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Premier Wen Jiabao

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**In a Fortnight**

**TAIWAN'S MILITARY SHORES UP INDIGENOUS DEFENSE CAPABILITIES**

By L.C. Russell Hsiao

While Taiwan is stepping up calls for the United States to sell the island new F-16 jets and diesel submarines, there are signs that the Taiwanese military has been shoring up the island's indigenously developed military capabilities. Recent pronouncements by a prominent Taiwanese legislator from the ruling *Kuomintang* (KMT) party revealed that the *Hsiung Feng* "Brave Wind" 2E surface-to-surface cruise missile system developed by the Chungshan Institute of Science and Technology may be deployed around the end of 2010. According to KMT Legislator Lin Yu-fang, who chairs the Legislative Yuan's National Defense Committee, the *Wan Chien* "Ten Thousand Swords" cluster bomb has also passed the air force's "initial operational testing" and will eventually be employed to augment the combat capabilities of its Indigenous Defensive Fighter (IDF) (*China Times*, August 30; September 8; *Liberty Times*, September 8).

These developments dovetail a recent U.S. announcement that Washington will sell new radar upgrades for Taiwan's IDF, which follows in line with Taiwanese efforts to upgrade its F-CK-1 A/B IDF, or *Ching-kuo*, into C/D "joint strike fighters" (*Defense News*, August 25). When equipped with the new *Wan Chien* "Ten Thousand Swords" cluster bomb, the Taiwanese Air Force would reportedly be able to strike China's military installations from more than 200 kilometers away (*Liberty Times*, September 8).

According to a Taiwanese military source cited by *Defense News*, the radar sale marks "phase two of the IDF's F-CK-1C/D *Hsiang Sheng* upgrade program" (*Defense News*, August 25). The release of the radar after a temporary hold might also signal

that Washington has reevaluated the target and approach of assisting Taiwan's defense needs. If the radar sales were part of a larger coordinated package, the framework would appear to be more focused on bolstering "industrial cooperation" between the two sides, which could help develop Taiwan's defense industrial capacity. Given strict controls, the extent of Taiwan's military modernization to meet China's growing military threat has been severely limited by what it can develop and manufacture domestically and more importantly, what the United States agrees to sell—which is becoming increasingly complicated.

Yet, there are conflicting signals emanating from Taiwan's military establishment. In the Ministry of Defense 2011 national defense budget, which was submitted to the Legislative Yuan on August 31, the budget of NT\$297.2 billion (\$9.27 billion) is NT\$200 million less than that of last year. This figure accounts for 16.6 percent of the nation's entire budget, which is less than three percent of GDP (2.73 percent), and the lowest in nearly five years. More importantly, of the total amount, NT\$272.7 billion was listed as open funds, while only NT\$24.5 billion (\$785.5 million) was budgeted for classified spending, which marks a decrease of nearly 40 percent (Central News Agency, August 31; *Liberty Times*, August 31). Yet, according to KMT Legislator Lin, while some weapons purchases originally scheduled for next year may be shelved or canceled, military production and research and development of counterattack or defensive weapons has remained steady (Central News Agency, August 31).

In spite of a thaw in bilateral ties since Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou assumed office in 2008, China's military modernization has continued unabated and is tilting the military balance in Beijing's favor. This trend is clearly reflected in both the 2010 U.S. Department of Defense's annual report on the Chinese military as well as the Taiwanese Ministry of Defense's report on China's military power. China's systematic development of sophisticated ballistic missiles in recent years has substantially expanded the inventory of its Second Artillery Corps and widened its operational reach. Of particular concern is the longer-range variant of the DF-21, which could be deployed into further hinterland and beyond the scope of Taiwan's defenses.

According to a senior Taiwanese intelligence official cited by the *Liberty Times*, China is planning to increase the existing estimated 1,500 missiles aimed at Taiwan to at least 1,800 (ETaiwannews, August 9). The announcement to deploy Hsiung Feng 2E missiles also comes in the wake of Taiwanese intelligence indications that China has deployed eight battalions of advanced S-300PMU2 long-range surface-to-air missiles in Fuqing county in Fujian province's Longtian Military Airbase (See "China-Taiwan

Up Missile Ante," *China Brief*, April 1).

Taiwan's Deputy Defense Minister Andrew Yang said in a report that the island is upgrading two missile batteries and adding four, anchored by Patriot III missiles from the United States. The defense shield is reportedly due in 2015 and will enable Taiwan to track incoming Chinese short-range missiles. The NT\$40 billion (\$1.25 billion) early-warning radar system can also track inbound ballistic and cruise missiles (Reuters, September 8).

Against the backdrop of China's growing conventional threat toward Taiwan, the initiatives undertaken by Taipei and Washington to shore up Taiwan's indigenous defense capabilities may reflect a deeper transformation in the U.S.-Taiwan defense relationship. As China continues its acquisition, development and deployment of new ballistic and cruise missile systems, it is increasingly putting U.S. assets in the region at risk. The destabilizing effects posed by China's increasing military assertiveness are also causing growing anxiety among its neighbors and strengthening U.S. ties with regional partners.

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## Premier Wen's "Southern Tour": Ideological Rifts in the CCP?

By Willy Lam

Two years before he is due to retire from the Chinese Communist Party's Politburo, Premier Wen Jiabao has issued his boldest-ever call for liberalization. While in the Guangdong boom town of Shenzhen in late August, the premier raised national eyebrows by playing up the pivotal role of political reform within the country's reform and modernization program. "Not only do we need to push forward reform of the economic structure, we must also push forward reform of the political structure," Wen said on the eve of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone (SEZ) (Xinhua News Agency, August 21).

Wen's unusually strong words have aroused controversy particularly because President Hu Jintao skirted the sensitive issue of political reform while marking the official celebration of the SEZ's 30<sup>th</sup> birthday on September 6. The stark contrast between the Wen and Hu speeches—and, in particular Wen's single-minded championship of political liberalization—has raised a host of questions about key issues in elite Chinese politics. Is the progressive-minded

premier engaged in a struggle with an “anti-reform” faction within the CCP? Is there an ideological split between the Premier and the President? Equally importantly, will Wen really go about picking up the threads of political reform, and if so, will he succeed?

Without the “guarantee” of political reform, Wen said in his August speech, “the fruits of the reform of the economic structure may be lost, and it will be impossible to realize the goal of modernization.” Dragging one’s feet on reform or retrogressing, he warned, “can only lead eventually to the road of perdition” (Xinhua News Agency, August 21; *People’s Daily*, August 22). A little over two weeks later, while speaking to Shenzhen cadres and guests from Hong Kong and Macau, President Hu praised the SEZ for “being brave in making changes and innovation and for not being fossilized [in thinking].” Yet while Hu pledged the CCP authorities’ continued support for Shenzhen’s “bold explorations,” the Party General Secretary urged officials in the go-go city to “resolutely uphold the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics as well as the socialist theoretical system with Chinese characteristics.” Hu added that Shenzhen must “continue to liberate its thinking and uphold the reform and open door policy to acquit itself of being a pacesetter in implementing the scientific theory of development and in promoting social harmony” (Xinhua News Agency, September 6; China News Service, September 6). In other words, Shenzhen must focus on economic—not political—reforms, and such endeavors must not deviate from “socialism with Chinese characteristics.”

In order to discern the significance of Wen’s speech, it is instructive to compare the series of liberal pronouncements made by the premier in recent years and his Shenzhen talk. At a National People’s Congress press conference in early 2007, Premier Wen became the first senior cadre to openly advocate the adoption of *pushi jiazhi*, or “universal values.” “Democracy, a [fair] legal system, freedom, human rights, egalitarianism... are not unique to capitalism,” Wen indicated. “They are values that all humankind is jointly going after.” In April this year, Wen published an article in *People’s Daily* eulogizing the CCP’s liberal icon, the late Party Chief Hu Yaobang. The premier, who had worked under Hu from 1985 to 1987, praised his former boss’s “superior working style” as well as “lofty morality and openness [of character]”. The Wen article also sparked speculation that he might try to rehabilitate the reputation of another late party chief Zhao Ziyang, who was sacked for supporting no-holds-barred, “Westernized” political reforms (Xinhua News Agency, March 15, 2007; *People’s Daily*, April 15, 2009; *New York Times*, April 15).

While these opinions constituted a departure from the

party’s conservative mainstream, Wen had refrained from criticizing his colleagues. The Shenzhen fusillade is remarkable because it amounted to a warning to—and a rebuke of—cadres who have failed to implement the edicts of illustrious reformers such as Deng Xiaoping. “Staying put and regressing will not only doom the attainments of 30 years of the reform and open-door policy—and the valuable opportunities of development—but also suffocate the vitality of socialism with Chinese characteristics and go against the wishes of the people,” Wen said. Moreover, parts of Wen’s speech—especially the caveat about enemies of reform shepherding the nation down a “road to perdition”—were repetitions of what late patriarch Deng Xiaoping said during his famous “tour of the south” in 1992. While visiting the Shenzhen and Zhuhai SEZs, the chief architect of reform delivered a stern warning to the CCP’s conservative faction (Xinhua News Agency, February 19, 2009; *People’s Daily*, February 19, 2009).

Who, then, is Wen targeting? At the very least, mid- to senior-ranked cadres who have cast aspersions on the premier’s pro-reformist edicts. Following Wen’s favorable assessment of *pushi jiazhi*, a number of crypto-Maoist academics and commissars in influential units such as the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) slammed the premier for introducing “dangerous” Western ideas. Take, for example, well-known CASS Marxist scholar Hou Huiqing, who made a thinly veiled attack against Wen in a 2008 article in the *Journal of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*. Hou asserted that people who praised “universal values” were “challenging mainstream socialist ideology” and “submitting themselves to the strong-willed discourse of the West.” At the same time, CASS President Chen Kuiyuan noted, “we must not engage in blind worship [of the West] and we must not extol Western values such as so-called universal values” (Chinaelections.org, June 28, 2008; *Journal of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*, March 19, 2009). In a recently circulated Internet article, commissar Zhang Qinde, a retired official at the Policy Research Office of the CCP Central Committee, went so far as to single out Wen for having committed “six major errors.” These included fomenting “capitalism with Chinese characteristics;” encouraging “bourgeois liberalization” or wholesale Westernization; and even “fanning the flames of the Zhao Ziyang Faction” (Ming Pao [Hong Kong], June 9; Maoflag.Net [Beijing], April 23).

There is speculation that Wen’s Shenzhen speech is emblematic of an ideological rift between the premier and President Hu, who as party general secretary is in charge of the party and country’s overall political orientations (*Apple Daily* [Hong Kong], August 31; *Asiasentinel.com*, August 30; *Frontline* [Hong Kong monthly], July 2010). For the past few years, Hu, together with Politburo

members Li Changchun and Liu Yunshan—who have direct control over the party’s ideological and propaganda apparatuses—has been trying to enrich what he calls the party’s “socialist theoretical system” by reviving orthodox values such as “sinicizing and popularizing Marxism” (See “Chinese leaders revive Marxist orthodoxy,” *China Brief*, April 29). For example, in a late 2008 speech marking the 30th anniversary of the inauguration of the era of reform, Hu said the CCP “never copies the political system and model of the West”—and that it must avoid the “deviant path” of capitalist values. (Xinhua News Agency, December 18, 2008; *People’s Daily*, December 19, 2008). And in his Shenzhen speech, Hu called on local cadres to “push forward the construction of the system of socialist core values, firm up beliefs in socialist ideals with Chinese characteristics, and to popularize patriotism, collectivism and socialist ideas” (Xinhua News Agency, September 6; *People’s Daily*, September 6).

The belief that Wen may not see eye to eye with his conservative Politburo colleagues is supported by the fact that several of Wen’s speeches over the past year have not been fully reported by the state media. For example, in reporting on Wen’s activities in the SEZ last month, Shenzhen Television exorcized Wen’s remarks about political liberalization. At the height of labor unrest in Guangdong and other provinces earlier this year, the premier told Hong Kong-based Phoenix TV that the incidents reflected “deep-seated contradictions” in Chinese society. Not a single official media picked up Wen’s seminal remark. Given Wen’s rank and prominence, the decision to underplay his speeches could only have been made at the very top of the party hierarchy (Yazhou Zhoukan [Hong Kong weekly], September 5; HKreporter.com, August 30).

In light of conservative party leaders’ negative views about reform, it is doubtful whether, having made a bold call for liberalization, Premier Wen is willing and able to follow this up with concrete policies. Several avant-garde academics and thinkers have given Wen high marks for re-hoisting the flag of political reform. Zhou Ruijin, a liberal theorist and former deputy chief editor of *People’s Daily*, praised Wen for “directly and comprehensively raising the goal of political reform.” “While some people are blindly optimistic about ‘the China model,’ Wen has the wisdom of seeing the danger of freezing reforms,” he said. According to liberal party elder Du Daozheng, who was once close to Zhao Ziyang, the premier is capable of taking substantive measures to realize his goals. Wen was “genuinely and resolutely committed to implementing the Deng Xiaoping line,” Du indicated. “He is firmly, clearly and unyieldingly pushing forward reform and the open-door policy” (Yazhou Zhoukan, August 30; Sina.com, August 28).

Other heavyweight intellectuals, however, gravitate toward the view that Wen is just paying lip service to high-minded goals. Well-known writer Yu Jie, who recently published *Wen Jiabao: China’s Best Actor* in Hong Kong, believes that the premier is merely trying to burnish his liberal credentials for the history books. “Wen Jiabao is not Zhao Ziyang,” Yu pointed out after reading Wen’s Shenzhen speech. “There is thunder but no rain. It is unrealistic to see Wen as the star who can save China” (*Apple Daily*, September 1; BBC News, August 16). Moreover, it is important to note that like his predecessor, former premier Zhu Rongji, Wen’s portfolio consists entirely in economic matters. He has little say on matters relating to ideology, culture or propaganda.

In public statements the past year, senior officials and media commentators have largely steered clear of the controversial issue of political reform. The exception is a series of articles distinguishing between “two kinds of political reform” and “two kinds of democracy,” namely, the dubious, capitalist-style variety in the West versus socialist political and democratic norms. For example, in an early September commentary entitled “Don’t confuse two kinds of democracy,” *Guangming Daily* lambasted liberal cadres for “failing to distinguish between socialist and capitalist democracies” and for “having arbitrarily imposed Western concepts on the reality of China’s political development.” In an apparent dig at Wen, the *Guangming Daily* commentator noted that those who talk about political liberalization in Shenzhen should first clarify the question of “who will be running the show” after such reforms have run their course (*Guangming Daily*, September 5; Newcenturynews.com, September 5). In other words, conservatives are arguing that both Deng- and Wen-style political reform may result in the CCP losing its stronghold on power.

Instead of political reform as defined by liberal leaders such as Deng Xiaoping and Hu Yaobang, mainstream cadres, including President Hu, have been focusing on administrative streamlining and, more recently, “innovation in social management.” In an early September article, the Xinhua News Agency cited Hu’s ideas about social management, which included “safeguarding and improving people’s livelihood” and “promoting social equality and justice.” Moreover, the main thrust of social management is not large-scale political change but ways and means to foster socio-economic harmony by defusing contradictions among China’s disparate classes and interest groups (Xinhua News Agency, September 4; *Legal Daily*, July 2). The possibilities that the CCP leadership may revisit political reform is also affected by the fact that preparations for large-scale personnel changes at the upcoming 18th CCP Congress have begun and honchos

of various factions are preoccupied with pushing the promotion prospects of their protégés. Even assuming that Wen is totally committed to resuscitating reform, the odds that the 68-year-old premier—who appears to be a minority of one within the CCP's top echelon—can do much in this regard are slim.

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## China's Evolving Anti-Access Approach: “Where's the Nearest (U.S.) Carrier?”

By Andrew S. Erickson

China's military planners covet the ability to prevent U.S. and allied forces from intervening effectively in the event of a future Taiwan Strait crisis and to constrain the latter's influence on China's maritime periphery, which contains several disputed zones of core strategic importance to Beijing. In order to achieve the aforementioned goals, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been pursuing a two-level approach to military modernization, with consistent focus on increasingly formidable high-end ‘anti-access/area denial’ (A2/AD) capabilities to support major combat operations in China's ‘Near Seas’ (Yellow, East, and South) and their approaches, and relatively low-intensity but gradually growing capabilities to influence strategic conditions further afield (e.g., in the Indian Ocean) in China's favor.

In July-August 1995 and March 1996, concerns about Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui's measures that Chinese leaders associated with moves toward *de jure* independence of Taiwan led Beijing to conduct missile tests and other military exercises near the Strait. To deter further escalation, then U.S. President William Clinton dispatched two carrier strike groups (CSGs) toward the region in March 1996, later remarking, “When word of crisis breaks out in Washington, it's no accident the first question that comes to everyone's lips is: where is the nearest carrier?” [1]. In the unfortunate event of a future U.S.-China military crisis,

however, it is Chinese leaders who would be asking where the nearest U.S. carrier is, albeit for the opposite reason.

Since 1996, China has methodically developed and acquired the technologies that could hold U.S. and allied military platforms and their supporting assets at risk in the Western Pacific [2], thereby positioning China on the affordable end of any asymmetric arms races. This matches Beijing's larger ‘active defense’ military doctrine, which is based partially on ‘non-linear, non-contact and asymmetric’ operations. Non-linear operations involve launching attacks from multiple platforms in an unpredictable fashion that range across an opponent's operational and strategic depth. Non-contact operations entail targeting enemy platforms and weapons systems with precision attacks from a distance sufficient to potentially preclude the enemy from striking back directly. Asymmetric operations involve exploiting inherent physics-based limitations to match Chinese strengths against an opponent's weaknesses [3].

At present, China's submarine-focused navy and still-limited air and naval aviation forces can only support a more limited strategy of sea denial and offensive counter-air as opposed to outright control. This A2/AD strategy is ever-more-potent, however, thanks to a vast and growing inventory of short-range ballistic and cruise missiles deployed in coastal units and on a variety of air, surface, and undersea platforms. The PLA is improving rapidly in many areas, and has manifold advantages on which to draw, particularly in its proximity to, and focus on, the most likely scenario—a multi-vector PLA offensive to pressure Taiwan into reunification.

### POTENTIAL GAME CHANGERS

In addition to widespread incremental improvements, China is on the verge of achieving several paradigm-shifting breakthroughs: anti-ship ballistic missiles, or ASBMs; streaming cruise missile attacks; precise and reliable indigenous satellite navigation, high quality real time satellite imagery, and target-locating data; and anti-satellite (ASAT) and other space-related weapons, which might be used to disrupt U.S. access to information, command and control, and ability to remotely control weapons. Such achievements promise to radically improve China's A2/AD capabilities by allowing it to hold at risk a wide variety of surface- and air-based assets were they to enter strategically vital zones on China's contested maritime periphery in the event of conflict.

Of perhaps greatest concern, Beijing is pursuing an ASBM based on the DF-21D/CSS-5 solid propellant medium-range ballistic missile. A DF-21D ASBM would have two stages, and a reentry vehicle (RV) with a seeker, control

bins and a warhead (unitary, submunitions, or conventional electro-magnetic pulse). In operation, some combination of land-, sea- and space-based sensors would first detect the relevant sea-surface target. While locating an aircraft carrier has been likened to finding a needle in a haystack, this particular ‘needle’ has a large radar cross section, emits radio waves and is surrounded by airplanes. Simply looking for the biggest radar reflection to target will tend to locate the largest ship—and the largest ship will usually be an aircraft carrier. The ASBM would be launched from a transporter-erector-launcher on a ballistic trajectory aimed roughly at the target, most likely a CSG. After jettisoning its stages, the RV would use its seeker (possibly radar-homing or infrared) to locate and attack the CSG. This could be supplemented by targeting updates if necessary. The DF-21D’s 1,500 km+ range could result in denial of access to a large maritime area, far beyond Taiwan and the First Island Chain into the Western Pacific.

Admiral Robert F. Willard, Commander, U.S. Pacific Command, recently stated in Tokyo: “To our knowledge, [China’s ASBM] has undergone repeated tests, and it is probably very close to being operational” (*Asahi Shimbun*, August 24). What sort of ASBM “tests” China is conducting remains unclear, but the sequence and convergence of multiple factors suggest that some form of flight tests may be useful and important for deploying such capabilities. While system components may be tested separately, and on the ground in many cases, a fully integrated flight test is likely to be necessary to give the PLA confidence in approving full-scale production and deploying ASBMs in an operational state. If and when the DF-21D is developed sufficiently, particularly during a time of strategic tension or crisis, Beijing might reveal a test to the world—with or without advance warning—in some way geared to influencing official and public opinion in the United States, Taiwan, Japan, and elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific [4]. Alternatively, unpublicized flight tests could be conducted to deter foreign militaries without alarming foreign publics (though information might ultimately reach them regardless). The fact of a hit, however manipulated and revealed, could change the strategic equation that planners on the both sides use in making difficult decisions.

China has a clear and compelling strategic rationale, sufficient resources (from the world’s second largest *official* [emphasis added] defense budget at \$78 billion), and the requisite technological expertise (having prioritized ballistic missiles and related infrastructure since the late 1950s) to progress rapidly in ASBM development. Patterns in a wide variety of open source publications offer indications that this is in fact occurring. China may already be producing DF-21D rocket motors, having reportedly completed a purpose-built factory in August 2009 [5]. Likewise important is the recent launch of multiple advanced *Yaogan*

surveillance satellites for a total of 11 in operation, three of which were apparently placed in the same orbit on March 5 (See “PLA Expands Network of Military Reconnaissance Satellites,” *China Brief*, August 19). Another possible indication is a recent news release attributed to China Aerospace Science & Industry Corporation citing Wang Genbin, deputy director of its 4th Department, as stating that the DF-21D can now hit “slow-moving targets” with a circular error probability of (meaning half of missiles fired will strike within) dozens of meters [6]. Retired Lieutenant Colonel Mark Stokes, USAF, and Tiffany Ma hinted that the Second Artillery may be constructing its first ASBM missile brigade facilities (Unit 96166) in the northern Guangdong Province municipality of Shaoguan (*AsiaEye*, August 3). A recent *Global Times* editorial goes so far as to advocate that to end “speculation” by Western intelligence agencies, “China ought to convince the international community of its reliable carrier-killing capacity as soon as possible” and “should also let Westerners know under what circumstances will such weaponry be used” (*Global Times* [English edition], September 6).

An ASBM system of systems, if developed and deployed successfully, would be the world’s first weapons system capable of targeting a moving CSG hundreds of kilometers from China’s shores from long-range, land-based mobile launchers. This could pose a new type of threat to the U.S. Navy qualitatively different from that of, for example, anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs). Unlike with ASCMs, the United States has not had decades to address the new challenge; interception is far more complex and time sensitive; and, even assuming that they can be located with confidence, highly concealable land-based launch platforms or supporting C4ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) infrastructure cannot be targeted without contemplating highly escalatory strikes in mainland China.

#### TRACKING A MOVING TARGET

Central to maximizing Beijing’s ability to employ ASBMs and related systems will be effective utilization of ISR, the collection and processing of information concerning potential military targets. An emerging network of space-based sensors promises to radically improve the targeting capabilities of China’s Navy and other services with which it may operate, for example, the Second Artillery.

China’s satellite capabilities, while far from cutting-edge in many respects, are improving rapidly. China today has only a fraction of the overall space capability of the United States, still has major gaps in coverage in every satellite application and relies to a considerable extent on technology acquired through non-military programs with

foreign companies and governments. China will likely purchase commercial imagery products to supplement its current surveillance capabilities until it is able to deploy a more advanced set of reconnaissance satellites in the coming decade. Such a capability could greatly improve China's ability to monitor force deployments on its periphery. Beijing is combining foreign knowledge with increasingly robust indigenous capabilities to produce significant advances of its own. China's satellite developers are experimenting with a new workplace culture that emphasizes modern management, standardization, quality control, and emerging mass production ability. China has developed a full range of military, civilian and dual-use satellites of various mission areas and sizes.

Improvements in access to foreign and domestic navigation-positioning systems increase the accuracy of Chinese missiles and other position-dependent equipment, and development of a viable independent system could improve Chinese access to reliable signals in conflict. China's current four-satellite *Beidou-1* constellation, deployed in 2007, is limited to supporting operations on China's immediate maritime periphery and providing navigation coverage accurate to within about 20 m. To reliably support broader operations, China is deploying a 35-satellite (5 geostationary, 30 medium earth orbit) constellation—called *Beidou-2/Compass*—that would provide much-improved accuracy, with regional navigation and communications coverage anticipated by 2011 and global navigation coverage by 2015-20 [7]. Four satellites have been launched thus far.

Given their potential for high resolution and accuracy, satellites will enhance Chinese ISR capabilities. China's imaging satellites with sufficient resolution to play a role in detecting and tracking a CSG are currently inadequate for continuous satellite coverage based on revisit times for specific ocean areas. China may, however, launch sufficient satellites to achieve coverage regionally (8-12 civilian, plus additional military) by 2015 and globally (a further 8-12 civilian, plus additional military) by 2020 [8]. Even before then, China's emphasis on small satellites and small solid-fueled rockets may allow it to achieve a satellite surge capability. China's low-cost launchers (e.g. *Kaituozhe*) may offer a combination of rapid turnaround and efficiency. The upgrading of Wenchang Satellite Launch Center, China's fourth, indicates a commitment to cutting-edge infrastructure [9].

#### CONCLUSION

Emerging Chinese A2/AD capabilities should concern not only the U.S. Navy but also the U.S. military as a whole, whose operations in East Asia writ large could be affected.

Similar challenges threatening to hold U.S. platforms at risk in vital areas of the global maritime commons are emerging in the Persian Gulf and might eventually materialize elsewhere.

Ongoing Chinese limitations include deficiencies in human capital, realism of training, hardware and operations, C4ISR, and real-time data fusion, as well as uncertainties on China's part about the extent to which it can detect targets and achieve geographical and temporal fires deconfliction with existing systems and strategies. Chinese ASBM development in particular faces serious challenges, e.g., in the areas of detection, targeting, data fusion, joint service operations, and bureaucratic coordination. A senior U.S. Department of Defense official recently indicated that, "the primary area ... where we see them still facing roadblocks is in integrating the missile system with the C4-ISR. And they still have a ways to go before they manage to get that integrated so that they have an operational and effective system" [10].

Yet China has many ways to mitigate limitations for kinetic operations around Taiwan or other areas of its maritime periphery and potentially for non-kinetic peacetime operations further afield. The PLA can augment C2 and target deconfliction by employing landlines, high-power line-of-sight communications, advanced planning, and geographic and temporal segregation. Its strength is relative to its objective, and here China may be extremely capable of achieving its specific goals. China need not keep pace with the U.S. technologically for its incremental developments to have disproportionate impact. The U.S. is inherently exposed because it operates offensively on exterior lines, and must struggle to maintain technological superiority to reduce this vulnerability.

China's diverse, rapidly-evolving, interactive C4ISR architecture remains different than that of the U.S., even as it increases in coverage and sophistication. To reach the next level of capability in safeguarding China's core interests, the PLA has to be able to locate a CSG on the ocean, but only in regions from which the CSG can strike China, and that is necessarily different from what the U.S. military has to do. Given the Chinese Navy's cultivation of a maritime militia and civilian vessels, and the PLA's apparent emphasis on cyber capabilities, it is not inconceivable that at least some rudimentary targeting data might be obtained via unconventional means. These factors suggest that U.S. analysts must not 'mirror image' when assessing China's ISR targeting capabilities or assume that satellite capabilities are themselves definitive.

A2/AD affords China a strategic defensive posture along interior lines. Overall U.S. qualitative, and even numerical,

superiority in advanced platforms and systems is of limited relevance for two reasons. First, the platforms most likely to be employed are those that are based within immediate striking distance at the outbreak of conflict; here China inherently enjoys theater concentration, while U.S. platforms are dispersed globally. Second, aircraft sent to the theater needs airfields from which to operate; here U.S. regional options are limited geographically and politically, and are vulnerable to Chinese missile attack.

While conflict is by no means foreordained, and interaction and cooperation should be pursued whenever feasible and equitable, the challenge presented by China's emerging A2/AD infrastructure cannot be ignored. Long before a crisis, and to deter one from ever erupting, U.S. leaders need to ask, "Where are *threats* to our carriers, and how can we counter them?"

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#### NOTES

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## China's Emerging Debate on Military Transparency

By Isaac B. Kardon

A reconsideration of traditionally skeptical attitudes about military transparency appears to be underway in China. Whereas Beijing formerly rejected Western calls for greater military transparency—arguing that transparency benefits the strong at the expense of the weak—a new calculus seems to be emerging that reflects China's greater confidence in its own strength. As Chinese military capabilities have improved in both relative and absolute terms, the same logic that justified wariness of military transparency now recommends it as a useful tactic. Recent comments by Chinese officials and experts, along with some adjustments to military practice, suggest that greater transparency is now seen as an instrument capable of serving useful political and deterrent functions.

China's interpretation of transparency nonetheless remains conditional and selective, elevating optics and public relations above substantive disclosures. Indeed, the Chinese practice of military transparency is marked by its omissions. Rather than embracing transparency as an end in itself, the PLA selectively addresses foreign demands for greater transparency without necessarily "providing information about military capabilities and policies that allow other countries to assess the compatibility of those capabilities with a country's stated security goals" [1]. The subsequent analysis of some recent statements and behaviors provides insight into how the risks and rewards of increased military transparency are portrayed within China, offering some indication of likely PLA practices in the future.

#### CHINESE MILITARY TRANSPARENCY IN CONTEXT

Beijing has traditionally viewed Western calls for greater military transparency as an indirect way to disadvantage a less capable Chinese military. Weaker states, they reason,

have little incentive to publicize capabilities insufficient to protect “core interests [2]”; in fact, for weaker states, “low military transparency is a way to protect themselves, by being ambiguous rather than specific” (*China Daily*, October 25, 2007). This stance precluded much transparency about *tactical or operational capabilities*. Instead, Chinese officials maintained that “transparency about *strategic intentions* is the most basic and important” sort of transparency (Zhongguo Xinwen She, October 23, 2009). (That distinction between intentions and capabilities is drawn most pointedly on nuclear issues, where Beijing deflects inquiries about types and numbers of nuclear weapons by citing a transparent Chinese nuclear doctrine.)

China also holds that “military transparency is relative and not absolute” (*China Daily*, October 25, 2007). This implies only a dim view of the value of transparency for a relatively weak power, leaving room for different practices under different circumstances. The authoritative *Science of Military Strategy* condones transparency, albeit conditionally: “foreign policies and military strategy and strength may be publicized according to the country’s conditions and on the premise that national military secrets will not be leaked” [3]. Academy of Military Sciences senior researcher Major General Luo Yuan elaborated on those conditions by stating, “the degree and scope of military transparency must be adjusted according to...the international situation in a particular period of time” (*China Daily*, October 25, 2007).

The “country’s conditions” on the domestic front and an “international situation” of increasing Chinese relative power may now provide favorable context for China’s evolving brand of military transparency.

#### DOMESTIC DIVIDENDS

Officials and popular press now argue that greater military transparency can help generate grassroots support from Chinese citizens, facilitate PLA institutional development and justify military budgets. This newly public discussion indicates changing calculations of transparency’s political utility in the domestic arena.

MND spokesman Hu Changmin asserted that “the main goal in our armed forces’ openness and transparency is to enhance the masses’ understanding of national defense and army building...” [4], while Major General Luo Yuan cited the Chinese people’s “right to know” how their government spends on the military and argued that awareness of military achievements will “nurture patriotism” (*Ta Kung Pao* [Hong Kong], September 8, 2009). Such populist themes are not uncommon, but are

used here to define useful domestic political functions for military transparency.

A July 1 opinion piece is the richest example of this line of argument, calling on the PLA to “improve military transparency for the Chinese people” (*Global Times*, July 1; People’s Daily Online, July 4). While nominally countering foreign demands for greater transparency, the argument that the PLA can and should be more transparent toward the Chinese public is framed in ways likely to resonate with popular audiences and PRC leadership.

The author, Liu Xiao [5], praises numerous foreign examples of military transparency, notes precedents from the PLA’s history as a people’s army and cites existing military regulations that prescribe transparent behavior. He goes on to sound a familiar, populist trope about the need for equitable treatment for the “common people” of China, who enjoy less access to their own military than foreign officials, journalists, Hong Kong and Macau residents, or the Party-state elite. By pointedly referencing the demands of Chinese citizens for more access to the Chinese military, he plays on Beijing’s sensitivity to public opinion and social stability.

The author’s implicit message is the need to build popular support for defense spending. This is especially salient given slower growth in the 2011 defense budget and the sense that the Taiwan issue no longer warrants automatic budget increases. Liu suggests that common people should be afforded an opportunity to kick the tires (both figuratively and literally) of the military enterprise they are being asked to support.

His message parallels broader public demands for greater responsiveness and accountability in spheres of government and Party activity beyond fiscal matters. Opening military facilities or events, however scripted the exercise, could conceivably bolster the Party’s claims to legitimacy and generate grassroots support for the nation’s armed forces.

These new arguments about the domestic efficacy of transparency are couched in distinctly Chinese terms and pitched to an entirely Chinese audience, suggesting a new instrumental view of military transparency that is at least nominally independent from foreign pressure.

#### MILITARY TRANSPARENCY AS DETERRENCE

Recent public comments and military exercises suggest that Beijing aims to employ transparency not only as a domestic tool, but as an instrument of deterrence. Numerous expert comments confirm the long-standing Chinese view that military transparency is advantageous for the strong at

the expense of the weak. They also indicate China's shift towards the strong end of the power spectrum, where transparency may serve a deterrent role.

*The Science of Military Strategy* is explicit about how transparency can function as a deterrent: "showing a disposition of strength to the enemy is to display clearly one's deterrent force... [with] such deterrent forms as large-scale military review, joint military exercise, and military visit, etc" [6]. China's own forays into this mode of transparency were not acknowledged as deterrent signals—such behavior being understood as the exclusive province of coercive or hegemonic actors. As PLA National Defense University (NDU) researcher Lu Yin noted, "obviously, transparency is in favor of the strong, as deterrence. Consequently, the stronger countries tend to make full use of military transparency as an instrument to exert pressure on or even bully weak countries" (China Daily Online, October 29, 2009).

Especially since the Cheonan incident, Chinese actions and comments have been less oblique about the potential deterrent function of military transparency. Most explicitly, a recent editorial bore the headline, "Transparent drills add edge to deterrence" (*Global Times*, July 1). The editorial points to the July Chinese naval exercises in the East China Sea as an example of how military transparency can "extend the reach of conventional deterrence" and serve a "crucial role in maintaining effective deterrence." Naval experts were also explicit in that these and other drills were effective in a "deterrent role" (Qilu Zhoukan Online, August 6).

Such "transparent" practices are also evident in the more frequent and better publicized demonstrations of modern weapons systems (including ballistic missile defenses, advanced indigenous combat fighters and nuclear submarines, and the anticipated test of an anti-ship ballistic missile). The January 2010 mid-course anti-ballistic missile (ABM) intercept test is a straightforward example of this phenomenon, combining the demonstration of strategically significant military equipment—a clear deterrent signal—with a concerted attempt to publicize the event as an illustration of Chinese transparency.

#### TRANSPARENCY AS PAGEANTRY

Closer observation suggests that China's receptive noises about military transparency may be less meaningful than they sound. The PLA prefers a brand of military transparency mostly consisting of style and pageantry (especially in parades, carefully scripted exercises, and stage-managed demonstrations) rather than substantial disclosures or demonstrations of operational capability.

This selective approach reflects concerns that excessive transparency will reveal weakness or lack of combat capabilities, and is reinforced by Chinese and Communist traditions of tightly scripted public messaging. Such rehearsed displays do not provide credible demonstrations of combat capabilities, and are therefore less effective as deterrent signals (See "Military Parades Demonstrate Chinese Concept of Deterrence," *China Brief*, April 16, 2009).

The 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary parade on October 1, 2009 provides a case in point. Beijing publicized the event as a clear demonstration of transparency and showcased 52 new weapons systems. The MND was explicit about the purpose of this disclosure: "the military review is in itself an important move by which China increases its military transparency" [7]. Yet despite impressing domestic audiences, the review did not persuade critical, informed foreign observers of the PLA's ability to deploy this equipment effectively in combat [8]. Similarly, tests of systems like the ABM are unconvincing when critical C4ISR capabilities necessary for effective use are not demonstrated.

Some Chinese experts acknowledge the limitations of this superficial approach to transparency. "Parades are not actual war," said NDU military expert Li Daguang, "and the war-fighting capabilities of many of those weapons and equipment have not been demonstrated yet. We should not blindly exaggerate our military strength" (*Global Times Online*, January 4). Major General Luo Yuan reinforced this judgment, pointing out that "We [China] practice transparency through military exercises and military parades. The U.S. does not hold many parades. Rather, it practices transparency through wars" (*Guoji Xianqu Daobao Online*, December 15, 2009). Though many of the weapons systems in question are public knowledge, certain key Chinese capabilities remain deliberately unconfirmed.

If more realistic military exercises or tests of military systems announced in advance were to fail or otherwise demonstrate serious deficiencies, this would undermine deterrence—and tarnish Beijing's carefully cultivated public image. It may be that papering over opacity with pageantry remains a more effective deterrent than revealing underwhelming capabilities with transparency. Lingering uncertainty about the true extent and functionality of its capabilities may therefore account for some of China's cheap talk—and chronic foot-dragging—on transparency.

#### CONCLUSIONS

These diverse comments and actions suggest that military transparency is a subject of real debate within China.

The PRC's shift from "weak" to "strong" appears to be a primary driver for this change. Yet transparency's utility—whether to aid deterrence or reduce conflict and miscalculation—ultimately relies on the credibility of the "transparent" gestures. Showmanship and rhetoric are no substitute for systematic transparency about capabilities, and tend to distort deterrent signals. While employing a narrow form of transparency has some utility for the Chinese—especially on the domestic front—the capabilities themselves may not yet be sufficiently evolved to justify more meaningful transparent measures.

Meanwhile, military transparency is now viewed not only as a sop for foreign criticism and a deterrent signal, but as a potent domestic political tool to advance PLA institutional development and fiscal needs. These plural uses raise questions about intended audiences for Beijing's military displays. Pressures to satisfy a nationalistic domestic audience eager for assertiveness may run at cross-purposes to China's aims to reassure and pacify its Asian neighbors of its benign intent. Pageantry is one temporary solution for this, by entertaining the domestic audience and nominally meeting some foreign demands without unduly alarming others with demonstrations of real capabilities. Yet, superficial displays are not sufficient to deter strong powers like America—and may even lead to miscalculations of China's actual capabilities. Sending tailored signals of deterrence for specific actors and situations (in response to U.S.-ROK drills, for example) will require significantly more evidence of the operational effectiveness of Chinese weapons, communicated in a more sophisticated fashion.

China's logic still suggests that improvements in PLA capabilities are likely to produce greater transparency over time. The conditional, instrumental and domestically-gearred nature of Chinese views of military transparency, however, demands further scrutiny. The practice of military transparency in China will not necessarily evolve in accord with Western norms or expectations.

Finally, China's use of the military to send deterrent signals will raise questions about how a stronger China intends to use its increased military capabilities. Even as China addresses foreign calls for increased transparency about its military capabilities, it will face persistent questions about what these capabilities signal about future intentions. Only real military transparency will reveal the extent to which those capabilities cohere with its stated intentions.

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## Ryukyu Chain in China's Island Strategy

By James R. Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara

In late August the Japanese daily *Yomiuri Shimbun* reported that the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) intend to stage their first-ever island defense exercises in December. The maneuvers will be held in concert with U.S. Navy forces to refine plans for recapturing the lightly protected Ryukyu Islands from a hostile—presumably Chinese—invading force (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, August 20). To date, the response from China has been rather muted

considering the stakes it faces (Asia Times, August 31). As the first installment in this series on Japanese maritime strategy demonstrated, China's People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has been making efforts to break out of the first island chain and operate freely in the Western Pacific, either to threaten the east coast of Taiwan or for some other purpose. Occupying one or more of the Ryukyus offers one way for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to do so. Once ensconced within the island chain, PLA forces could drive off allied navies, keeping Tokyo and Washington from slamming the nautical gateway shut.

After decades of declining to dispute Chinese access to the Pacific, Tokyo has started taking the prospect of Sino-Japanese maritime competition more seriously, and it grasps the geographic dimension of any such contest. Indeed, the editors of *Asahi Shimbun* recently fretted that Prime Minister Naoto Kan's Advisory Council on Security and Defense Capabilities had issued a report that espoused modifying the government's National Defense Program Guidelines. The Guidelines shape JSDF strategy and forces and thus constitute an indicator of how the government views the security setting. The editors interpreted the Advisory Council report as embracing "the logic of force." For them it marks a dangerous step back from Japan's pacifist traditions (*Asahi Shimbun*, August 28).

That there is an antagonistic element to Sino-Japanese relations, then, is far from obvious to many Japanese, who quarrel among themselves over the nature of China's rise and its security implications for their nation. Former Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba, for example, recently told the Beijing-Tokyo Forum, "There is no need for us to keep stressing that China is a threat. The China-threat theory in Japan has turgidly stirred unease among the people" (Xinhua News Agency, August 31). Accordingly, interactions between the two Asian heavyweights defy easy prognosis. Trade and commerce are knitting their economies together even as strategic ambivalence buffets bilateral ties. Conflicting impulses and trends have given rise to what the Japanese-mainstream dubs a "politically cold and economically hot" relationship. While officialdom refrains from portraying China's ascent as a challenge to the U.S.-led Asian order, the planned Ryukyu exercises indicate that Tokyo has quietly taken to hedging its bets.

#### PROSPECTIVE CONTINGENCIES AT SEA

The Japanese armed forces must contend with a variety of contingencies involving the Ryukyus. One possibility is a narrowly focused Chinese attack designed to open a corridor through the archipelago. PLA forces might capture islands adjoining one or two straits through the archipelago. A prime candidate is Miyako Island, which

abuts both the Miyako and Ishigaki straits, the passages of choice for PLAN flotillas in recent years judging by their deployment patterns [1]. Missile-armed troops emplaced on Miyako could safeguard PLAN shipping through each strait, letting the island perform double duty.

Just to the south, Ishigaki Island offers another attractive target. Chinese skippers might favor Miyako Strait from a navigational standpoint. It is deeper and broader than the Ishigaki Strait, offering more maneuvering room and more scope for submerged transit. Yet vessels essaying the northern route must cross under the shadow of Okinawa, within range of allied weaponry. Consequently, the Ishigaki Strait could become the PLAN's preferred exit from the near seas. And indeed, the much-discussed intrusion of a Chinese *Han*-class nuclear attack submarine in 2004 took place in this southern passage [2]. Occupying *both* islands would grant the PLA full control of the southern passage and partial control of the northern one, holding open both options and diversifying the Chinese operational portfolio. Some signs suggest that the JSDF is starting to take this prospect seriously. The military is considering stationing small contingents on the two islands (*Japan Today*, July 20).

Alternatively, the PLA might wrest the entire Ryukyu chain from Japan, opening up the full range of possibilities. Either way, an island campaign would further several purposes. It would promote what the Pentagon terms "anti-access/area denial" (A2/AD) operations, meaning efforts to bar maritime Asia to U.S. reinforcements while keeping forces already in the theater from entering such areas as the Taiwan Strait. Operating between the island chains, PLAN submarines and surface action groups would mount a defense-in-depth against U.S. Navy expeditionary groups steaming west from bases like Guam, Pearl Harbor, or San Diego. Missile and torpedo attacks would inflict serious damage while depleting fuel, ammunition, and other stores these forces need to wage war after reaching the combat theater.

While few Chinese mariners would admit to the precedent for ideological reasons, the PLA in effect intends to reprise Imperial Japanese Navy strategy for World War II. During that time, Japanese naval planners envisioned depleting westward-bound U.S. task forces through aerial and subsurface raids conducted from well-supplied island strongholds. Attrition would even the force ratio, softening up the U.S. fleet as a precursor to the decisive battle. Imperial Japanese forces, however, enjoyed ample time beforehand to fortify the islands and atolls against attack. Allied forces would doubtless raid Chinese positions, denying PLA invaders time to dig in. How such encounters would play out is anyone's guess.

There appears to be a “north-south” as well as an “east-west” axis to China’s island strategy. By controlling Japan’s southern flank, PLA forces entrenched along the island chain could supply air and sea cover for PLAN vessels cruising off the east coast of Taiwan. For example, stealthy, missile-armed Type 022 *Houbei*-class catamarans stationed at the many small harbors in the Ryukyus could hold off allied forces while the PLAN fleet overcame the Taiwan Navy and pounded away at shore targets. In fact, the PLAN flexed this capability during live-fire exercises in the East China Sea this past July [3]. Moreover, small craft and mobile missiles operating from the islands and the Chinese coast could impede *north-south* movement, foreclosing a juncture between allied forces based in Japan and any reinforcements *en route* from South or Southeast Asia.

Nor are the benefits of island operations solely military in nature for China. For instance, Beijing might seize the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyutai Islands as a political-psychological gambit. China and Japan both claim the two uninhabited islets and adjacent waters (as does Taiwan), along with sizable deposits of undersea oil and natural gas. The two nations last sparred over the islands in early 2005, setting loose vitriolic anti-Japanese protests on the mainland. As Peter Dutton notes, Beijing has deftly stoked “managed confrontation” with Tokyo in the East China Sea, using Japan’s dark imperial past to inflame anti-Japanese sentiments when it suits China’s political needs [4]. Chinese leaders might give managed confrontation a more forceful twist in some future Sino-Japanese encounter. Small wonder Beijing pays the islands such close attention, considering the operational, strategic and diplomatic windfalls occupying them could yield.

#### HOW SHOULD TOKYO ANSWER BEIJING’S CHALLENGE?

Despite this grim-sounding forecast, it is by no means foreordained that the PLAN can snatch the islands from Japan, much less hold them against allied counterattack. The rudimentary state of the PLAN amphibious fleet (See “PLA Amphibious Capabilities: Structured for Deterrence,” *China Brief*, August 19), the PLA’s lack of expeditionary experience, and other shortfalls illuminate distinct Japanese advantages in a Sino-Japanese competition. Tokyo holds a permanent geographic advantage that it can exploit by beefing up its defenses along the Ryukyu chain. And it retains military capabilities honed to a fine edge during the Cold War, most notably antisubmarine warfare (ASW). This represents solid groundwork for competitive strategy vis-à-vis Beijing.

Think back: Despite the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force’s (JMSDF) modest combat power relative to the Soviet

Navy, Japanese mariners put geographic features to good use while maximizing their operational advantages. U.S. submariners famously insist that the best ASW implement is another submarine. Modern diesel-electric JMSDF submarines guided by sophisticated sensors and tactics lent invaluable support to the offensive-minded U.S. maritime strategy of the late Cold War. JMSDF boats offset their short range and endurance compared to nuclear-powered vessels by “sitting on the bottom and waiting” for approaching Soviet submarines. Such tactics conserved fuel, reduced machinery and flow noise, enhanced concealment, and thereby boosted JMSDF boats’ chances of passive sonar detection [5].

By obstructing chokepoints with submarines, fixed- and rotary-wing ASW aircraft, and an elaborate undersea sensor network, JMSDF tacticians in effect dared Soviet skippers to risk passage through the narrow seas bordering the Sea of Japan. Most chose to remain within the first island chain. At the same time, Japanese nautical gatekeepers kept open the maritime thoroughfares to permit offensive U.S. operations against the Soviet Navy’s Far Eastern “bastions,” or enclosed seas. For Japan this division of labor paid strategic dividends beyond strictly operational and warfighting matters. Tokyo could exert pressure on Moscow without incurring prohibitive financial costs or assuming an offensive naval posture that violated the spirit of the postwar “peace constitution.” A variant of Tokyo’s Cold War strategy may suit its needs in the Ryukyus today. Reports that the JMSDF will expand its submarine fleet from 18 to 20 boats—the first such increase since 1976, at the height of the Soviet naval challenge—suggest that the Japanese leadership has decided to do just that. Chinese observers have taken notice (*China Daily*, August 12).

While offensive submarine warfare holds significant promise for the JMSDF, however, the fleet’s supremacy in ASW is on the wane. The PLAN submarine fleet represents the vanguard of Chinese military modernization, steadily growing more numerous, more stealthy and more lethal. In part this is simple physics. As new technology quiets Chinese boats, they are harder to find, track and kill. ASW becomes increasingly resource- and asset-intensive. Indeed, American submariners now question their own capacity for ASW in the Pacific. In short, the burden of undersea combat falls disproportionately on the defender. Whether Japan can sustain sea- and airborne ASW forces sufficient to bottle up a materially superior China is doubtful. This will be especially true should the PLA perfect its antiship ballistic missile (ASBM) – a weapon ideal for striking at JMSDF “helicopter destroyers,” or DDHs, the light aircraft carriers that form the core of the surface fleet’s ASW capability.

A more offensive mindset, then, may represent the future of Japanese maritime strategy. Numbers of platforms matter, but this is not as big an obstacle as it seems. Standard JMSDF practice is to retire submarines at around 15 years of service life, assuring the fleet remains on the technological cutting edge. By contrast, U.S. Navy attack submarines serve for around thirty years. Judging by the American example, Tokyo can enlarge its submarine fleet with minimal effort and expense. It can simply build new boats at the current rate while leaving older ones in service longer.

A similar shift from defense to offense could take place in the realm of mine warfare. The JMSDF excels at mine countermeasures (witness its mine-clearance operations after the first Gulf War) but places little emphasis on offensive minelaying. Fielding such a capability should nonetheless prove rather simple for tech-savvy Japan. Even primitive sea mines have stymied modern navies in recent years—again, with Iraqi minelaying off Kuwait in 1990-1991 offering a prime example. In short, combining existing assets with new, cheap ones could let Tokyo cordon off its arc of the first island chain, imposing prohibitive costs on the PLA should it choose to force its way out of the China seas.

Finally, an obvious step for the JSDF would be to fortify the islands themselves against attack, sparing Japanese forces the hazards of retaking them from PLA occupiers. As noted before, the islands are virtually undefended. Dug-in and armed with antiship and antiair weaponry, Japanese troops could make the Ryukyus exceptionally hard targets for PLA forces operating far from their bases. Effective joint and allied operations could keep the PLA from storming the islands or, failing that, cut them off, isolate them and wait them out in wartime. Either way, Japan would come out ahead in the Sino-Japanese competition.

How Japan will fare at this is less clear. To glimpse the future of Sino-Japanese maritime competition, it is worth asking what military missions the JSDF must perform to exploit Asia's intricate maritime geography, how well-configured and—trained Japanese forces are to prosecute such missions, and what gaps in strategy, doctrine, and force structure the JSDF must plug to compete successfully with Beijing.

Will Japan act on its advantages? It is hard to say. In the final analysis, the obstacles before Tokyo are more intellectual and emotional than military in nature. Japanese politics and postwar traditions will work against greater vigor at sea, while military institutions like the JSDF habitually prefer doing more of the same. If these reinforcing tendencies win out, Tokyo will continue attempting to match the

PLA ship-for-ship while depending on Washington to tip the military balance. Both the upcoming island defense exercises and Ground Self-Defense Force plans to organize an amphibious force to retake islands wrung from Japan tacitly admit that Tokyo does not expect to hold them against an initial PLA assault. JSDF forces will have to fight at a disadvantage to recover lost territories (*Asahi Shimbun*, September 1).

Advantage: China.

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