中国简报 China Brief
a journal of analysis and information
The JAMESTOWN FOUNDATION

VOLUME IX • ISSUE 18 • SEPTEMBER 10, 2009

IN THIS ISSUE:

Chinese and Indian border guards

China Brief is a bi-weekly journal of information and analysis covering Greater China in Eurasia.

China Brief is a publication of The Jamestown Foundation, a private non-profit organization based in Washington D.C. and is edited by L.C. Russell Hsiao.

The opinions expressed in China Brief are solely those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Jamestown Foundation.

In a Fortnight

By L.C. Russell Hsiao

PRC'S NATIONAL DAY PARADE TO SHOWCASE CHINA'S RISE

The Hu Jintao administration appears to be pulling out all the stops for the October 1 celebration of the 60th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The country's National Day will be inaugurated by a keynote speech by Paramount Leader Hu. The occasion of the speech has been used by his predecessors, Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin, as a capstone on the state of China's path toward modernization, which was spearheaded by Deng's "opening-up" reforms in the 1970s. The ceremony will be crowned by a gargantuan military review through Tiananmen Square that is slated to showcase the coming of age for China's second-generation military hardware and technologies and to demonstrate the Chinese military's designing and manufacturing prowess. The October 1 parade will be the 14th military parade since 1949.

Rehearsals for the epic military review are already underway and not a shred of doubt about security in the central and neighboring administrative regions is being taken lightly as the authorities tackle growing unrest in its peripheral regions. Chen Jiping, deputy director of the Central Committee for Comprehensive Management of Public Security—which coordinates the activities of the police, state security agents and judicial departments—announced on September 6 that seven municipalities, provinces and an autonomous region (i.e. Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shanxi, Shandong, Liaoning and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region) have signed an agreement that will establish a security "moat," or comprehensive security checks, to "fence off the potential threats" (Xinhua News Agency, September 6).

The JAMESTOWN FOUNDATION

For comments or questions about *China Brief*, please contact us at pubs@jamestown.org

1111 16th St. NW, Suite #320
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: (202) 483-8888
Fax: (202) 483-8337

While Chinese experts remain tight-lipped about the specific missile models that will be on display, outside experts have been able to gleam the fact from photos of the September 6 rehearsal, which analysts say exhibit an unprecedented show of strength. According to a Chinese state-media report, there will be five types of missiles, including nuclear intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), conventional cruise missiles and medium-range and short-range conventional missiles on display that have never been officially reported before (Xinhua News Agency, September 2). Andrei Chang (aka Andrei Pinkov), editor-in-chief of *Kanwa Defense Review Monthly*, pointed out that during the 1999 military parade, the PLA only displayed three Dong Feng-31 (East Wind-31) ICBMs, while this year that number leaped to eight. The DF-31 (CSS 10 Mod 1) and its longer-range variant DF-31A (CSS 10 Mod 2) are road-mobile, solid-fuel ICBMs developed by the Academy of Rocket Motor Technology that have a maximum range of over 4,500 and 7,000 miles respectively. According to a recent U.S. government estimate, China has fewer than 15 launchers for each model (U.S. Air Force Air and Space Intelligence Center, Ballistic and Cruise Missile Threats 2009). "This is a sign they are sending to Washington that they have a counterstrike capability," said Chang (*United Daily News* [Taiwan], September 7; *Defense News*, September 8).

According to an anonymous source cited by the official Xinhua News Agency, who was only referred to as an expert from the Second Artillery Corps (SAC), China's strategic missile forces: "Our [China's] second generation [missiles] can match their [Russian and U.S.] third and fourth generations, and the third generation under development [e.g. DF-41] is comparable to their fifth and sixth generations" (Xinhua News Agency, September 9).

In recent years, the Chinese government has come under increasing pressure from the international community for the lack of transparency in its growing defense spending, which has experienced annual double-digit percentage increases that extend back for more than a decade. According to Chinese-official figures, China's 2009 defense budget of $70.2 billion reflects an increase of 14.9 percent over 2008, and follows a rise of 17.6 percent in 2008 compared with the previous year (*China Daily*, March 4). U.S. sources put China's actual defense budget closer to between $97 billion to $139 billion.

According to PLA Major General Luo Yuan, senior researcher and former deputy director of World Military Studies at the Beijing-based Academy of Military Sciences and member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), a military review can serve four purposes:

First, a military review can provide an account of the country's military spending to the Party and people. Since Western countries are increasingly calling for more transparency in Chinese military spending, according to Luo, greater transparency is needed not only toward the international community, but rather toward the Chinese people to demonstrate how the taxpayers' money is being spent. The Chinese people have the 'right to know' how the military is revolutionizing, modernizing and regularizing.

Second, a military review is a form of promoting national defense awareness, and according to Luo, a strong nation must have a military spirit, a positive and firm attitude, and thus, having troops march in formation in front of the people can have the effect of raising national pride.

Third, for the People's Liberation Army (PLA), a military parade can instill the feeling of honor and responsibility in the troops, and thereby boost morale.

Fourth, according to the major general, a military review can intimidate hostile countries. It can showcase China's power and national power, and exhibit the formidable achievements that its defense sector has made in the past decade, and nurture patriotism (*Ta Kung Pao* [Hong Kong], September 8).

Mr. L.C. Russell Hsiao is Associate Editor of The Jamestown Foundation's China Brief.

***

Sea-change in Japanese Politics Offers Hopes for Better Ties with China

By Willy Lam

Apart from breaking the Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) 50-odd years of nearly uninterrupted dominance over Japanese politics, the ascendancy of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) as the new ruling party in the landslide general election on August 30 could have a pivotal impact on the country's relations with China. Ties between the two most powerful Asian nations are set to improve significantly, if only in terms of symbolism and atmospherics in the near term. Yet, deep-seated contradictions between the two giant neighbors rooted in centuries of rivalry, including Tokyo's perception of the "China threat" phenomenon and its apparent participation in what Beijing deems a Washington-led "anti-China containment policy," will likely pose challenges to relations for a considerable time to come.

First of all, the main faction of the DPJ led by Prime Minister-in-Waiting Yukio Hatoyama is expected to end the LDP's single-minded dependence on the United States not only for nuclear deterrence but also overall stewardship in diplomatic and security issues. In articles in the Japanese and American media the past month, Hatoyama has played up the importance of "maintaining [Japan's] political and economic independence … when caught between the U.S. which is fighting to retain its position as the world's dominant power, and China, which is seeking ways to become dominant." While Tokyo will certainly uphold its defense alliance with the United States, Japan's next prime minister has reiterated the new ruling party's emphasis on an equidistant approach and a "Japanese-American partnership between equals" (Xinhua News Agency, September 4; Bloomberg, August 27).

Equally significant, Hatoyama has underscored his country's primacy as an Asian nation. The Stanford-educated former professor entertains great expectations about an "East Asian community" for economic progress. A great admirer of the spirit behind the European Union (EU), the 62-year-old scion of Japan's prominent Hatoyama Clan supports closer ties among Asian economies, including a common Asian currency. He wrote in the *New York Times* that Asian countries "must spare no effort to build the permanent security frameworks essential to underpinning [regional currency integration] which … will likely take more than 10 years" to establish. Given that China overtook the United States as Japan's biggest trading partner in 2007—and that the latter's recovery from its worst recession since World War II is predicated upon increased exports to China—economic imperatives as much as political considerations underlie the DPJ's "Asia first" mind-set (*New York Times*, August 27; China News Service, September 1).

DPJ honchos have lost no time in extending gestures of goodwill to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership. For example, Hatoyama has indicated that he will not be visiting the Yasukuni Shrine, where a dozen-odd number of Japan's "Class A" war criminals are being worshipped (*China Daily*, April 22; AFP, April 22). Former LDP Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's annual pilgrimage to the Yasukuni was one factor behind the drastic deterioration of Sino-Japanese relations in the early 2000s. While bilateral ties were substantially repaired when Shinzo Abe called on Beijing in October 2006—barely a week or so after succeeding Koizumi as prime minister—Abe never made a public declaration about shunning the controversial Shinto shrine to allay the party's conservative base of support. In fact, Hatoyama is one of a handful of politicians from across the political spectrum to have proposed a special committee to investigate crimes committed by the Imperial Army ranging from recruiting "comfort women" to making bio-chemical weapons. It is also likely that a Hatoyama government will go ahead with building a religiously and politically neutral "alternative monument" to remember the war dead (*China Youth Daily* [Beijing], August 31; *People's Daily*, August 12).

Moreover, the Hatoyama leadership has hinted that it will drop the so-called "values diplomacy" that was championed by LDP chieftains including former prime ministers Koizumi and Abe. The concept refers to the need for Japan to forge a partnership with Asia-Pacific countries such as the United States, Australia and India, which follow the standard Western democratic model. The "values diplomacy," however, has been regarded by Beijing as yet another version of an "encirclement policy" against China. Instead, Hatoyama has revived the precept of "fraternity among nations", first enunciated by his grandfather Ichiro Hatoyama, who was prime minister in the 1950s. This essentially means that Tokyo should extend the spirit of friendship and good neighborliness not only to allies such as the United States but also to countries with different ideologies such as Russia and even North Korea. In an interview with the domestic media, Katsuya Okada, DPJ Secretary-General and Foreign Minister-designate, indicated that his party would refrain from commenting on human rights and other sensitive issues regarding China. Referring to recent disturbances in the Tibet and Xinjiang Autonomous Regions in China, Okada noted that "these are purely China's domestic issues and the DPJ would not intervene [in them]" (Xinhua News Agency, August 4; *Global Times* [Beijing] July 30).

Regarding flashpoints in Asia, especially territorial squabbles among countries including Japan and China over islets in the South China and East China Sea, Hatoyama thinks that the parties involved should focus on seeking joint economic advancements while shelving their differences. "The problems of increased militarization and territorial disputes cannot be resolved by bilateral negotiations," he pointed out recently. "The more these problems are discussed bilaterally, the greater the risk that citizens' emotions … will become inflamed and nationalism will be intensified." Citing the EU as a model of "how regional integration can defuse territorial disputes," Hatoyama argues that the fruits of economic synergy will persuade parties to sovereignty-related conflicts to opt for joint development by setting aside their disagreements (Christian Science Monitor, August 17; N*ew York Times*, August 27).

The CCP leadership has been quick to demonstrate good will toward the Hatoyama team. While meeting a Japanese business delegation earlier this week, Premier Wen Jiabao said Beijing appreciated the DPJ leadership's

"positive attitude" toward China. "We are willing to boost communication and cooperation with the new Japan cabinet, to increase mutual trust… and to continue and deepen the development of the Sino-Japanese strategic and mutually beneficial relationship," Wen said (China News Service, September 9). Scholars who double as advisers to party and government organs have expressed cautious optimism over the new order in Tokyo. Liu Jiangyong, a top Japan expert at Tsinghua University, noted that while "problems and conflicts in China-Japan relations won't disappear if the DPJ comes to power, its policies are overall quite positive for relations [with Beijing]." Zhang Boyu, a specialist on Sino-Japan relations at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences agreed. "While maintaining an alliance with the U.S., the DPJ's foreign policy places more stress on Asia," she said. "The prospects for its China policies are by and large relatively optimistic." The day after the historic polls, the official Chinese newspaper International Herald Leader ran an article headlined "Hatoyama: Japan's Obama," which said Japanese voters were full of expectations for this Japanese version of the American president (Reuters, August 27; China News Service, August 28; International Herald Leader [Beijing], August 31).

It should be noted, however, that there are sizeable differences among DPJ factions over domestic as well as foreign policy. This reflects the fact that this erstwhile opposition party was formed in 1998 out of an amalgamation of disparate political elements, including former LDP parliamentarians. Major figures at the helm, including Hatoyama, Okada and former party chief Ichiro Ozawa, have had long experience dealing with China. Ozawa and Okada in particular have made trips to China almost annually for the past decade, during which they received VIP treatment from the CCP leadership. This stands in sharp contrast to the LDP, most of whose leaders, since the late 1990s, lack personal ties with movers and shakers in Beijing. Yet at the same time, there is a vocal wing of young Turks within the DPJ, which advocates hawkish foreign policy views not dissimilar to those of Koizumi, Abe and outgoing premier Taro Aso. For example, Seiji Maehara, who was briefly party leader four years ago, is an advocate of scrapping Article No. 9—the so-called "peace clause" —of the Japan Constitution, as well as a strong defense force to go along with an enhanced global role for the country (Xinhua News Agency, August 3; China News Service, August 29; China Youth Daily Online, August 31).

Also important for Beijing's Japan-watchers is the DPJ administration's stance toward the United States. It is significant that as Hatoyama and his colleagues are poised to govern, they have toned down earlier statements about Japan-U.S. links that have caused anxiety in Washington. In his post-election telephone conversation with Obama, Hatoyama said relations with the United States were the "foundation of Japan's diplomacy" and that "we want to build constructive, future-oriented Japan-U.S. relations." The DPJ policy manifestos of 2005 and 2007 favored cutting the number of U.S troops stationed on Japanese soil; revising the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) that governs the political and legal status of these soldiers; and terminating anti-terrorism refueling operations by Japanese forces in the Indian Ocean. In the past month, however, the DPJ leadership has dropped strong hints that the new government would only seek changes regarding SOFA and American bases after establishing sufficient rapport with the Obama Administration. Hatoyama has also spoken enthusiastically about a Japan-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, something that even the LDP had not actively pursued (AFP, September 3; Mainichi Shimbun [Tokyo], August 3; CSIS.org [Washington], August 7; ABC News, August 30).

Over the longer term, Sino-Japanese ties could be determined by changes in how ordinary Japanese perceive the precipitous rise of China and the "China threat" theory. Except for the radical wing of the DPJ, Japan's new ruling party has steered clear of reference to the "China threat" —and the need for the country to build up its defense forces and to boost cooperation with the United States as a hedge against a possibly expansionist China. It is significant, however, that conflicts between the two neighbors this year have been dominated by defense-and sovereignty-related matters. Beijing's official media have spoken out against Tokyo's plans to station a thousand-odd troops on Yonaguni Island, which is close to the disputed Senkaku (or Diaoyu) islets. Last month, the Chinese Foreign Ministry hotly countered Tokyo's claim that the Okinotorishima, an outcropping in the Pacific Ocean some 1,740 meters southwest of Tokyo, is an "island"—and that Japan can therefore claim some 400,000 sq km of exclusive economic zone (EEZ) around it. Beijing has insisted that Okinotorishima is only a "reef," which under international law, cannot be entitled to any EEZ. Professor of International Relations Liang Yunxiang of Peking University noted that contradictions between the two nations on sovereignty-related questions would not go away. "Tokyo will not give way on sovereignty issues, which are intertwined with national interests, irrespective of which party is holding power," he said (*Ming Pao* [Hong Kong], August 31; China News Service, August 28; AFP, July 1).

Whether the epoch-making triumph of the DPJ will prove to be a game-changer for Japan-China relations may be gauged by the following pointers: one is how soon Hatoyama and his key aides will visit China. Japanese newspapers have reported that the new Prime Minister may

call on Beijing as early as next month (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, September 7; *Ming Pao*, September 8). Another is whether Beijing will dispatch Vice-President Xi Jinping—who will likely succeed Hu Jintao as party chief in 2012—on a tour of Japan as a symbolic gesture of the CCP's commitment to bolstering good ties with Japan through the generations. Equally crucial are areas of financial and economic cooperation such as a "currency swap" mechanism for settling China-Japan trade in either renminbi or yen, but not the U.S. dollar. An even more important bellwether is whether both governments can summon enough political will to substantiate the theoretical accord reached in mid-2008 between President Hu and then-prime minister Yasuo Fukuda on the "joint development" of gas-fields under the East China Sea. For the agreement to be effective, a formal bilateral treaty has to be signed. Despite the Hu-Fukuda theoretical breakthrough, Tokyo and Beijing have recently engaged in new spats over the exploitation of gas fields in the contentious area (Reuters, August 27; *Global Times*, August 25). It seems obvious, then, that much more than calls for fraternity and good will are required to ensure that Sino-Japanese relations move forward on an even keel.

Willy Wo-Lap Lam, Ph.D., is a Senior Fellow at The Jamestown Foundation. He has worked in senior editorial positions in international media including Asiaweek newsmagazine, South China Morning Post, and the Asia-Pacific Headquarters of CNN. He is the author of five books on China, including the recently published "Chinese Politics in the Hu Jintao Era: New Leaders, New Challenges." Lam is an Adjunct Professor of China studies at Akita International University, Japan, and at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

***

Emerging Fault Lines in Sino-Burmese Relations: The Kokang Incident

By Ian Storey

Armed conflict between Burma's armed forces (known as the Tatmadaw) and the Kokang militia (known as the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, MNDAA), along the Sino-Burmese border in late August brought into sharp focus the complex and sometimes testy relationship between Burma (Myanmar) and the People's Republic of China (PRC). During the fighting the MNDAA—which has close links to the PRC—was routed, over 40 persons were killed, and tens of thousands of refugees streamed across the border into China. The incident underscored how the ruling junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), is capable of undertaking actions that challenge Beijing's interests, belying characterizations of Burma as a client state of China.

Burma and China forged close relations in the late 1980s following international disapprobation and economic sanctions in the wake of their crackdowns on anti-government demonstrators in August 1988 and June 1989, respectively. On balance, both governments benefited greatly from tightening relations: the Burmese military regime was able to consolidate power largely thanks to arms, economic aid and the diplomatic recognition provided by the PRC; in return, China gained privileged access to Burma's rich natural resources and access to the Indian Ocean (*China Brief*, February 7, 2007).

China's economic penetration of Burma deepened in the first decade of the twenty-first century as the West tightened economic sanctions against the regime. Bilateral commerce reached $2.4 billion in 2007-2008, accounting for a quarter of all Burma's foreign trade and a 60 per cent increase over what it was three years ago (Mizzima News, October 24, 2008). Chinese companies have invested heavily in the country's manufacturing, mining, power generation and energy sectors, and in 2008-2009 China emerged as Burma's number one investor, pumping $856 million into the country, or 87 percent of all foreign investments (Deutsche Presse-Agentur, July 14).

Close relations with Burma have also enabled China to improve its energy security situation. In March, after several years of negotiations, an agreement was signed to build twin oil and gas pipelines from the port of Kyaukphyu in Arakan State to Kunming, Yunnan Province. Construction of the 1,200 mile pipelines is scheduled to begin this month, with China footing the $2.5 billion bill. When completed in 2013, the pipelines will not only be used to transport oil and gas from Burma's offshore energy fields to the PRC, but also from the Middle East and Africa, thereby bypassing the Strait of Malacca, which Chinese strategists view as a strategic vulnerability (*China Brief*, April 12, 2006).

Despite the obvious gains Burma's junta has accrued from its ties to the Chinese government, the ruling generals—many of whom fought against the China-backed Communist Party of Burma (CPB) in the 1960s and 1970s—resented their dependence on Beijing and from the mid-1990s moved to lessen that dependence by joining ASEAN and courting other major powers such as India and Russia [1].

Notwithstanding the SPDC's success in diversifying the country's foreign relations, China remains Burma's most important international partner. Moreover, despite the absence of genuine trust between the two governments,

China and Burma have arrived at a mutually beneficial arrangement: Beijing provides diplomatic cover for the junta at the United Nations, soft loans and weapons supplies; in return it expects the SPDC to provide stability so Chinese companies can reap long-term returns on their considerable investments.

China has lived up to its side of the bargain. Twice in 2007 it wielded its veto at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to protect Burma in the face of international criticism (*China Brief*, October 17, 2007). More recently, in August, China used its diplomatic clout at the UNSC to dilute a statement of concern following the conviction of Aung San Su Kyi, leader of the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD), for violating the terms of her house arrest with the visit by John Yettaw—an American who swam across Inya Lake to her house—in May (*Straits Times*, August 15).

On the bilateral front, the PRC has shown increasing signs of frustration, however, with the SPDC for the slow pace of political reform and economic development, both of which it believes would defuse popular resentment against the regime and enhance stability. Beginning in 2004, Chinese leaders publicly called on the junta to move forward with the so-called "roadmap to democracy," the framing of a new Constitution and national reconciliation. A new Constitution was framed in 2008, but Beijing has kept up pressure on the SPDC to maintain the momentum. In April, for instance, on the sidelines of the Baoa Forum in Hainan Province, Prime Minister Wen Jiabao told his Burmese counterpart Thein Shein that China hoped the SPDC could achieve "political stability, economic development and national reconciliation" (Xinhua News Agency, April 17). The detention of Ms. Suu Kyi in May was a major setback for national reconciliation, and prompted China's Foreign Ministry to call for reconciliation, stability and development through "dialogue with all parties" (Xinhua News Agency, May 19). According to some reports, China has advised the junta to allow U.N. Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari to play a more active role in fostering dialogue between the SPDC and Suu Kyi, advice the junta is loath to accept (Mizzima, January 20).

Burma's Policy Toward Ceasefire Groups Generates Tensions

Another source of instability, and one that puts China in a difficult position and threatens to undermine its economic interests in Burma, is the SPDC's policy toward ethnic armies in the north and northeast of the country.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the PRC provided the BCP with arms and money to sustain an insurgency against the central government. In the 1980s, however, Beijing phased out its material support to the BCP in the interests of promoting greater economic interaction between the two countries, especially along the 1,300-mile border where fighting had stymied trade. In 1989 the BCP fractured along ethnic lines, and China was able to use its long-standing connections with local leaders to facilitate ceasefire agreements between the Burmese government and ethnic groups such as the Wa, Shan, Kachin, and Kokang. Seventeen ceasefire agreements were reached, (rising to 27 in the 1990s): in return for ending hostilities against the junta, the ceasefire groups were allowed to retain control over their territories, armed militias and lucrative businesses, including gems, lumber and narcotics production. The ceasefires ushered in two decades of uneasy peace.

According to the new Constitution, the Tatmadaw has sole responsibility for national defense. In April, therefore, the SPDC demanded that the ceasefire groups disarm or transform their armies into smaller, lightly armed border guard militias under the command of the Tatmadaw. While some of the smaller ceasefire groups have accepted the government's demand, the largest ones such as the Wa, Kachin, and Shan have rejected it for fear of losing their autonomy and business interests.

The most important ceasefire group to reject the SPDC's demand is the United Wa State Army (UWSA) which has an estimated 20,000 men under arms. Formerly the shock troops of the BCP, China has maintained close links to the UWSA over the past two decades. The U.S. government labeled the UWSA a narcotic trafficking organization on May 29, 2003. Chinese businessmen have extensive commercial interests in the Wa region (both legal and illegal) and the area provides a conduit into Burma proper: according to some estimates, one to two million Chinese citizens have taken up residency in the country and now dominate the commercial life of Upper Burma centered on Mandalay. Over the years, China has ensured a steady supply of weapons to the UWSA, including shoulder fired surface to air missiles, artillery and anti-aircraft guns (*Jane's Intelligence Review*, March 2008). Moreover, Beijing has been able to use its influence with UWSA leaders to redirect the flow of illegal narcotics produced in the Wa area, including methamphetamines, away from China and into Thailand, Laos and Cambodia [2]. Nevertheless, narcotics produced in Burma continue to find their way into southwest China, fueling a major drug addiction problem there.

Determined to consolidate control over the entire country before elections next year, the SPDC has refused to take no for an answer. In June the Tatmadaw attacked and captured bases belonging to the Karen National Liberation Army

along the Thai border. In early August the government shifted attention to the MNDAA in Kokang, an ethnically Chinese region in the northern Shan State bordering China. As with the UWSA, the Kokang have maintained close links with China since the dissolution of the BCP in 1989. On August 24, the Tatmadaw routed the 1,000-strong MNDAA and occupied the capital Laogai. The conflict sparked an exodus of 37,000 refugees—mainly Kokang Chinese but also PRC nationals—into Nansen county, Yunnan (Xinhua News Agency, September 4). Among the refuges were 700 MNDAA fighters who were disarmed by the Chinese authorities (The Irrawaddy, September 1). During the fighting, shells fired by the Tatmadaw landed on the Chinese side of the border, killing one person (Xinhua News Agency, August 30). Beijing issued a sharp rebuke to the SPDC, calling on it to immediately restore stability along the border and, unprecedentedly, to "protect the safety and legal rights of Chinese citizens in Myanmar" (*Global Times*, August 29). According to both governments the situation has stabilized and the Chinese authorities have been encouraging the refugees to return. According to Chinese official estimates, a total of 9,304 Kokang inhabitants had returned to Laogai (Xinhua News Agency, September 4). Reports suggest, however, that the majority of refugees are reluctant to return home for fear of retribution (The Irrawaddy, September 4). Naypyidaw justified the attacks on the MNDAA as part of a crackdown on illegal narcotics and arms production. Yet, the assault on the Kokang militia can be seen as a warning signal to the UWSA that the SPDC is committed to bringing the border areas under its control before 2010. According to some observers, the junta has been inspired by the Sri Lankan government's military victory over Tamil separatists earlier this year (*Straits Times*, August 30). An attack on the UWSA, however, would be a risky undertaking. Although the Tatmadaw is numerically superior, the UWSA is well-armed and knows the territory intimately. Even if the Tatmadaw was able to seize the Wa capital of Panghsang, UWSA fighters could simply melt away into the mountains and forests from where they would be able to mount a lengthy insurgency against government forces.

A protracted and bloody conflict along the border is an unsettling prospect for the PRC for four reasons. First, fighting would severely disrupt bilateral trade, much of which is conducted at the border, and hence the economic development of China's landlocked southwest provinces. Second, as demonstrated by the Kokang incident, conflict would inevitably trigger an outpouring of refugees into China that the authorities would be forced to feed and house. Third, construction of the Kyaukphyu-Kunming pipelines, which China considers a strategic necessity, may have to be suspended as the proposed route passes close to Wa controlled areas. Fourth, the Wa would likely increase narcotics production to finance operations against the Tatmadaw, which could fuel drug addition in the PRC.

With so much at stake, Chinese officials are undoubtedly working frantically behind the scenes to broker an agreement between the SPDC and UWSA. Such a deal would almost certainly involve China providing financial sweeteners to both sides. If China fails to pull off a deal, a return to hostilities cannot be ruled out. In the final analysis, however, Beijing's relationship with the SPDC is more highly valued than its ties to the Wa, meaning China might have to cut its proxy loose, and possibly close the border in the event of hostilities.

Instability along the frontier is not the only contentious issue in Sino-Burmese relations. The growing nexus between Burma and North Korea, including allegations that Pyongyang is assisting the junta to acquire nuclear weapons capabilities, has generated a lot of negative publicity for the PRC because of its close links to both governments *(Sydney Morning Herald*, August 1). If there is any substance to the allegations—and thus far no concrete evidence has been produced—a Burmese nuclear weapons program would pose a major foreign policy headache for Beijing, as it would not want to see two nuclear armed pariah states—North Korea and Burma—along its borders.

China's increasing frustration with the Burmese government has prompted speculation that Beijing may be hedging its bets by opening a tentative dialogue with the NLD (The Irrawaddy, July 15). Yet, contacts between Chinese diplomats and the Burmese opposition seem to have been initiated by the NLD rather than Beijing, and a dramatic shift in support by China from the SPDC to Ms Suu Kyi's party is highly improbable: the NLD is a spent force in Burmese politics while the SPDC's power remains firmly entrenched. Similarly, talk of Naypyidaw hedging its bets with Beijing by exploring a possible rapprochement with the United States seem overdrawn, though the SPDC might be using the prospect of more amicable ties with Washington to pressurize Beijing into using its influence with the ceasefire groups to accept the junta's demands.

The Kokang Incident has laid bare the fault lines in Sino-Burmese relations. Negotiations aimed to avert renewed conflict along the border will test the limits of these relations over the coming months.

Ian Storey, Ph.D, is a Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore.

Notes

1. Jurgen Haacke, Myanmar's Foreign Policy: Domestic

influences and international implications, IISS Adelphi Paper No. 381 (Oxford: Routledge, 2006).
2. Donald M. Seekins, "Myanmar: Secret Talks and Political Paralysis" in Daljit Singh and Anthony L. Smith (eds.), *Southeast Asian Affairs 2002* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2002), p. 208.

***

Military Buildup Across the Himalayas: A Shaky Balance

By Vijay Sakhuja

In less than one year, China and India will celebrate six decades of bilateral relations capped by festivities in their respective country. This period, however, has been marked by a border war in 1962 that precipitated a long phase of antagonism and hostility between the two sides. Yet, there were several positive trends in their bilateral relations since the late 1980s that buoy the decline in mutual trust: regular high level political interactions; increasing bilateral trade that may reach $60 billion in 2010; boundary demarcation talks since 2003; and joint military exercises, which included two 'anti terror' exercises in 2007 and 2008. Most recently, during border talks in August in New Delhi, the two sides agreed to 'seek a political solution' to the boundary problems and work towards 'safeguarding the peace and calmness in the areas along the border' (Xinhua News Agency, August 6).

Notwithstanding these positive trends, the two Asian powers still suffer from a trust deficit and are increasingly concerned about each other's strategic intent, particularly over their respective military developments across the Himalayas. The Chinese side has specifically warned India of its 'military initiatives' in Arunachal Pradesh, a northeastern state of India that includes Tawang—home to one of Tibetan Buddhism's most sacred monasteries—and claimed by Beijing (Asia Times, July 10), and New Delhi has raised the specter of the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) 'systematic upgrading of infrastructure, reconnaissance and surveillance, quick response and operational capabilities in the border areas' (*Indian Express,* July 12). Besides border intrusion, incursions, air space violation and even on one occasion an ambush by PLA soldiers (*Tibetanreview.net,* August 11) are causing immense concern to the Indian army. In 2008, there were reportedly "270 border violations and nearly 2,300 instances of 'aggressive border patrolling' by Chinese soldiers" (*New York Times,* September 4). Although leaders on both sides try to downplay the border sparring, there is ample evidence pointing to the further augmentation of defense forces and military infrastructure along the border. This could be the harbinger of a spiraling arms race.

Geographical Determinants

Geography is an important factor in the military infrastructure developments along the India-China border. A large part of China's border lies along the flat Tibetan plateau, which gives China the advantages of higher operational and logistical capability for strategic planning during a military contingency. These favorable geographical settings allowed China to build an extensive network of roads, railheads, forward airfields, pipelines and logistic hubs that appear geared toward supporting military operations. Moreover, China is reportedly deploying intercontinental missiles such as the DF-31 and DF-31A at Delingha, north of Tibet, which can strike targets in northern India (Asia Times, July 9).

Unlike China, Indian troops are deployed on high mountains and have to negotiate a tougher terrain comprising of snow capped peaks, deep valleys, thick jungles and difficult mountain passes. Some of the Indian army posts can be accessed only during favorable weather conditions by animal transport and human porters [1]. Furthermore, a number of forward posts can only be serviced by helicopters for troop induction, logistics support and casualty evacuation. In essence, China enjoys geographical advantage and has built a sophisticated logistic network for conducting offensive operations against India.

Military Infrastructure

China has established a long distance rail link between Beijing and Lhasa and this service would later be extended to Xigaze, South of Lhasa, and then to Yatung, near Nathu La passes [2]. Further, Lhasa would be connected to Nyingchi, just north of Arunachal Pradesh, and the rail network would then run along the Brahmaputra River and the Sino-Indian border to Kunming in Yunnan. The rail project, when complete, would be a technological marvel, but it will be useful to keep in mind that it is being developed on the Tibetan plateau, and thus can provide China with a strategic advantage by enhancing the PLA's logistic supply chain.

Furthermore, the Chinese authorities have announced plans to widen the Karakoram Highway, which links China to Pakistan, from the existing 10 meters width to 30 meters to allow heavier vehicles to pass throughout the year. According to an Indian military analyst, China has deployed "13 Border Defence Regiments, the 52 Mountain Infantry Brigade to protect Southern Qinghai-Tibet region, the 53 Mountain Infantry Brigade to protect the high plateau in the Western sector, the 149th Division

of the 13th Group Army in the Eastern Sector and the 61st Division of the 21st Group Army in the Western Sector" [3]. This is a substantial military concentration, which can provide a forceful initial response in case of a breakout of hostilities across the Himalayas.

Similarly, the PLA Air Force (PLAAF) has established airfields at Hoping, Pangta and Kong Ka, two airfields at Lhasa and an additional four in the region that can be rapidly operationalized [4]. Beyond just supporting fighter aircraft, these air bases have enhanced PLA airlift capability that includes division strength of troops (20,000), air-drop a brigade (3,500 troops) and helicopter lift of approximately two battalions. These figures are for a single lift [5].

In mid-August 2009, the PLA commenced a major military exercise that would be conducted over two months. The war game code named 'Stride-2009' (Kuayue-2009) involves nearly 50,000 troops drawn from the military regions of Shenyang, Lanzhou, Jinan and Guangzhou, who would conduct operations over long distances. Significantly, one of the primary aims of the exercises is to test the PLA's 'capacity of long-range projection' (Xinhua News Agency, August 11). The exercise would also marshal civilian assets such as high-speed trains traveling up to 350 kilometers per hour and commercial aircraft to move troops over long distances (*China Daily* [Beijing], August 12). According to Ni Lexiong, a military analyst at Shanghai University of Political Science and Law, "This is really about a rapid response to sudden events in Tibet and Xinjiang, but also the military will play an increasing role in moving supplies and responding to disasters" (*Startribune.com* [Canada], August 11).

China's sprawling military infrastructure provides the PLA with a strong logistic back up, which enables the rapid deployment of troops and a robust offensive capability. India, on the other hand, is constrained by geography. In June 2009, General J.J. Singh, the governor of Arunachal Pradesh and former chief of the Indian Army stated, "Two army divisions comprising 25,000 to 30,000 soldiers each will be deployed along the border in Arunachal' and "[deployment] was part of the planned augmentation of our capabilities to defend the country ... The increase in force strength is to meet the future national security challenge" (Reuters, June 8). These two divisions are specially trained in mountain warfare and would augment the number of Indian troops to 120,000 (Stratpost.com, June 8).

Soon thereafter, in July 2009, the Indian Air Force (IAF) announced that it had planned to forward-deploy two squadrons (18 aircraft each) of Su-30 MKI advanced fighter jets at its airbase in Tezpur (150 kilometers south of the Chinese border) in Arunachal Pradesh. According to the IAF chief, "We have plans to improve infrastructure in the north-east. We're upgrading four-five airfields and Advanced Landing Grounds (ALG). We're also going to be basing a fleet of Sukhoi-30s in Tezpur in addition to the existing MiG 21s fighter jets" (*Stratpost.com,* July 21). The ALGs are strategically located at Daulat Beg Oldie and in Chushul on the border with Aksai Chin in the proximity of Karakoram Highway. In addition, the IAF has plans to position Su-30 MKIs at Chabua and Jorhat in Assam, Panagarh in West Bengal and Purnea in Bihar (Sifynews.com, July 10).

Interestingly, there is a maritime dimension to the military developments in the Himalayas. Located at an altitude of 14,500 feet, the Pangong Lake is under the control of both China (90 kilometers) and India (45 kilometers), but a stretch of about 5 km is disputed (*Indian Express*, October 6, 2008). Both sides have positioned patrol vessels and conduct routine surveillance. There have been regular incidents of transgression and incursions but both sides have exercised restraint and adopted a standard drill that helps disengagement; when boats from both sides come face to face with each other, they raise flags and shout 'hindi chini bhai bhai' (Indian and Chinese are brothers) and disengage. China operates 22 boats manned by 5-7 personnel each and India has deployed 2 large boats operated by 21 personnel each. In 2008, the Indian navy chief had visited the lake and India has plans to augment its capability by deploying more boats in the lake (Indian Express, October 7, 2008).

The Indian Ministry of Defense Report 2008-2009 has expressed concerns over China's military capabilities and observed that 'greater transparency and openness' is critical but on a conciliatory note also stated that India will 'engage China, while taking all necessary measures to protect its national security, territorial integrity and sovereignty' (*Indian Express,* July 12). There are fears in India about China's military modernization and augmentation of military infrastructure along the borders. China has been increasing its defense budget on a regular basis and in 2009 it announced a 14.9 percent rise in military spending to 480.6 billion renminbi ($70.3 billion) marking 21 years of double-digit growth (*Defence.pk,* March 4). Yet, unofficial estimates place the total amount much higher than the figures the Chinese government claims.

The Indian military leadership has expressed concern about the growing military power potential of China. Admiral Sureesh Mehta, chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, categorically stated that "In military terms, both conventionally and unconventionally, we can neither have the capability nor the intention to match China force for force …" but cautioned that as China consolidates

itself and builds its comprehensive national power and a powerful military, it is "likely to be more assertive on its claims, especially in the immediate neighborhood [*sic*]." Further, "It is quite evident that coping with China will certainly be one of our [India] primary challenges in the years ahead. Our trust deficit with China can never be liquidated unless our boundary problems are resolved" (*Zeenews.com*, August 10).

In the 21st Century, China and India have emerged as major Asian powers and are engaged in building their respective strengths. The current trends in their bilateral political and economic relations augers well for Asian prosperity. Yet, the slow pace of talks on demarcation and delineation of the boundary (commenced in 2003), military infrastructure developments along the border, are some of the issues that remain uppermost in the minds of Indian planners and strategic analysts. The boundary dispute gains greater salience given the fact that China has resolved its boundary disputes with most of its neighbors, while its dispute with India remains unresolved. It is fair to argue that China is biding time to build its comprehensive national power including military capability reflected in Deng Xiaoping's thought "*tao guang yang hui,*" which literally translates as "hide brightness, nourish obscurity," and in Beijing's interpretation, "Bide our time and build up our capabilities" and then challenge India at the time of its choosing.

Vijay Sakhuja, Ph.D., is a Visiting Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, Singapore.

Notes

1. Author's discussions with retired Indian army officers in August 2009.
2. Shailender Arya, "The Train to Lhasa' *Journal of Defence Studies*, winter 2008.
3. Rajan, D.S. 2009. 'China: Media Anger on Arunachal Pradesh Continues Unabated', SAAG Paper No. 3260, June 18, 2009.
4. Arun Sehgal, "Military Moves and Reactions: The PLA's Profile in Tibet is Increasing in Strength and Sophistication", *Pragati: The Indian National Interest Review*, No 28, July 2009, pp.15-18.
5. Ibid.

***

The Geopolitics of Cross-Strait Disaster Relief

By Drew Thompson

Typhoon Morakot swept across Taiwan in August, dumping over 100 inches of rain with entire villages wiped out by mudslides, leaving a trail of destruction including over 600 dead and missing. The aftermath of this natural disaster has become enmeshed in Taiwan's domestic and cross-Strait politics while the United States, China and others provide financial and material assistance to on-going relief efforts.

Taiwan's President Ma Ying-jeou has faced significant domestic criticism for a slow and bumbling response in the first days after the typhoon passed when the scope of the human tragedy was increasingly revealed. The prime minister has resigned, while a raft of cabinet members have offered to resign, including the defense minister, the foreign minister and his deputy, ostensibly in response to the slow mobilization of the military to provide relief and the foreign ministry's initial response to decline international offers of much needed aid. Beyond the domestic political issues, geopolitics lurks not far beneath the surface of relief efforts, particularly as it relates to China's offers of assistance, the latest in a long string of cross-Strait disaster relief efforts.

Within a day of receiving the request from Taiwan authorities, the United States provided assistance, which included sending a military cargo aircraft from Japan with supplies and military heavy lift helicopters from a vessel off-shore, the second time U.S. forces have deployed on Taiwan since recognition switched to China in 1979. Unlike Taiwanese military aircraft that delivered relief aid to Tsunami stricken countries in early 2005, the U.S. helicopters displayed their national markings and entered Taiwan without objection from Beijing (Taiwan News, August 17).

China was fast to offer aid to Taiwan following the disaster, despite suffering damages and casualties when Morakot swept onto the mainland. Referring to their "compatriots," China quickly shipped relief supplies including prefabricated houses, tents and medical supplies, while orchestrating the collection of millions of dollars from individuals and organizations on the mainland. Some Taiwanese have pointed out that the Kuomingtang (KMT) leadership accepted this aid while rejecting initial offers from the United States, Japan and elsewhere (Taiwan News, August 25). Mainland commentators found themselves in the somewhat awkward position of defending the KMT, which is far preferable to Beijing than the opposition, while

providing advice to Ma Ying-jeou, urging him, "to dash to the very front battle line, set up a headquarters and conduct decisive maneuvering there," much as Beijing's leaders now rush to the site of their own disasters to direct efforts (*People's Daily*, August 24). President Hu Jintao also took the unusual step of deciding to meet publicly with a visiting delegation that represented Taiwanese indigenous groups, using the event to express China's goodwill and highlight the mainland's contributions to relief efforts (Xinhua News Agency, August 19).

China's intention for providing this disaster relief assistance is to build its influence and image in Taiwan, consistent with Beijing's strategic global interest in employing this highly specialized form of diplomacy. Much as China seeks to extend its influence abroad through disaster relief and humanitarian assistance, both Taiwan, under the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang)—which governed Taiwan from 1949-2000—and China have actively sought to achieve their respective objectives through provision of disaster relief assistance to one another. This is not a new phenomenon. The provision of sanctioned disaster relief between Mainland China and Taiwan has been a regular occurrence since the mid-1980s, while the KMT's efforts to influence mainlanders through propaganda-laden relief efforts extend further back in time. In May 1950, the semi-official Free China Relief Association, which was established that year by the KMT to provide aid to refugees from China, conducted air drops of 70,000 tons of Taiwanese rice along with propaganda texts over much of eastern China, labeling their bags, "mainland disaster famine [relief], from Taiwan compatriots." In February 1961, Taiwan's Defense Ministry floated balloons carrying food and clothes in a humanitarian gesture from Quemoy Island to the mainland in response to reports of famine following the disastrous Great Leap Forward campaign. In 1976 following the earthquake that leveled Tangshan, the Free China Relief Association floated 170,000 balloons with relief supplies across the Strait when Taiwan's offers of aid were officially rejected by Beijing.

The first instance of officially sanctioned disaster relief aid to cross the Strait occurred in 1986 when the Red Cross Society of China donated $50,000 to Taiwan's Red Cross following an earthquake near Hualian. In 1988, Taiwan's Free China Relief Association sent $100,000 to help Chinese flood victims in the first instance of the ROC providing humanitarian assistance to the PRC. Later that year, President Lee Teng-hui led a campaign to provide $1 million in aid from Taiwan's Red Cross to China's in response to an earthquake in Yunnan. President Lee said at the time that it was "proper to separate the people of mainland China from their Communist rulers, when formulating policy" (BBC, November 16, 1988). Lee justified the disaster relief donations as beneficial so long as contacts did not occur on an official level.

Just as politics underlies foreign assistance programs the world over, cross-Strait disaster assistance is no exception. In 1991, Taiwan agencies donated $210,000 and NT$1 million (approximately $37,000) worth of supplies to the Chinese Red Cross for flood relief. Ma Ying-jeou, then vice chairman of the Mainland Affairs Council, a cabinet-level administrative agency under the Executive Yuan, accused China of distorting the goodwill of the Taiwanese people in response to a *People's Daily* commentary that gifts from Chinese in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macau is very moving and, "this kind of adhesive force came from the high degree of confidence of billions of people in the Chinese Communist Party and The People's Government." Five years later in February 1996, a magnitude 7 earthquake struck Lijiang, Yunnan, killing more than 200 and injuring thousands, just four weeks before the Taiwan presidential election when cross-Strait tensions were at their peak. Despite massive PLA exercises and missile tests, which ultimately saw the United States dispatch two aircraft carrier battle groups to the area, the Taiwan Red Cross and other organizations provided hundreds of thousands of dollars in relief funds and materials to the Chinese Red Cross in an operation that appeared relatively free of rancor, despite the deteriorating political and security situation at the time (Central News Agency, February 4, 1996 and February 13, 1997; DPA, February 6, 1996).

China's disaster relief assistance following the 1999 earthquake in Taiwan was not immune from cross-Strait geopolitics, particularly as the island faced a hotly contested election the next year. Jiang Zemin expressed his sympathies soon after the earthquake struck on September 12, 1999, and the mainland began offering assistance immediately afterwards. Initial responses from Taiwan's government were guarded, as Beijing peppered its statements about linkages between Taiwan and the mainland. Then Chairman of the Mainland Affairs Council Su Chi—the current National Security Council (NSC) Secretary-General—stated, "This would be a good beginning to improving ties," but politics quickly trumped humanitarian assistance as China used the earthquake as an opportunity to assert its claims to Taiwan in the United Nations and with other countries and organizations. China pressured the United Nations and countries' Red Cross societies to seek permission and consult with it prior to providing assistance, and refused permission for a Russian military rescue team to cross China's airspace on route to Taiwan. Taiwan's Foreign Minister Jason Hu expressed the island's outrage, accusing China of having political motivations and decrying their actions as, "a robbery committed during a fire" (*Taipei Times*, September 25,

1999).

Taiwan's contribution to relief efforts following the 2008 Sichuan earthquake contrast with the 1999 earthquake experience, reflecting the more relaxed political atmosphere following the KMT's return to power in Taiwan following the 2008 presidential election. Ma Ying-jeou's electoral victory ended the eight-year reign of the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) under President Chen Shui-bian, following Taiwan's first transfer of executive power in 2000. Rescue teams from Taiwan's Red Cross and the Taipei City government flew in a direct flight from Taipei to Chengdu, the first time that a Taiwanese search and rescue team had taken part in disaster relief missions on the mainland.

Like the Sichuan earthquake effort, China's aid to Taiwan in response to Typhoon Morakot appears less affected by cross-Strait politics than past incidents, though mistrust certainly runs deep on both sides as evidenced by some local Taiwanese governments refusing to accept Chinese aid and accusations by the opposition that President Ma is leaning too close to China (Reuters, August 18). This mistrust exists not only in the cross-Strait relationship, but has often spilled out into outright competition for international influence through the provision of disaster relief assistance. Both countries clearly see the value in "Disaster Diplomacy" as a means of expanding influence, not just between each other, but globally as well.

In September 2004, Hurricane Ivan swept through the Caribbean causing extensive damage, including on the small island of Grenada. One of only a handful of countries that recognized Taiwan, up to 90 percent of the structures on Grenada were damaged and 13 people were killed. China offered assistance after the hurricane passed, despite not having formal diplomatic ties. A major recipient of Taiwanese aid since recognizing the island in 1989, Grenada's prime minister expressed dissatisfaction with Taiwan's initial offer of $200,000 in relief funds and restructuring of existing aid commitments. He requested Taiwan increase its five-year aid package to $245 million, secretly traveled to Beijing in December of that year, then switched recognition to China a few weeks later when Taiwan did not oblige (Speech by Prime Minister Keith Mitchell, December 20, 2004, Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs Statement, January 28, 2005).

Much like China seeks to expand its international influence through disaster relief and humanitarian assistance, Taiwan is also a major international donor, including to countries that do not recognize it. Taiwan made significant contributions to Iran and Pakistan following earthquakes there and it was also a major donor to nations affected by the 2004 Asian Tsunami. Yet, humanitarian gestures can not be divorced from geopolitical realities, as Taiwan discovered when China successfully lobbied to exclude Taiwan from the international Tsunami donors coordination conference in Jakarta. Moreover, China carefully watched international efforts in response to the Asian Tsunami and has steadily sought to increase its capabilities to respond to international disasters. The Chinese military's recent attention to Military Operations Other Than War or "MOOTW," refines the PLA's traditional domestic disaster relief role and positions it to operate abroad in the future through new capabilities and doctrine, such as a new hospital ship and claims that China's future aircraft carrier will likely undertake disaster relief missions.

As China consolidates its place as a major international disaster relief donor, Taiwan will need to adapt its strategies and approaches. There are clear limits to "Disaster Diplomacy," as evidenced by Taiwan's exclusion from the Tsunami conference, so expectations should be reasonable. Certainly, as the victim of frequent natural disasters, and having extensive global relief experience, technology and resources, Taiwan should not be marginalized in international groupings and room should be made for Taiwan to participate in international efforts in disaster reduction and relief. While Taiwan has made good use of its advantages in this field, such as co-hosting with China the 2008 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Workshop on Large-Scale Disaster Recovery, more opportunities should be explored. Taiwan should be considered as an observer or dialogue partner to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and relevant U.N. agencies, enabling Taiwan to participate in regional programs addressing critical transnational issues, including disaster relief.

While one can not turn a blind eye to the political realities of the cross-Strait relationship, the days of Taiwan floating balloons with care packages over the bamboo curtain are clearly behind us and a new era of cooperation in the field of disaster relief and humanitarian assistance has arrived. For such occasions where future international disaster relief or humanitarian assistance is needed, both sides of the Strait can sincerely seek opportunities to build mutual trust, open channels of communication and surmount diplomatic challenges.

Drew Thompson is the Director of China Studies and Starr Senior Fellow at The Nixon Center.

***