's *Art of War* comes to mind—Mahan's writings are malleable. They can be put to a variety of uses, from stoking Chinese nationalism to carving out bigger navy budgets. If Chinese Mahanians cherry-pick the parts of his theory that prescribe apocalyptic fleet encounters, China's maritime rise may tend toward confrontation with fellow sea powers. That is, if the same drumbeat of Mahanian commentary persists, it will furnish a leading indicator of trouble for the U.S. Navy and its Asian partners.

AN ASYMMETRIC YET MAHANIAN PLAN

Even if China does interpret Mahan in warlike fashion, it need not construct a navy symmetrical to the U.S. Navy to achieve its maritime goals, such as upholding territorial claims around the Chinese nautical periphery, commanding East Asian seas and skies, and safeguarding distant sea lines of communication. Beijing could accept Mahan's general logic of naval strategy while seeking to command vital sea areas with weaponry and methods quite different from anything Mahan foresaw. If the much-discussed anti-ship ballistic missile pans out, for instance, the PLA could hold U.S. Navy carrier strike groups at a distance. Medium-sized Chinese aircraft carriers could operate freely behind that defensive shield, sparing the PLAN the technical and doctrinal headaches associated with constructing big-deck carriers comparable to the U.S. Navy's *Nimitz* or *Ford* classes. Beijing would fulfill its Mahanian goal of local sea control at a modest cost—an eminently sensible approach, and one that Mahan would have applauded. Thus, Western observers should avoid projecting their own assumptions onto Chinese strategic thinkers.

Strategic theory, then, gives Westerners an instrument to track China's maritime rise, complementing more traditional techniques of net assessment. If Chinese scholars and seafarers continue ignoring the cooperative

strands of Mahanian thought, mistaking his writings for (or misrepresenting them as) bloody-minded advocacy of naval battle, Chinese strategy will incline toward naval competition and conflict. On the other hand, a China whose leadership fully grasps the logic governing Mahanian theory may prove less contentious. Western observers should keep sifting through Chinese strategic discourses and official statements in an effort to ascertain where China's Mahanian turn may lead. America's strategic longevity in Asia could depend on it.

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Deepening Naval Cooperation between Islamabad and Beijing

By Itamar Y. Lee

Chinese President Hu Jintao elevated the concept of “harmonious ocean” (*hexie haiyang*) in an unprecedented maritime parade during the 60th anniversary of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) at Qingdao on April 23. In Hu's speech, the Chinese leader proclaimed that “for now and in the future, China would 'never seek hegemony' (*yongbu chengba*), nor would it turn to military expansion or arms races with other nations” (Xinhua News Agency, April 23). In spite of these assurances, the PLAN's growing activism on the high seas has grown notably more pronounced from the Arabian Sea to the South China Sea. Despite the absence of a credible military threat in an era of peaceful development, Beijing “began a major military build up” [1]. The increased level of Chinese naval activities in recent years has unsettled the littoral states that line its expanding belt of maritime activities, particularly India, which has grown increasingly wary of PLA military modernization.

The growing presence of Chinese naval power around the Indian Ocean, which serves as the conduit between the Gulf states and Southeast Asia, is deepened by its support facilities in Myanmar (Burma), Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the deepwater facility in Pakistan's Gwadar port. Indian military experts have pointed out that these bases have the effect of “virtually encircling India” (*Hindustan Times*, March 17), and senior officials have expressed explicit concerns about these developments. According to Indian Defense Minister M.M. Paalam Raju, “We [India] are taking steps [to see] that Chinese influence does not pose a threat” (*Zeenews.com*, June 1). The increased naval cooperation between Pakistan and China in recent years and the development of the Gwadar naval base are becoming a magnet of growing strategic concerns for India that may not only transform the regional military balance by sparking an arms race but also significantly reshape the regional security architecture.

The extent of China's current power projection capabilities remains an open question. According to Chinese specialists, “China's sea power and the expansion of its navy are limited” beyond Taiwan, the Nansha Islands (Spratlys) and

the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands [2]. For the time being the PLAN has no choice but to “face an ambition-capability gap in terms of using military power to secure its foreign energy investments or to defend critical sea lanes against disruption” [3]. Adding to its Malacca dilemma, which has been well documented in the Chinese media, some noted analysts have also recently pointed to a Hormuz conundrum for the PLAN to bypass the sea lanes of communications (SLOCs) toward the Middle East (*China Brief*, September 22, 2008).

In an effort to deal with these “strategic bottlenecks” from the Malacca Strait to the Hormuz Strait, China has been strengthening bilateral relations with Pakistan with a focus on naval cooperation and the development of the Gwadar port, which is located 400 kilometers from the Hormuz Strait. According to General Pervez Musharraf, the former Pakistani President, “Pakistan provides a natural link between the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) states to connect the Eurasian heartland with the Arabian Sea and South Asia” (*Guardian*, June 16, 2006). As one Pakistani expert stressed, Gwadar port in Pakistan not only offers China a transit terminal for crude oil imports from the Middle East and Africa to Xinjiang to meet its soaring energy demands—which is indispensable both for its economic development and domestic stability—but also provides a strategic location from which to monitor U.S. naval activity in the Persian Gulf; to follow Indian activity in the Arabian Sea; and to assess future U.S.-India or U.S.-Japan naval cooperation in the Indian Ocean [4].

Thus Chinese development of the Gwadar port can not be simply evaluated on commercial and economic terms, since the port is a dual-use infrastructure that could provide military access for Chinese naval projection and a base for its strategic warships [5]. If the PLAN deploys its submarines off the Gwadar port in Pakistan, this will allow the PLAN to bypass the strategic bottleneck presented by the Malacca Strait, while strengthening its power projection capabilities in the region [6]. Moreover, China's deepening bilateral naval cooperation with Pakistan can offer a strategic maritime buffer zone as well as a useful political and diplomatic outlet toward Islamic states in the Middle East [7]. Pakistan is an active member of the OIC (Organization of the Islamic Conference) and oil-rich moderate Gulf States regard it “as a counterweight to Iran and Iraq” [8].

Increased naval cooperation between Pakistan and China hints at an evolving Chinese naval strategy, which seems to be transitioning from the late Chinese patriarch Deng Xiaoping's instruction of “hiding real capabilities to bide our time” (*taoguang yanghui*) to “making some contributions by seizing opportunities” (*yousuo zuowei*).

By the same logic, as China continues naval expansion toward Islamabad, “its strategic goals may shift, which in turn could require the development of new capabilities” [9].

Since 1999 the PLA has initiated the new strategy of *sanda sanfang* (three attacks and three defenses), which refers to attacks against stealth aircraft, cruise missiles and armed helicopters, and defense against precision strikes, electronic jamming and electronic reconnaissance and surveillance. This program was originally initiated by the PLA after its study of air combat in the Yugoslav War. According to a 2007 report by the U.S. Office of Naval Intelligence, “the PLA Navy is actively involved in developing and training with its own combat methods for the new ‘Three Attacks and Three Defenses’” [10]. In an era of information warfare, growing naval cooperation between Pakistan and China will likely be focused on conducting cooperative naval intelligence, gathering strategic information and obviating an enemy’s surveillance activities.

In this regard, China’s basing activities not only in Gwadar but also in Hambantota of Sri Lanka could be linked with the PLA Navy’s overall strategy of keeping the ocean(s) [beyond the Taiwan Strait] ‘peaceful and harmonious’ in terms of Chinese national interests (*The Times of India*, April 26). According to Chen Hu, “China needs the Oceans ... The Oceans also need China ... *Hexie shijie* [harmonious world] can not exist without *hexie haiyang*” (*Zhongguo Haijun Wang* [China Navy Net], April 25). The concept of *hexie haiyang* [in the Indian Ocean] was loudly echoed by Pakistan with the tacit support of Beijing. More recently, Pakistani Defense Minister Ahmad Mukhtar reinforced the image of the burgeoning cooperation between the two country’s naval powers, saying “I [Pakistan] want your [Chinese] warships to stay in Pakistan, for they are really amazing” (*Zhongguo Ribao Wang* [China Daily Net], March 12).

China’s naval cooperation with Pakistan has gradually developed since October 2003, when the Chinese and Pakistani navy held training exercises in the East China Sea near Shanghai, which was the PLAN’s first military training exercise with a foreign nation. In November 2005, the PLAN conducted a non-traditional military training exercise with Pakistan in the Arabian Sea. In July 2007, the PLAN undertook its first multinational military training exercise at sea near Pakistan. According to Ye Hailin, a researcher in the Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), ‘the Indian Ocean with Chinese characteristics’ has emerged since 2007 when two Chinese guided-missile frigates, *Lianyungang* and *Sanming*, participated in the first AMAN 07 multinational naval exercise in Karachi (*Dongfang Zaobao*, March 13).

In an interview with the official Xinhua News Agency, PLAN Commander Admiral Wu Shengli stated that, “Since the new century, the Chinese Navy has conducted 37 joint military drills with its foreign counterparts in areas including non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, security defense of sea-land-air channels, antiterrorism and joint search and rescue.” Admiral Wu added that the PLAN was on the way of becoming an “ocean-going iron Great Wall” (*Beijing Review*, May 4).

The significance of Sino-Pakistani naval cooperation was underscored by an assessment made by Pakistan’s Admiral Afzal Tahir in 2008: “Pakistan’s Navy and the PLAN have been continuing a friendly relationship, this not only is a crucial part of our bilateral relations but also will bring a positive outcome to us. This is my strong and unchanging belief” (*Dongfang Zaobao*, April 8, 2008). In March 2009, the PLAN’s most advanced indigenous built Type 052B (or *Guangzhou*) missile destroyer, which is stationed at the Sanya naval base on Hainan Island, participated in the second AMAN 09 multinational naval exercise held by Pakistan from March 9 to 12. According to Li Ping, the captain of the destroyer, “sending *Guangzhou*, our most advanced homemade destroyer,” with the slogan of ‘Together for Peace,’ “showcases China’s full respect for Pakistan’s sea ...” [11]. According to Li, “AMAN 09 will enhance our capabilities in coping with changes in military technology, multifaceted security challenges as well as diverse military missions. Non-traditional military tasks, which diverge from the military’s traditional tasks of confrontation and war, range from antiterrorism and anti-piracy to international humanitarian aid and disaster relief” (*Beijing Review*, March 13).

Furthermore, the Pakistan Navy recently indicated that it will receive two of four F-22P frigates from China in August and December of this year. Each frigate is equipped with modern weaponry and sensors, as well as anti-submarine Z9EC helicopters. Two helicopters have reportedly arrived in Pakistan. The third F-22P Frigate was reportedly launched at Hudong Shanghai on May 28, and construction of a fourth ship started in March of this year at the Karachi Shipyard and Engineering Works, and will be delivered to the Pakistan Navy in April 2013 (*Associated Press of Pakistan*, June 4). In an effort to neutralize China’s growing military influence in the regional balance, India has ordered three new Phalcon Airborne Warning and Control Systems (AWACS) for \$1.1 billion from Israel in 2004. The first of three AWACS was delivered on May 27, 2009 and the remaining two planes are expected to reach India in 2010 (*Jerusalem Post*, May 24). New Delhi, in tandem with Indo-Israeli military cooperation, recently deployed four Sukhoi fighter aircraft on Tezpur airbase in Assam along the Chinese border. It is reported that India

plans to acquire over 200 Russian-made Sukhoi by 2014 (*Daily Times*, June 16).

Deepening naval cooperation between Beijing and Islamabad complicates the changing maritime balance of power in the strategic area between the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf. China's rising naval influence from the Taiwan Strait to the Strait of Hormuz via the Indian Ocean aims not only at enhancing its military capability for strategic peripheral denial but also at developing "politically useful capabilities to punish American forces if they were to intervene in a conflict of great interest to China" [12]. In particular, China's visible maritime investment and naval presence in the Indian Ocean, under the aegis of Pakistan and the SCO, increases its strategic ability to affect vital sea lanes to the Persian Gulf while keeping the Taiwan Strait harmonious [13]. Therefore, it remains to be seen whether the evolving naval connections between Pakistan and China could become the hidden teeth of the Dragon along the Indian Ocean between Tehran and Taipei.

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