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“Sixth-Generation” leader Hu Chunhua

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.



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In a Fortnight

By L.C. Russell Hsiao

SIXTH-GENERATION LEADERS PROMOTED TO TOP PARTY POSITIONS

In the first major re-shuffle at the party provincial committee level following the 17th Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Congress in 2007, several changes have caught the attention of Chinese leadership-watchers. While the personnel changes, which were announced on November 30, affected six out of the 31 provincial committees, two changes stood out in particular. Hebei Provincial Governor Hu Chunhua (46) and Agriculture Minister Sun Zhengcai (46) were elevated to provincial party-secretary of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and Jilin Province respectively (Xinhua News Agency, November 30; *Ming Pao*, December 1).

Prior to his promotion as party-secretary, Hu Chunhua’s (no relation to Hu Jintao) portfolio included serving as chief of the Communist Youth League (CYL), an affiliation that begs close ties to President Hu Jintao—the ringleader of the CYL faction. Moreover, he spent nearly 17 years in the Tibet Autonomous Regions (TAR) that included a tour as the region’s first vice-party secretary in 2006, which earned him the nickname “Little Hu [Jintao]” in the media (*United Daily News*, November 30; *Ming Pao*, December 1; *The Straits Times*, December 1).

Sun Zhengcai, a native of Shandong Province, earned his Ph.D. in agriculture from China Agricultural University. Sun was selected to serve as the agriculture minister in late 2006, which made him the country’s youngest ministerial-level official at the tender age of 43 years old. Sun also used to be head of Shunyi district in Beijing and served as secretary-general of the Beijing CCP municipal committee (*Ming Pao*, December 1; *Ta Kungpao*, December 1).

The meteoric ascendance of Hu and Sun, who were both born in the 1960s, marks the first time that party members of the so-called “sixth generation,” who range from 42 to 49 in age, were promoted to the ranks of party-secretary at the provincial levels. This move positions Hu and Sun ahead of their peers in becoming the core of the “sixth-generation” of Chinese leaders. Indeed, Hu and Sun were both featured in an issue of the official journal *Global Personalities*, which shined the spotlight on five “sixth-generation” politicians (See Willy Lam, “Hu Jintao Picks Core Sixth-Generation Leaders,” May 15). Interestingly, Hu and Sun also represent different factions among the rising stars of cadres. Hu with his CYL background is deeply rooted in the President Hu-led *tuan pai* (CYL faction), and Sun, who had won accolades from Premier Wen Jiabao for his competence in office, is identified more with the “elitist” group spearheaded by Vice President Xi Jinping—even though Sun is not a “princeling.”

President Hu has apparently been trying to promote a corps of young cadres up the ranks in order to consolidate the “sixth-generation” leadership in recent years—a practice handed down by the late patriarch, Deng Xiaoping—and the latest personnel shuffle may represent Hu’s attempts at staging the aftermath of the 18th Party Congress in 2012 when Hu and Wen are scheduled to step down (Sina.com.hk, December 1). Some media reports have even suggested that the personnel changes were made in preparation for the “sixth-generation” leaders coming of age at the 19th Party Congress, which will be held in 2017—effectively laying the foundation for the ruling coalition that will govern following the 2017 conclave and in the “post-Xi Jinping era” after 2022 (*United Daily News* [Taiwan], November 30).

Another notable characteristic found in this raft of personnel changes was an emphasis on transferring the “team leader” (*yibashou*) between the different provincial committees: From Hebei to Inner Mongolia, Jilin to Liaoning (vice-versa) and Fujian to Henan. These personnel arrangements appear in line with Deng’s dictum that senior officials in party units should hail from “the five lakes and four seas.” From the central leadership’s perspective, these movements of top party officials may also serve as a bridge between different provincial regions and at the same time strengthen the central authorities’ control over the local branches. According to Huang Zhongqing, the director for the Beijing bureau of *Nanhwa Morning Paper*, the contradiction between the central and local government has become wider since Deng’s economic reforms. The major problem lies in a growing divide between local interests and comprehensive economic development. Moreover, Huang pointed out that the plague of corruption among party officials has grown more severe, and even though

routinely changing personnel cannot root out corruption, it can at least impede the development of a patron-client relationship in politics (BBC [Chinese], December 1).

The five changes at the provincial party-chief level also include former Fujian Provincial Party-Secretary Lu Zhangong, who was assigned to serve as party-secretary at the Henan Provincial committee, and replaced by the party’s only female party chief in 20 years, Sun Chunlan. Sun served as party chief of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions. Additionally, former Jilin Provincial Party-Secretary Wang Min was assigned to serve as the party-secretary at the Liaoning Provincial committee, and will be replaced by Sun Zhengcai (Xinhua News Agency, November 30).

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Hu Jintao Unveils Major Foreign-Policy Initiative

By Willy Lam

Chinese President Hu Jintao has signaled his administration’s readiness to play a bigger—and perhaps more constructive—role in global affairs through the release of a five-pronged foreign policy game plan. Cited by the official *Outlook Weekly* as “Hu Jintao’s Viewpoints about the Times,” this far-reaching initiative consists of five theories on, respectively, “the profound changes [in the world situation], constructing a harmonious world, joint development, shared responsibilities, and enthusiastic participation [in global affairs].” In a late November issue of *Outlook Weekly* (a mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party [CCP]), ideologue Zhang Xiaotong indicated that the party chief and president’s “viewpoints” amounted to a “major theoretical innovation” based on the “scientific judgment of the development and changes of the times.” This ambitious agenda has been unveiled after U.S. President Barack Obama’s visit to China and before the Copenhagen climate change summit, two events that could become milestones in the Middle Kingdom’s quest for quasi-superpower status.

According to National College of Administration (NCOA) Professor Wang Yukai, President Hu’s new-look diplomacy marked the first time that a contemporary Chinese leader had arrived at a comprehensive set of theories with an international perspective. He noted that the “viewpoints” would “undoubtedly provide a theoretical guideline for China’s future participation in global affairs.” More

significantly, the CCP leadership's rejiggered worldview can be interpreted as the CCP leadership's response to a key point recently raised by President Obama, that Washington "welcomes a strong, prosperous and successful China that plays a greater role in world affairs." While Premier Wen Jiabao, a close Hu ally, had disputed the G-2 characterization of China and America during his meeting with Obama, Beijing seems primed for evermore stellar performances on the world stage (*Outlook Weekly* [Beijing], November 24; *Ming Pao* [Hong Kong], November 25; Reuters, November 17).

In his 7,000-word article, Zhang, an editor at the Party Literature Research Center under the CCP Central Committee, collected foreign policy statements that Hu made on public occasions as well as in internal party conclaves. He cited Hu, who heads the CCP Leading Group on Foreign Affairs (which is China's foremost policy-setting organ on the diplomatic and security fronts) as saying that the contemporary world had experienced "historic changes" and that the same could be said for China's relations with the world. Saluting impressive gains in China's industrial and technological prowess, Hu noted that the Chinese were living "in an era that is full of opportunities and challenges" —and that "the opportunities exceed the challenges." The Chinese "economic miracle" has made it possible for the CCP Fourth-Generation leadership under Hu to make radical departures from late patriarch Deng Xiaoping's famous diplomatic credo of "adopting a low profile and never taking the lead" in international affairs (Xinhua News Agency, November 24).

Not all of Hu's "viewpoints" are new. The ideals of constructing a harmonious world as well as "joint development" especially with neighboring nations were first raised by former President Jiang Zemin in the late 1990s. The harmony concept, which harks back to the Confucianist ethos of *shijiedatong* ("commonality of the nations"), also means that China's precipitous rise will not lead to conflicts with other countries. "Harmony" means the minimization of military and other conflicts. Whereas "joint development" is Beijing's preferred solution to sovereignty disputes with Asian countries ranging from Japan to Vietnam and the Philippines (Xinhua News Agency, October 28, 2002; China News Service, April 9). Of the five components of the Hu leadership's novel worldview, perhaps the twin theories of "shared responsibility and enthusiastic participation" are most significant. The idea that Beijing is willing to shoulder "shared responsibilities" for global obligations reflects the CCP leadership's readiness to become what former U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick called a "responsible stakeholder." The "enthusiastic participation" imperative implies that Beijing will be acquitting itself of world affairs in a way

that is commensurate with its quasi-superpower status. Theorist Zhang quoted salient passages from Hu's speech in December 2008, which celebrated the 30th anniversary of the start of the reform era: "The future and fate of contemporary China is intimately linked with the future and fate of the entire world." The supremo went on to urge party and government officials to synthesize the goal of "upholding independence and sovereignty" with globalization so that the country can "make contributions to fostering humankind's peace and development" (Xinhua News Agency, December 18, 2008; *People's Daily*, November 25).

The year 2009 has seen Beijing appear to take the lead in a plethora of world issues. At the G-20 meetings in London and Pittsburg, Chinese diplomats called for the graduate replacement of the U.S. dollar as the "world currency." They also lobbied successfully for an augmentation of the voting powers of developing nations in the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Tens of billions in aid dollars have been pledged to poor nations during President Hu and Premier Wen's meetings with African and Southeast Asian leaders (Xinhua News Agency, November 10; China News Service, November 11). Most importantly, Premier Wen will, at Copenhagen, reassure the international community of China's commitment to fighting global warming: By 2020, China will cut "carbon intensity"—the amount of fossil-fuel emission per unit of economic output—by 40 to 45 percent from 2005 levels. At the same time, Beijing has led developing nations including India and Brazil in pressing the industrialized world to devote at least 0.5 percent of GDP to helping poor nations in areas including fostering green technology (*Wall Street Journal*, November 28; AFP, November 29).

Moreover, Beijing seems to have made at least selective modification to its long-standing principle of "non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries." The *Outlook Weekly* article pointed out that China has joined more than 20 peacekeeping missions mandated by the United Nations, in addition to participation in efforts to resolve nuclear problems in North Korea and Iran, and ethnic conflicts in Sudan. During the China visit of President Obama, Beijing apparently acceded to Washington's demands that it use its influence with Tehran to rein in the Middle Eastern country's nuclear-weapons program (*Washington Post*, November 26). Late last month, China joined Russia and 25 other nations in endorsing an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) resolution that called on Iran to immediately halt operations at its Qum uranium enrichment plant. The resolution also expressed "serious concern" about the military applications of the pariah state's putatively peaceful nuclear facilities (*New York Times*, November 28; Xinhua News Agency,

December 1).

Of course, there are limits regarding the extent to which this country with \$2.2 trillion worth of foreign-exchange reserves and a population of 1.3 billion can do for global harmony and development. One of the five theories under “Hu Jintao’s Viewpoints” is that “various parties must observe the principle of mutually shared responsibilities.” This refers to Beijing’s insistence that its contributions to the global commonwealth be conditional upon commensurate inputs by other nations, especially developed countries and regions such as the United States and the European Union. Moreover, the *Outlook Weekly* article cited Hu as asking cadres to strike a balance between China’s internal development and its national interests on the one hand, and its globalization commitments on the other. Thus, Beijing has to ensure that its international contributions will not adversely affect the country’s “core interests” in both the economic and diplomatic arenas. For example, given China’s reliance on smokestacks industries, the CCP leadership can only do so much to curb carbon emissions. Moreover, in light of China’s dependence on exports as an engine of growth, do not expect a significant appreciation of the renminbi in the foreseeable future (*People’s Daily*, November 17; *Ming Pao*, November 14; *Wall Street Journal*, November 26; Reuters, November 30).

These considerations will also form the parameters of Beijing’s international commitments regarding Iran and North Korea. Given China’s traditional quasi-alliance relationship with Iran—and its hefty investment in the latter’s oilfields—it may be unrealistic to assume that Beijing will go the distance in pressuring Tehran to jettison its nuclear ambitions. How the Hu leadership will draw the line between China’s dependence on Middle Eastern oil and its cooperation with the Western alliance will become clearer when the UN Security Council debates possible sanctions on Tehran early next year. It is also significant that Beijing has flatly refused to heed repeated requests from the United States, Japan, South Korea and other nations to use its clout with North Korea regarding Pyongyang’s equally ambitious nuclear gambit. The November visit to the DPRK by Chinese Defense Minister General Liang Guanglie, which came hot upon the heels of the North Korean tour of Premier Wen, has highlighted the “lips-and-teeth” relationship between the two socialist neighbors (Reuters, November 25; *Washington Post*, November 3).

Both in public addresses in recent years and in speeches cited by ideologue Zhang, Hu has stressed that China’s enhanced participation in global affairs will not affect its unique model of development. One of the president’s favorite arguments is that globalization means countries

should respect and learn from each other so as to “safeguard the world’s pluralism and the multiplicity of development models.” The Fourth-Generation chieftain has also reiterated that Beijing will “ceaselessly explore and perfect a road [map] of development that is suitable to China’s national conditions” (*People’s Daily*, November 3; News.CCTV.com [Beijing], November 25, 2006). In other words, Hu and his colleagues are warning critics in the United States and Europe that China’s enhanced globalization notwithstanding, the CCP will never introduce “Western” norms ranging from freedom of expression to multi-party politics. This perhaps explains why even as China’s top cadres and diplomats are throwing their weight around the globe, the country’s state-security personnel are working overtime to detain or intimidate hundreds of dissidents, activist lawyers and NGO organizers (AFP, November 14; The Associated Press, November 25).

NCOA’s Professor Wang has cited the possibility that “Hu Jintao’s Viewpoints about the Times” may be enshrined in the CCP Charter, perhaps at the 18th Party Congress slated for 2012. Given the unrestrained aggrandizement of Chinese influence around the globe, Hu might go down in history as a “foreign policy president” that has immensely raised the country’s profile. The Middle Kingdom’s enhanced participation in world events, however, has hardly been greeted with universal acclaim. The popularity of the “China threat” theory has testified to fears on the part of nations with disparate backgrounds about the possibility that the CCP leadership will use its unprecedented powers to pander to the growing legions of nationalists at home. Beijing’s continuing love affair with pariah states such as North Korea and Iran has aroused suspicions about its tendency to put narrow national interests above international peace and development. The onus is on the Hu leadership to convince the world that while Beijing must juggle its “core interests” and global commitments, its “active participation” in world affairs will at least be in line with those of the United Nations.

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Libya Cautions China: Economics Is No Substitute to Politics

By Yitzhak Shichor

As anticipated, the fourth ministerial Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), which was held in Sharm al-Shaykh (Egypt), November 8-9, reflected wall-to-wall praise for Sino-African “cooperation” in general and particularly for the positive Chinese role in Africa. China announced its readiness to pour more money into Africa, planning more projects and increased presence with “no strings attached.” Yet it is precisely this emphatic divorce between economics and politics in Chinese external activities, or between economic aid and political aid, which has triggered unprecedented criticism not heard of before from some African leaders.

In recent years China’s Africa policy has attracted fire from many quarters outside the African continent—governments, NGOs, the media and academics. African governments, on the other hand, appeared to have welcomed the Chinese presence and underlined its benefits, often compared to their negative experience with the Western and even the Soviet presence, occasionally termed “colonialism” and “imperialism.” Africans, with the possible exception of some opposition groups, have failed to criticize the so-called Chinese “model.” Fully aware of the “Western” sources of this criticism, Beijing has indeed defied its Africa-policy critics as competitors who envy China’s achievements in the continents that trespass “their” territory and undermine “their” interests. When asked by a journalist about this criticism, Wen Jiabao, China’s prime-minister, replied: “There have been allegations for a long time that China has come to Africa to plunder Africa’s natural resources and practice neo-colonialism. The allegation in my view is totally untenable. Who is really asking these questions? Is it the African states or is it the West looking on nervously?” (*Africa News*, November 16). Indeed, for a long time Africa failed to ask questions about the implications of the Chinese offensive in the continent. “Africa offers China... friends who do not judge it” (Reuters, November 1). Not anymore.

AFRICAN CRITICISM OF CHINA

This forbearance was interrupted—apparently for the first time—before, during and after the recent FOCAC meeting, and not just by opposition groups and parties but by high-ranking officials. They expressed concern about a number of issues related to the Chinese offensive. Thus, Nigeria’s Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Bagudu Hirse blamed China for financing corrupt and repressive regimes: “We accept what China is doing. And we welcome their

investment. But,” he underlined, “they must understand that we are very sensitive to good governance and democracy. We can’t start thinking of imposing sanctions on Guinea or Niger for bad governance and then they [China] go behind us and strike some other deals. We suspect they do that anyway. They will never confirm it, but we read the newspapers—we know what is going on” (*Africa News*, November 16).

He was referring to Beijing’s decision (reportedly of June 2009) to invest \$7 billion in a mining deal in Guinea, announced by Guinea’s military junta immediately after the September massacre of the opposition when over 150 protestors were killed. Though Beijing has denied the deal had been signed, it draws international condemnation and protests by human rights groups (CBS News, October 25). Precisely a year earlier, a \$5 billion oil deal that was made between China and Niger “in the greatest of secrecy and with contempt for regulation,” has been denounced by unions and civil rights groups that called for an investigation of how the funds resulting from the agreement are spent and a general parliamentary inquiry into the deal, out of concern that the people of Niger would not benefit from it (BBC News, July 30, 2008). Yet China’s activities in Africa are not only breeding corruption.

“Hugely fearful of China’s way of doing business”, the Egyptian independent Member of Parliament Mustafa al-Gindi, used the unmentionable word: “Whatever they say, it is a fact that the Chinese come to Africa not just with engineers and scientists—they are coming with farmers. It is *neo-colonialism*. [...] There are no ethics, no values.” (*Africa News*, November 16, emphasis added). Still, these are kind words compared to the interview with the Libyan Foreign Minister Musa Kusa, published on November 10, 2009 by the influential (Arabic and English) daily *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* (The Middle East) in which he lashed out at China’s Africa policy as harshly as ever before. As a former head of Libya’s foreign intelligence service (for 15 years), he is probably one of the Africans most familiar with Chinese operations on the continent.

LIBYA’S FOREIGN MINISTER INTERVIEW

In the interview—given on the occasion of the fourth meeting of FOCAC held in Egypt—the Libyan foreign minister tried to tone down his criticism by praising China’s support for the African “liberation movement,” its unity and contribution to balancing the international system, “but”, he said, “not at the expense of the [African] people.” He then added: “When we look at the reality on the ground we find that there is something akin to a Chinese invasion of the African continent. This is something that brings to mind the effects that colonialism had on the

African continent [in the past]. [...] Therefore we advise our Chinese friends not to follow in this direction i.e. [*sic*] bringing thousands of Chinese workers to Africa under the pretext of employment, for at the same time Africa is suffering from unemployment.” He went on saying that China’s programs of training and employing thousands of Africans is welcomed “but this welcome does not mean [accepting] the Chinese coming to settle in Africa.”

A number of themes were singled out in his criticism. For one, accusing China of a “divide and rule” policy, he rejected Beijing’s refusal to allow delegates of the African Union (AU) to participate in the Forum or to consider the AU as a representative of Africans. It “is an insult to the African Union. [...] Is it reasonable for China—as a single country—to preside over an entire continent? This is an injustice. [...] China’s unwillingness to accept the presence of African Union commissioners means that they do not want the African Union, or African Unity, but rather China wants to cooperate with Africa as separate nations, rather than as a union.”

For another, he accused China of betraying the African countries that had facilitated China’s admission to the United Nations and the Security Council. Yet, when the Chinese reached an international position they “did not support their friends.” “We did not see the Chinese playing an effective role, and [they] did not help the African [bloc] gain a [permanent] seat on the Security Council, but on the contrary, opposed it. This caused us to ask the question ‘What is the difference between them and imperialists?’” Finally, he raised an interesting point, accusing China of evading politics and Beijing of abandoning the movements and countries that need its support. “Here I am reminded of the strange Chinese position on the Goldstone report... China should have a more visible position on this, rather than being satisfied with a tentative vote.” In an unequivocal statement he said: “Genuine cooperation must include politics [...] and should not be limited to building roads and schools. It is true that this is required, but international cooperation is not based on constructing buildings and giving aid, but rather through political positions.” These remarks highlight one of Beijing’s principal weaknesses in the international system: its systematic attempts to avoid taking clear-cut positions on global issues in an effort to please all sides. Sooner or later, Beijing’s political passivity will begin to undermine its economic interests. Implicitly, Libya’s Foreign Minister warns the Chinese that the countries and people of Africa (and the Middle East) expect more vigorous political support and, while they may appreciate China’s economic contribution, they have no intention of becoming subjugated to the Chinese and prefer to keep their options open.

THE ORIGINS OF LIBYA’S CRITICISM

This criticism is just one additional crack in a series of Sino-Libyan disagreements in the last few years. The most recent concerns Libya’s decision to block the sale of the Canadian firm Verenex, that controls oil assets in Libya, to China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and to buy it instead (CNPC offer was 57.5 percent higher). At about the same time and in a similar way, Angola’s state-owned Sonangol announced it wanted to block the sale of Marathon Oil’s 20 percent oilfield stake to Chinese oil companies (CNOOC and SINOPEC). The Chinese insistence on keeping local hiring to a minimum has brewed resentment. “Some in Africa are starting to find the Chinese embrace too tight” (*The Australian*, September 30). This could signal increased intervention of African governments in the oil sector to ensure more diversification of oil customers and thus to maximize income and to diminish dependencies, to the detriment of China (*Petroleum Economist*, November). Yet, Sino-Libyan friction concerned not only economics but also politics.

Earlier, in 2006, the two countries squabbled over Libya’s relations with Taiwan. The deterioration began in January when Sayf al-Islam Qadhafi—chairman of the Libyan Qadhafi Foundation—met President Chen Shui-bian in Taiwan, acting as an envoy of his father, Mu’ammar Qadhafi. Libya, which had maintained diplomatic relations with Taiwan from 1959 to 1978, recognized the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1971 but delayed the establishment of diplomatic relations until 1978. Qadhafi invited Chen Shui-bian for an official “state visit” to Libya and said that his father was resolved to develop relations between the two countries, with Libya serving as Taiwan’s gateway to Africa. “He hoped that the two nations sign a memorandum on establishing mutual representative offices before his departure” [1]. Adding insult to injury, this invitation came on January 19, precisely when PRC Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing was meeting Qadhafi (the father) in Libya. An online Libyan newspaper reported recently that Sayf al-Islam Qadhafi was officially and practically appointed as successor to his father (*Libya al-Yaum* [Libya Today], October 15).

To be sure, a few months later, in May 2006, Libya allowed Chen Shui-bian to make a stopover in Tripoli, and used the opportunity to negotiate the issue of representative offices in the two countries, despite Beijing’s protests and “strong opposition.” A PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman said: “We demand that Libya live up to its commitment and immediately cease all official exchanges with Taiwan in whatever forms so as to maintain the overall China-Libya relations... This is a serious violation of Libya’s long-term

commitment to the one-China policy and will exert a negative impact on China-Libya relations” (Xinhua News Agency, May 11, 2006). Indeed and inevitably—it has. Probably in response to Beijing’s implicit threats, Libya sent a low-ranking representative to the third FOCAC and ministerial meeting held in Beijing in November 4-5, 2006.

CONCLUSION

These incidents should by no means create the wrong impression. It is far too soon to eulogize China’s Africa policy, one of the most remarkable success stories in global politics over the last two decades. China is not only heavily invested in Africa for many years to come, but most African governments and public opinion still appreciate the Chinese economic contribution, while overlooking its negative implications such as bad governance, corruption, human rights abuses and lack of transparency. Yet, there are initial signs that Africa’s leaders are becoming aware of these shortcomings based not only on their historical experience but also on current international norms, greater visibility and demands for accountability. Qadhafi by no means reflects these norms. Addressing Oxford University students via satellite on May 17, 2008, he said that both the PRC and the United States compete for influence in Africa: “American interference has been much more harmful and hypocritical ... China’s influence was conducted in a purely business fashion that did not resort to military adventures and double standards” (Middle East Online, May 17, 2008). Qadhafi does not want to drive the Chinese away as they have played a significant role in Libya’s housing, energy, communication, transportation, and other sectors. He wants the Chinese to behave themselves and to realize who is in charge and it is not Hu.

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NOTES

1. Office of the President, Republic of Taiwan, *News Release*, January 18, 2006.

Taiwan and the Changing Strategic Balance in the East China Sea

By I-Chung Lai

On October 19, Legislator and Chairman of Congressional Caucus for the opposition party DPP (Taiwan Democratic Progressive Party) Chai Trong-rong publicly accused the Ma Ying-jeou administration of providing China with sensitive undersea survey data around Taiwan. Legislator Chai maintained that the information, which he alleged the Ma administration supplied, was germane to China’s May 11 submission of the preliminary survey findings on the outer limits of its continental shelf to the U.N. Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (UNCLNS) on the East China Sea. The government denied the allegation (*Taipei Times*, October 20). Such charges highlight the deep-seated suspicion held by the opposition party toward the Kuomintang (KMT)-led government. Yet whether Chai’s accusation proves to be true or false, the Ma administration has indeed taken a very different approach than the previous administration toward China and Japan in maritime issues related to the East China Sea and Taiwanese-claimed territorial waters.

For instance, the Taiwanese-media recently disclosed that the Ma administration is no longer claiming the territorial waters around Kinmen and Matsu, two small islands that have long been part of its frontline defense against China (*Liberty Times*, November 23). These two major cases constitute a growing body of evidence signaling that a major shift is underway in Taiwan’s strategic orientation, particularly in its maritime domain. Taiwan, an island strategically located at the crossroad of the western Pacific Ocean and Continental Asia, pivots on the sea-lane of communications (SLOCs) between Northeast and Southeast Asia. Taiwan’s strategic orientation, whether it folds in line with continental Asia or maritime Asia, has the potential to fundamentally alter the strategic landscape in the western Pacific.

CHINA BECOMES TAIWAN’S PARTNER IN THE EAST CHINA SEA

Mending relations with China has been the cornerstone of President Ma’s foreign policy. Throughout his political career, Ma has consistently advocated that “cross-Strait relation outweighs all other Taiwan’s external relations” (*Liberty Times*, June 10, 2008). Indeed, since his electoral victory in the March 2008 presidential election, cross-Strait relations have thawed considerably. This may be attributable to President Ma’s acceptance of the so-called “92 consensus” as the basis on which to resume official dialogue with the PRC. In his inauguration speech as KMT (Chinese Nationalist Party) chairman on October 18,

President Ma stated that the “92 consensus” means that both sides accept the “one China principle,” (Economic Times, October 19), yet both sides are free to interpret what “China” means [Republic of China or People’s Republic of China] (Hong Kong Central News Agency, October 18).

In addition to increasing official-contacts between Taipei and Beijing, cross-Strait cooperation has also expanded into strategic areas. One of these strategic areas involves cooperation in the East China Sea. Chinese National Petroleum (CNP), a Taiwanese state-owned oil company, has intensified its joint oil-exploration cooperation efforts in the South China and East China Sea with China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC), a PRC government-owned oil company. In a 2002 research study conducted by a KMT-affiliated think tank, National Policy Foundation, the author called for closer cooperation with China in the areas of oil exploration in the midline of the Taiwan Strait. Three days after his inauguration, President Ma reportedly ordered an interagency study on the possibility of Taiwan-China Petroleum cooperation. According to the National Security Council’s (NSC) original planning, future focus will be on cross-Strait cooperation for oil and gas exploration in the South China Sea, the East China Sea and other offshore resources through setting up a cross-Strait joint venture (*China Times*, October 26, 2008). Yin Chi-min, then the Taiwanese Minister of Economy, stressed that one of the aims for accelerating cross-Strait petroleum cooperation is to enhance Taiwanese energy security (TTV.com.tw, March 16).

According to a senior Taiwanese official in the NSC, one purpose for Taiwan-China petroleum cooperation is to balance against Japan and Vietnam oil and gas exploration activities in the East and South China Sea, respectively (*China Times*, October 26). Indeed, cross-Strait cooperation in these areas could ameliorate the general atmosphere across the Taiwan Strait and improve political confidence on both sides as well. Implicit in this cooperation, however, is that China—Taiwan’s primary strategic adversary—is being framed by the current Taiwanese government as a strategic partner for its energy security against Vietnam and Japan, countries that Taiwan has previously had friendly relations with under the previous administration.

TAIWAN-JAPAN TENSION INCREASED AFTER MA TOOK OFFICE

Taiwan-Japan relations represent another example of significant change in Taiwan foreign relations, one which is altering the regional dynamics. Despite President Ma’s claim that 2009 marks the year of “Special Partnership of Taiwan and Japan,” (Central News Agency, January 20) less than a month after taking office, a Taiwanese fishing boat entered disputed waters near Senkaku Island /Diaoyutai

and the event quickly escalated into an all-out diplomatic fistfight between Taipei and Tokyo (*China Post*, September 1). Then Premier Liu Chao-hsuan publicly threatened to use military force if necessary to uphold Taiwan’s sovereignty claim over the Senkaku/Diaoyutai area (Taiwan News, June 16). Taiwan’s chief representative to Japan was recalled to protest against Japan. On June 16, Taipei also dispatched coast guard ships to guard a civilian fishing boat that entered the disputed area to proclaim sovereignty (Central News Agency, June 17). At the same time, Jian Yu, the spokesperson for China’s ministry of foreign affairs, restated the Chinese position that Diaoyutai/Senkaku is part of Chinese territory and expressed deep concern and anger toward Japan about sinking the Taiwanese ship. He also demanded that Japan stop its “illegal activity around this area” (*Wenwei Pao*, June 18).

As Taiwan-Japan relations continued to deteriorate into a state of diplomatic cold war after the fishing vessel incident, the Japanese Defense Ministry confirmed a *Tokyo Shinbun* report that it was studying plans to deploy self-defense forces on Yonaguni-Jima, which lies 67 miles (108 kilometers) from the east coast of Taiwan (Taiwan News Online, July 4). In response to this report, the Ma administration asked Tokyo to exercise self-restraint. The proposal to base military units at a time when cross-Strait tension was at an all-time low sparked a lot of speculation. Some analysts pointed out that such a move by Japanese Self Defense Forces indicates that Tokyo’s views toward Taiwan are changing, and that the island may now become a target that Japan may need to defend “against,” rather than to defend “with” (FTV English News, July 3; *Taipei Times*, July 6). According to the Japanese Defense Ministry spokesperson, “the [Japanese] government is currently studying this military deployment and that it will be added to the nation’s basic self-defense plans scheduled to be revised at the end of this year” (*United Daily News* [Taiwan], July 3).

THE COLLATERAL DAMAGE OF MA’S SINO-CENTRIC FOREIGN POLICY

The opposite directions in which Taiwan-China and Taiwan-Japan relations appear to be moving raises questions about the Ma administration’s capability to wage its “comprehensive diplomacy.”

Proponents of Ma’s strategy explain that this hurdle in bilateral relations is a normal development for every incoming administration; especially since the ruling party has been in opposition for the previous eight years. This worsening development between Taiwan and Japan can be attributed to the inexperience of the incoming new government, the lack of “Japan hands” within the

administration, and the deep-seated “anti-Ma” complex among some Japanese political elites. According to this school of thought, the tension will eventually go away as the administration gradually gets familiar with all the nuts and bolts of Japan affairs. It can also be argued that lowering tension across the Taiwan Strait fits Japan’s national interest as well, thus there should be no reason for Japan to oppose Ma’s foreign policy since Japan’s basic national interest is fundamentally met due to Ma’s action.

Yet, critics of Ma’s strategy believe this development is the direct result of Ma Ying-Jeou’s own “great Chinese nationalism complex,” which sees Japan through the eyes of China, rather than viewing it from the angle of Taiwanese national interest (*Liberty Times*, June 22, 2008). In terms of the Senkaku/Diaoyutai dispute, Ma’s actions reneged from the tacit understanding between Taipei and Tokyo established during the previous Lee and Chen administrations. This understanding is based on a set of unstated protocols that in the event of a conflict Taipei will not send its governmental ship into the troubled area; that Taiwan will adhere to the principle of non-violence; and that this issue will remain a strictly bilateral matter between Taiwan and Japan. At the height of the Lien-Ho fishing boat tension in June 2008, between then-Premier Liu’s war talk, Ma’s pending decision to send Taiwanese naval vessels to escort civilian fishing boats entering the disputed water (*Taipei Times*, June 17), and a KMT legislator’s suggestion to “unite with China against Japan” (*lianzhong zhiri*), the Ma government broke all of the cardinal precedents of managing Taiwan-Japan relations over the East China Sea issue. Taiwan-Japan relations have not been the same since.

FROM THE TAIWAN STRAIT TO THE EAST CHINA SEA: CHANGING STRATEGIC BALANCE

The first 18 months of Ma’s administration have altered the long-standing strategic balance in the East China Sea. In spite of the territorial dispute between Taiwan and Japan, Tokyo could always count on Taipei to be a cooperative partner. Under the previous two administrations, at the very least, Taipei would not take Beijing’s side when Japan-China disputes flared up. Now that the Taiwanese government appears to be changing its position by taking a pro-China stance, Japan will face opposition not only from its Western front, but also from its Southern front if the East China Sea dispute flares up again.

This development could also pose a strategic challenge to the U.S.-Japan alliance. If Taiwan is no longer willing to play a silent but supportive role in strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance, it may have to prepare for the possibility that Taipei will forge a common position with China in some

cases; for instance, in the Diaoyutai/Senkaku island dispute and cross-Strait oil/gas joint exploration in the East China Sea. Thus, the alliance’s capability and freedom of action will be complicated by the uncertainty in Taipei’s actions. Yet, an all-out “Chiawan” (China-Taiwan) cooperation seems unlikely in the near future, but the fundamentals of the East China Sea strategic equation are undergoing long-term changes. It seems clear from President Ma’s policy announcements, which prioritize cross-Strait relations above all other external relations, that as long as Ma remains in office, lowering tensions across the Taiwan Strait will be followed by increasing strategic uncertainty in the East China Sea.

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NOTES

1. Guo Boyao, “Studying the Development of Taiwan’s Oil Industry from Cross-Strait Oil Exploration,” National Policy Foundation Research Report, May 29, 2002.
2. This is based on author’s personal experience dealing with the Taiwan-Japan issue working at Taiwan’s representative office in Japan 2000-2003.

Priorities and Challenges in China’s Naval Deployments in the Horn of Africa

By Richard Weitz

For a few days in mid-November, it looked like the Chinese government was prepared to take the unprecedented step to lead a multinational security operation involving the armed forces of Russia, the United States, the EU, and other countries. Following the seizure of yet another Chinese commercial vessel by Somali-based pirates, Beijing convened a two-day conference to enhance international coordination of the many foreign fleets currently seeking to defend shipping around Somalia from pirate attack. Participants included senior navy officers from EU and NATO countries along with representatives from India, Japan, Russia, and other navies whose warships have joined the maritime patrols around the Horn of Africa (BBC, November 6).

According to some media reports, at a subsequent meeting of the Shared Awareness and De-confliction (SHADE) group, which includes representatives of the some three dozen navies currently participating in the maritime

counter-piracy mission, the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) delegates expressed a willingness to integrate their operations more closely with the other navies on the mission (Fox News, November 10). In addition, they reportedly told officials from the European Union Naval Force for Somalia (EU Navfor) that they wished to assume more of a leadership role in the multilateral maritime patrols. In particular, the PLAN members suggested they favored rotating the SHADE co-chairmanship among the other participating navies so that China could serve in that role. Thus far, these monthly meetings have been co-chaired by the EU Navfor and the multinational Combined Maritime Force led by the United States (*Telegraph*, November 10).

Both of the existing co-chairs supported the proposal. At an international anti-piracy conference in Hong Kong that convened a few days later, Commodore Tim Lowe, the deputy commander of the Combined Maritime Forces, said that the chairmanship position was "a leadership role in terms of making sure that the meetings and the agendas for the meetings are properly coordinated." Lowe added that he hoped "that perhaps in April or May next year, we would see China taking on that lead coordinator role for the corridor" that the international fleets established for protecting the commercial vessels (Reuters, November 13).

A few days later, however, the Chinese government reverted to their previous stance of simply calling for greater international cooperation against the pirates. Rather than leading or even joining a combined multilateral force, Chinese representatives called for a division of the sea lanes currently being patrolled into separate national sectors. Writing in *China Daily*, Zhang Haizhou observed that Chinese "officials deftly parried appeals for China to lead the anti-piracy mission" that were made by Lowe (*China Daily*, November 20).

For example, senior Colonel Huang Xueping, a Defense Ministry spokesman, said that, "China is always open to boosting international patrolling cooperation (and) wishes to cooperate, bilaterally and multilaterally, with all nations involved" in the counter-piracy operation off Somalia. But he added that Beijing wanted to "reach consensus" on an arrangement for defining specific national patrol areas (*China Daily*, November 20). Liu Zhenmin, deputy permanent representative of the People's Republic of China (PRC) to the UN, likewise proposed to the UN Security Council that the navies engaged in the counter-piracy mission "define areas of responsibility." He argued that such an approach would improve escort operations and reduce the risks of pirates hijacking vessels. Liu also called for an "integrated solution" to overcome the piracy problem, which would include promoting political stability

in Somalia and enhancing the ability of the country's neighbors to counter regional piracy. He further urged that the navies now supporting the counter-piracy mission off Somalia "should expand maritime escort operations and other countries should also improve how they carry out maritime escort operations" (Xinhua News Agency, November 18).

Rear Admiral Yin Zhuo maintained that allocating specific areas for each patrolling country would "significantly increase" the efficiency of the operation. He observed that, "When each country takes care of a specific area, density of the patrolling mission will grow," though he added that the navies involved had to have effective means of coordinating their activities (*China Daily*, November 20). When discussing appropriate coordinating mechanisms, Beijing's reluctance to engage in close military cooperation with NATO was again evident, a factor also seen in China's cautious policies toward the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. The Chinese press quoted Admiral Yin as arguing that the United Nations "is the best candidate to take the leading coordinating role" in countering the pirates because China lacks formal relations with NATO (*China Daily*, November 20).

PLAN PROCEDURES

The growing threat to international shipping in the Gulf of Aden and neighboring regions from pirates operating from ports in lawless Somalia has engendered an unparalleled global response. The UN, NATO, the EU, and various national governments have organized separate multilateral and single-country maritime security operations in the Horn of Africa region to patrol sea lanes, escort merchant vessels, and respond to distress calls and pirate sightings. Since the PLAN first sent three warships to conduct counter-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden this January, the Chinese Navy has focused on protecting Chinese-flagged vessels and Chinese sailors. Thus far, PLA representatives have resisted EU and NATO proposals to join a more centrally commanded operation (BBC, November 6).

The PLAN has traditionally concentrated on defending Chinese coastal waters and on impeding U.S. military intervention in any Taiwan contingency. Although Chinese warships have engaged in port visits and unsophisticated exercises with foreign navies, the current operation represents the first potential combat mission for the PLAN outside the Pacific. The Chinese Navy has now sent four task forces, consisting of two or three warships, typically frigates, along with a larger supply ship and hundreds of sailors and special force troops, since the beginning of the year (Xinhua News Agency, October 30). In November 2009, Liang Wei, the deputy chief of operations for the

PLAN's South Fleet, said that the four Chinese flotillas had escorted or protected approximately 1,100 commercial vessels from potential pirate attack (Reuters, November 13).

Yet, none of the Chinese warships on patrol thus far appear to have engaged in large-scale combat with the pirates, raising the interesting question of what rules of engagement the Chinese flotilla follows. At a November 2009 maritime seminar in Hong Kong, Liang Wei, deputy chief of operations for the South Sea fleet, said the standard operating procedures were for the PLAN first to investigate any incident "to make sure it is not a fisherman but a pirate." The Chinese sailors would fire warning shots if the pirates initiated the use of force. If this show of force failed to stop the pirate attack, then the Chinese ships would fire in self-defense of themselves or in defense of others (*South China Morning Post*, November 14). Yet the same source cites another unnamed Chinese military official who acknowledged that the PLAN weighed additional criteria when determining its response to a pirate attack. "For us to use force is a very complex matter ... it is not just a simple question based on an operational requirement." Rather, the decision over how to respond also involved "political questions—and these are not issues dealt with by military commanders alone. Our warships off Somalia are very well aware of this. We are fully prepared to use force, but we do not take that step lightly" (*South China Morning Post*, November 14).

THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Despite the large international counter-piracy operation, the Somali piracy threat has worsened this year after showing some signs of improving in 2008 after foreign navies established a five-mile wide protection corridor that ranged up to 300 nautical miles off Somali's coast. As of mid-October 2009, the pirates had conducted almost 150 attacks on commercial vessels in the waters off the Horn of Africa since the beginning of the year. They succeeded in hijacking more than 40 ships and at least 270 hostages (RIA Novosti, October 21). Many of the recent attacks have occurred at great distances from Somalia's shores—including some in the Indian Ocean and even the Gulf of Oman—as the pirates have sought to prey on vessels outside the protection corridor (United Press International, November 19).

Chinese ships have suffered several prominent attacks. On October 19, the pirates seized a vessel owned by China Cosco Holding, the *De Xin Hai*, and its 25 crew members while they were conveying 76,000 metric tons of coal over 700 nautical miles from Somalia's coast (*New York Times*, October 22). Following the incident, PRC Foreign Ministry

spokesman Ma Zhaoxu said China would "make all-out efforts to rescue the hijacked ship and personnel," but no such operation occurred (*Time*, October 27). Instead, the PRC Ministry of Transport subsequently issued a warning that "Chinese ships must urgently steer as far away from the area as possible. Ships within the region must exercise caution and increase their vigilance" (RIA Novosti, October 21). In November, the pirates launched their most distant attack to date on a Hong Kong-flagged oil tanker sailing 1,000 nautical miles from Mogadishu.

This upsurge in maritime assaults may account for Beijing's recent efforts to strengthen the international response to the piracy challenge. In addition to hosting last month's international counter-piracy summit in Beijing, the PLAN in September conducted a three-day joint exercise with the Russian Navy in the Gulf of Aden that rehearsed capturing and detaining pirates. The Chinese warships that participated in these simulated search-and-detain operations included the *Zhoushan* and the *Xuzhou* along with support vessels (RIA Novosti, September 21).

Several considerations led the PRC leadership to make the unprecedented decision to deploy the PLAN on a counter-piracy mission around the Horn of Africa. China possesses one of the world's largest commercial shipping fleets and relies heavily on international maritime commerce, including for energy imports from the Persian Gulf which are carried on tankers that traverse regions potentially threatened from long-range pirates operating from Somalia [1]. Chinese policy makers and security experts have cited this dependence on foreign energy imports as a Chinese security vulnerability [2]. The PRC's counter-piracy efforts near Somalia enjoy the legitimacy of several UN Security Council resolutions calling on UN member states to curb piracy in the region. The counter-piracy operation also has the support of Somalia's transitional government. In addition, many other foreign navies are engaged in the same mission. The Somali campaign marks the first widespread participation of the world's rising naval powers—which besides China includes India and other non-NATO navies—in an active maritime operation distant from their shores [3]. On January 14, 2009, a Chinese delegation attended the founding meeting of the Contact Group on Piracy Off the Coast of Somalia, giving Beijing a leading role in this institution from the start (unlike in the case of such institutions as the Proliferation Security Initiative, which the PRC has resisted joining partly because China would have to accept a set of principles Beijing had no say in establishing). The Contact Group provides a mechanism to allow states and international organizations to exchange information on aspects of combating piracy off Somalia's coast [4].

In addition to whatever protection of China's shipping that results from the PLAN's participation in the counter-piracy operation around Somalia, the Chinese Navy and the PRC have benefited in other ways from supporting the mission. The Chinese sailors involved have had ample opportunities to improve their tactics, techniques, and procedures by working in close proximity with several more experienced navies. Rear Admiral Du Jingchen, commander of the first PLAN task force, earlier told the Chinese media while returning to his home port of Sanya that he used the 123-day patrol to test his sailors' capabilities, weapons, and support mechanisms as well as promote maritime defense diplomacy (*China Daily*, April 29). "The first anti-piracy fleet had zero experience," he explained, but it had learned valuable lessons applicable for future overseas PLAN missions. A week earlier, Zhuang Congyong, a researcher with the Naval Command Academy, likewise observed that, "The ability to go deep into the ocean to conduct integrated operations is a key criterion for a strong navy. The escort operation to the Gulf of Aden and Somali waters reflects and starts the transformation of our military strategy," Zhuang said, adding that, "The Chinese navy will conduct more long-distance escort missions in the future" (Xinhua News Agency, April 22). By engaging in such a high-profile operation, moreover, the PLAN can highlight its contribution to advancing China's foreign interests to PRC policy makers, including those determining the Navy's budget.

The Chinese government in turn has characterized its support for the counter-piracy operation as meeting Beijing's commitments as a benign international security actor (what some non-Chinese analyst have termed a responsible global stakeholder). It also confirms China's growing capacity and willingness to contribute to international humanitarian missions. The day after the PRC celebrated the 60th anniversary of the PLAN in April 2009, an editorial in the People's Daily Online lauded the Somalia operation on the grounds that, "The protection offered by the PLA fleet safeguards the national interests of China and projects a favorable image of China to the world." The commentary added that, "This mission indicates that as a responsible power of the international community, China is fulfilling its promise to advance the construction of a harmonious world, and is taking actions to uphold world peace and boost mutual development. At the same time, it is demonstrating to the world that China, currently in the course of peaceful development, is utilizing its own military power to provide 'public goods' to the international community" (People's Daily Online, April 24).

Yet, assuming a leadership position in the international counter-piracy coalition in the form of the SHADE

co-chairmanship appears to have been a step too far for Beijing's still cautious government, despite the encouragement offered the PRC by European and U.S. Navy commanders. In this regard, China's wavering over leading the maritime mission off Somalia is symptomatic of how Beijing has approached many other international security issues. Chinese policy makers stress their desire to support world peace and security, but they still shun leadership roles in prominent international institutions and endeavors seeking this end. In Central Asia, for instance, Chinese officials continue to defer to Moscow's primacy when it comes to many political and military questions, including those addressed in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

The PRC's most prominent security role has been with respect to the Korean Peninsula, where Beijing has played a key part in establishing and sustaining the Six-Party Talks. But even here the Chinese government has performed the role primarily of facilitator and mediator rather than that of leader. Instead of defining the terms of a preferred solution and seeking to impose it on the other parties, Beijing has sought to encourage Pyongyang and Washington to reconcile their differences through direct dialogue and use the multilateral framework of the talks to reach a comprehensive agreement that would also satisfy Seoul and Tokyo, who in turn are expected to provide financial support for any deal.

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NOTES

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2. U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *Annual Report 2009* (Washington, D.C.), p. 133, http://www.uscc.gov/annual_report/2009/chapter2_section_2.pdf.
3. Brian Wilson and James Kraska, "Anti-Piracy Patrols Presage Rising Naval Powers," *YaleGlobal*, 13 January 2009, <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=11808>.
4. "First Plenary Meeting of the Contact Group on Piracy Off the Coast of Somalia, New York, January 14, 2009," Fact Sheet, U.S. Department of State, January 20, 2009, <http://www.state.gov/t/pm/rls/fs/130610.htm>.
