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

VOLUME XI • ISSUE 18 • SEPTEMBER 30, 2011

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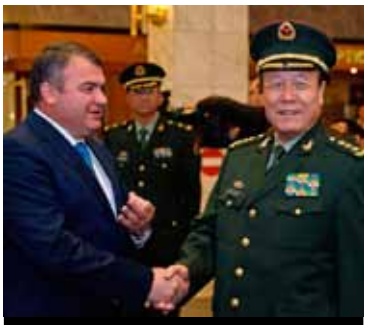

Russian Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov and CMC Vice Chair Guo Boxiong

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 Peter Mattis.

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In a Fortnight

PUBLIC SECURITY OFFICIALLY JOINS THE BLOGOSPHERE

By Peter Mattis

On September 27, the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) announced the national launch of "police microblogging construction" (*gong'an weibo jianshe*) as the newest element in its social management toolkit and public security informationization (MPS.gov.cn, September 27; *People's Daily*, September 27). To prepare the national launch of police microblogging, the MPS convened a special seminar on September 25 and 26 to help establish the "normalization" of police microblogging with informed research and lessons from a trial period for the MPS program that took place over the last 18 months at sub-national levels. MPS Vice Minister Huang Ming presided over this launch seminar and said the results so far have been very promising (*China Police Daily*, September 27).

Part transparency, part opinion shaping and part two-way information service, police microblogging aims to achieve a number of objectives. The primary objective is related to improving the relationship between the people and MPS elements at every level. As one article earlier this year put it, police microblogging deals with the people's right to know what its government is doing (*Liberation Daily*, February 28). The flip-side of this government transparency concerning social stability is the

government's right to guide public discussion by countering what it deems rumors and unhelpful conjectures. As state media argued on the day of the launch, the microblogging environment often contains emotional if not irrational information that requires MPS guidance (*Legal Daily*, September 27; *People's Daily*, September 27; *China Police Daily*, September 27). Microblogging also offers a way to release useful public safety information and respond directly and openly to public inquiries (*Legal Daily*, September 27).

Police microblogging construction provides yet another example of Beijing leveraging local-level government innovation as a generator and testing ground for new governance ideas. The MPS credited the Foshan Municipal Public Security Bureau in Guangdong Province with taking the first steps in using Chinese microblogging platforms as a way to communicate with the local citizenry. The MPS also highlighted other public security departments and bureaus highlighted for their innovative experiments in using microblogs to disseminate public safety information and move toward service-oriented public security work, including Beijing, Xiamen, Jinan, Kunming, and Hebei (MPS.gov.cn, September 27; *Legal Daily*, September 27; *China Police Daily*, September 27; *People's Daily*, September 27; November 29, 2010).

In January and February this year, a broader discussion appeared to take place about the direction and value of police microblogging. The China Police Daily carried an online poll in January to investigate reactions to the program and other press outlets discussed the merits of the local programs. Most notably, local-level public security offices reported improved public perceptions of the police for those units using microblogs relative to MPS units that did not. Answering the question of whether police information would attract users and receive wide distribution, MPS elements reportedly ran many of the most popular government microblogs (Xinhua, September 27; *China Police Daily*, September 27; *Liberation Daily*, February 28; *China Police Daily*, January 18). The initial microblogging experiments were used to tout MPS achievements, but led to the embarrassing results of "zero forwards, zero comments" on police microblog posts. This failure shifted police microblogging toward the more practical efforts to solicit tips, provide warnings and describe preventative measures for public safety (*China Police Daily*, January 4).

While some observers have hailed microblogging as the latest political "game changer" in China, there can be no question that the changing ways in which Chinese citizens use information has affected government information policy. The *People's Daily* highlighted a need to change the prevalent attitude that the public security personnel can avoid engaging the public without social stability-related consequences (September 27). At this weeks' seminar, Vice Minister Huang pointed out that the times called for the MPS to respond to the citizenry's new expectations as the Internet has created a new conceptual landscape for maintaining stability (*China Police Daily*, September 27).

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Fear and Loathing in Beijing? Chinese Suspicion of U.S. Intentions

By Michael S. Chase

Recently, a number of Chinese analysts have argued U.S. diplomatic and military actions in the region—including Washington's efforts to assure allies in response to North Korean attacks, its engagement with Vietnam and other countries in Southeast Asia, and its statements about resolving competing claims in the South China Sea—reflect what they see as a desire to ensure that China's emergence will not challenge U.S. interests. According to Shen Dingli of Fudan University,

Washington is exploiting regional tensions and urging some countries to "hedge against China's rise" ("A Chinese Assessment of China's External Environment," *China Brief*, March 25). Such comments appear to reflect growing concern about U.S. intentions, at least among some Chinese scholars and security analysts. The United States repeatedly has indicated it welcomes the emergence of a more prosperous and powerful China, one that is capable of playing a larger and more constructive role on the international stage, but many in China are concerned that Washington is becoming increasingly uneasy about the implications of China's arrival as a great power.

Chinese analysts have harbored deep suspicions about U.S. strategic intentions for many years, but a changing strategic context and a series of recent incidents in the region appear to have intensified their concerns. Some Chinese scholars even suspect the United States intends to "contain" China to prevent it's rise from challenging America's position as the predominant power in the international system. To be sure, there is considerable debate about these issues in China, but even the more nuanced and balanced assessments suggest Beijing views Washington's concerns about China's rising power and growing U.S. involvement in the region as factors that are complicating Chinese policy. China's most recent defense white paper reflects this growing wariness. According to *China's National Defense in 2010*, China's security environment remains relatively favorable, but "suspicion about China, interference and countering moves against China from the outside are on the increase." Beijing's suspicion of U.S. intentions may make it difficult for the United States to maintain a strong deterrence posture while simultaneously assuring Beijing that it welcomes China's arrival as a great power.

The United States Welcomes China's Rise…

As underscored by numerous official statements, the United States welcomes China's emergence as a great power with global interests. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and other senior officials have emphasized that the United States wants to build a "positive, cooperative, and comprehensive relationship" with China [1]. To be sure, Washington is also concerned about how a stronger and more capable China will use its growing power in the region and beyond. In particular, U.S. officials highlight lack of transparency with regard to China's growing military capabilities and uncertainty about Beijing's long-term strategic intentions.

Nonetheless, the overall strategic message Washington is sending is that the United States welcomes the emergence of a more prosperous and powerful China—one capable of playing a larger and more constructive international role. Washington also seeks to assure Beijing that the United States is not trying to delay or prevent China's emergence as a great power with global interests and capabilities. For example, in June 2011, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stated "We are not trying to hold China down. China has been a great power for thousands of years. It is a global power and will be a global power" (*Wall Street Journal*, June 2).

…But Beijing is Deeply Suspicious of U.S. Strategic Intentions

No matter what strategic assurances the United States provides, some in China are concerned the United States is becoming increasingly uneasy about China's emergence as a great power. Specifically, despite Washington's rhetorical emphasis on the importance of a stable and constructive U.S.-China relationship, they are deeply concerned the United States ultimately will attempt to delay or prevent China's emergence as a great power because it sees a stronger China as a threat to its continued preeminence. Some even fear Washington really intends to "contain" China. Chinese suspicions about U.S. strategic intentions are longstanding [2]. What is new is that a changing strategic context and series of recent events appear to be intensifying China's concerns.

One key factor is China's wariness about the possible implications of a shifting balance of power. Some Chinese scholars see U.S. power as diminished by the strains of multiple wars and the global financial crisis [3]. Yet there is considerable debate about the extent to which the gap is narrowing and the implications for Chinese foreign and security policy. In the words of Vice Foreign Minister Cui Tiankai, "China's national strength has been on the rise in the past three decades and more since reform and opening up… but there remains a big gap, even a huge gap, between China's national strength and that of the United States. This is a fact that we Chinese must face soberly" (*People's Daily*, January 18). Dai Bingguo's December 2010 essay on "Peaceful Development" is also noteworthy in this respect [4].

Notwithstanding this debate about the extent to which the balance of power is shifting, a number of Chinese analysts have portrayed the United States as worried that it is declining relative to China, giving rise to concerns that Washington will try to check China's rise in order to preserve its preeminent position (*Outlook Weekly*, February 6). Beyond concerns about how the United States is likely to respond as China narrows the gap, some Chinese analysts highlight Taiwan and maritime security issues as indicative of antagonistic U.S. strategic intentions.

The China-Taiwan relationship has improved dramatically in recent years, but Taiwan remains a central concern and a source of suspicion about U.S. intentions toward China. Beijing continues to object to U.S. political-military backing for Taiwan in general and U.S. arms sales to the island in particular. Beijing also appears convinced Washington's support for Taiwan is aimed at using it as an obstacle to China's emergence as a great power. In this respect, some see U.S. arms sales to Taiwan as evidence of a "two-handed" policy toward China, one that includes elements of engagement on the one hand and containment on the other (*PLA Daily*, September 12). More broadly, as Nancy Bernkopf Tucker and Bonnie Glaser point out: "Apart from being a potential trigger for war, Taiwan impedes improvement in U.S.-China relations because of suspicion and mistrust. Beijing firmly believes that Washington seeks to keep the PRC weak and divided to obstruct China's rise" [5].

Beyond Taiwan, some Chinese analysts are focused increasingly on what they see as a deteriorating maritime security environment. In the words of China Academy of Social Science (CASS) researchers Zhang Jie and Pu Jianyi, "maritime security has become a major source of tensions in China's peripheral security situation" (*Shijie Zhishi*, January 16). Some Chinese scholars identify the United States as the main cause of China's maritime security problems. Academy of Military Science analyst Major General Peng Guangqian argues the United States is "the fundamental factor that influences surrounding countries, and causes complicated situations, intensified contradictions, and greater turbulence" [6]. Some Chinese analysts contend Washington seeks to exploit North Korean attacks on South Korea and Beijing's maritime disputes with its neighbors, especially Japan, Vietnam and the Philippines.

Chinese observers have expressed concerns that recent events in the Yellow Sea, East China Sea and South China Sea reflect what they see as Washington's determination to prevent China from challenging the U.S. position in the region. Some Chinese observers criticized the late 2010 U.S.–South Korean naval exercises as further destabilizing an already tense situation. Particularly vocal opposition came from PLA officers, such as Luo Yuan, who emphasized the historical sensitivity of the Yellow Sea as "the gateway to China's capital region" (*People's Daily*, July 16, 2010). Indeed, the writings of some PLA officers and other observers suggest they interpreted the exercises as a show of force intended to put pressure on China. For example, Li Jie asserted, "Although on the surface the purpose was to exert pressure on North Korea, actually a very large part of this was to exert influence over China" (*Phoenix Weekly*, February 2011). U.S.

support for Japan following the September 2010 ship collision incident near the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands also raised concerns for Chinese analysts (*China Daily*, December 20, 2010).

As for the South China Sea, some Chinese analysts assert other countries are exploiting Beijing's relatively restrained approach by nibbling away at China's interests. Zhu Chenghu, a vocal military scholar at National Defense University, writes that rival claimants are "plundering China's oil and gas resources without scruple, turning the South China Sea into an ATM machine" (*Global Times*, July 1). Many Chinese observers worry that Vietnam and the Philippines may try to draw in the United States to advance their own interests at China's expense. Some Chinese scholars even suggest the United States will take advantage of an opportunity to sow discord between China and the other countries with territorial claims in the South China Sea in pursuit of a broader strategy of "containment." Additionally, China's disagreement with the United States over what activity is permissible within China's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) is another source of tension. Chinese analysts complain U.S. reconnaissance activities in China's EEZ are increasing and they appear to believe these reconnaissance activities reflect hostile intentions toward China ("Assessing China's Response to U.S. Reconnaissance Flights," *China Brief*, September 2).

The Dark Side: Fears of Encirclement, Containment and Subversion

Some Chinese analysts who view these maritime developments as evidence of Washington's broader strategic intentions toward China argue that the United States is bent on exploiting Beijing's differences with its neighbors over maritime issues as part of a broader plan aimed at "encircling" or "containing" China. According to Liu Jianhua and Yu Shuihuan of Zhongnan University of Finance and Economics, "The controversy between China and Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei over the issue of South China Sea sovereignty, and the concerns of Japan, India and Australia over the expansion of China's maritime power, have provided excellent opportunities for the United States to draw them in to encircle China" [7].

Some Chinese analysts see this as part of a strategy of "C-shaped encirclement." Perhaps the most vocal proponent of this argument is PLA Air Force Colonel Dai Xu [8]. In a recent op-ed, Dai argued that U.S. military exercises in the Yellow Sea, involvement in the South China Sea dispute and the development of operational concepts like "Air-Sea Battle" are all directed mainly at China. Moreover, Dai views U.S. attempts to strengthen its relationships with Japan, South Korea, Australia and India as part of an attempt to create an "Asian NATO" (*Global Times*, August 2, 2010). In this view, the United States is building on the posture it created to contain China beginning in the 1950s, which centered on alliances and bases along the first and second island chains. Although Dai's views may be on the extreme end of the spectrum, he is certainly not the only Chinese analyst who is concerned that the United States is pursuing a strategy of "containment." For example, in a speech last year, CASS President and Central Committee member Chen Kuiyuan said that U.S. leaders "will not give up their strategy of trying to contain China's sustainable development." Chen further suggested it would be wishful thinking to believe, that by partnering with a neo-imperialist United States, Washington would leave China alone. [9]

Another concern is Beijing's longstanding fear of "peaceful evolution," which has been heightened this year amid concerns about pro-democracy uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa. Chinese observers frequently assert that Washington aims to undermine the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Recently, some have cited U.S. efforts to circumvent Internet censorship as evidence of this alleged intent to subvert China's political system (*Chinese Cadre Tribune*, April 2011). Some Chinese Internet users even interpreted then-U.S. Ambassador to China John Huntsman's appearance at a February 2011 "Jasmine Revolution" gathering in Beijing as

proof of what they see as a conspiracy aimed at weakening and destabilizing China (*The Atlantic*, February 24). The U.S. Embassy in Beijing explained the timing of the stroll was a coincidence. Whatever Chinese officials and scholars may think about this particular incident, some probably will continue to view U.S. support for civil and political rights in China as indicative of a desire to change China's system of government through "peaceful evolution."

Counterarguments Emphasize Constraints on Containment

The argument that Washington intends to "contain" China has vocal proponents, but it is certainly not the only point of view articulated in Chinese debates about U.S. policy toward China. Some Chinese observers suggest the more extreme characterizations of U.S. intentions clearly exaggerate the potential for "containment." According to Rear Admiral Yang Yi, Washington may be worried about China, but Cold War-style containment is irrelevant because China is much different than the Soviet Union and the current international environment is hardly the same as it was during the Cold War (*Shijie Zhishi*, August 16, 2010).

Chinese scholars also suggest Washington's policy options are limited by the desire of many countries in the region to maintain positive relations with China and the United States rather than choosing sides. In addition, they argue China's growing power and influence make it an important player on a broad range of international issues. As a result, they conclude Washington's options are constrained because Chinese cooperation is often required to achieve U.S. foreign policy goals.

Still, even many of the more sophisticated analyses of U.S. policy toward China tend to portray Washington as increasingly concerned about the possibility that China's rise will challenge its predominant position. For example, Liu Qing, Director of the American Studies Department at the China Institute of International Studies, writes that Washington did not expect China to rise so quickly and that U.S. concerns and anxiety about China are growing [10]. Chinese scholars also suggest Washington's "Return to Asia" is aimed at retaining its dominant position, and that U.S. military and diplomatic actions are making the regional security situation more complicated for China.

Implications for the United States

The United States and some countries in the region are hedging their bets because of China's growing military power and uncertainty about China's long-term strategic intentions. They also are pushing back against some of China's more assertive behavior along its maritime periphery. Such actions, however, are not "containment," as the term is usually understood in the context of Cold War superpower rivalry. Nevertheless, growing Chinese suspicion poses a difficult problem for the United States. Washington understandably seeks to assure U.S. allies and discourage aggressive moves by China, but doing so without inadvertently heightening Chinese concerns could prove to be very difficult in some cases.

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Notes:

1. For example, see Hillary Rodham Clinton, "Inaugural Richard C. Holbrooke Lecture on a Broad Vision of U.S.-China Relations in the 21st Century," Washington, DC, January 14, 2011, http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/01/154653.htm.
2. On the attitudes of China's America specialists and Chinese views of U.S. strategic intentions during the 1990s, see Phillip C. Saunders, "China's America Watchers: Changing Attitudes towards the

United States," *China Quarterly*, No. 161, March 2000, pp. 41–65.

3. Wu Xinbo, "Understanding the Geopolitical Implications of the Global Financial Crisis," *Washington Quarterly,* Vol. 33, No. 4, October 2010, pp. 155–63.

4. For the official English translation, see Dai Bingguo, "Stick to the Path of Peaceful Development," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, December 6, 2010, http://www.news.xinhuanet/com/english2010/indepth/2010-12/13/c_13646586.htm; for the Chinese version, see http://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2010-12/06/content_1760381.htm

5. Nancy Bernkopf Tucker and Bonnie Glaser, "Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?" *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 4, pp. 23–37

6. Peng is quoted in Guo Zhenyuan, "Zhongguo zhoubian anquan xingshi de huigu yu zhanwang [Review of and Outlook for China's Security Situation in Surrounding Areas], *Zhongguo Pinglun*, No. 159 (March 2011): p. 55. "Without intervention by the United States," Peng argues, "these contradictions would not have emerged suddenly and all at once, nor would they have become so acute."

7. Liu Jianhua and Yu Shuihuan, "'Duobian shiya: Meiguo dui Hua waijiao celue xin dongxiang [Multilateral Pressure: A New Trend in America's Diplomatic Tactics Toward China]," *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi* [Contemporary International Relations], October 20, 2010, pp. 1–7

8. Dai Xu, *C-xing baowei: neiyou waihuan xia de Zhongguo tuwei* [C-Shaped Encirclement: China's Breakthrough Under Internal and External Problems] (Shanghai, China: Wenhui Publishing, 2009).

9. "Chen Kuiyuan zai Zhongguo shekeyuan 2010 nian zhuanti yantaohui shang fabiao zhongyao jianghua" (Chen Kuiyuan Makes an Important Speech at the Chinease Academy of Social Sciences' 2010 Special Topic Seminar) http://www.cass.net.cn/file/20100810279147.html.

10. Liu Qing, "Meiguo zai Yatai zhanlue bushu de xin bianhua" (New Changes in U.S. Strategic Deployments in the Asia-Pacific), *Xiandai guoji guanxi* (Contemporary International Relations), May 2011, pp. 13-19, 26.

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China's Cautious Economic and Strategic Gamble in Venezuela

By Evan Ellis

Since coming to power in February 1999, Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez has waged a highly visible campaign against the U.S. and Western "imperialism" in Latin America, replete with fiery rhetoric, nationalization of strategic industries, the creation of alternative regional institutions, support for a range of leftist causes and alliances with controversial leaders including Libya's Muammar Gaddafi and Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Chinese financial and technical support has bolstered Chavez's ability to do so. Beijing's support so far has included the following: four loans totaling $32 billion; arms sales; the purchase of Venezuelan oil; the construction of transportation, logistics, power and telecommunications infrastructure in the country; and technical consulting.. China also committed to invest $40 billion in oil projects in the Orinoco tar sands, which estimates place as the largest reserve in the world with 513 billion barrels of recoverable heavy petroleum. Most recently, on September 5, Chinese companies signed agreements to help Venezuela's Ministry of Basic Industries develop its minerals sector (*El Universal*, September 6).

In each of these activities, the PRC has repeatedly emphasized that its support to the Venezuelan regime is strictly business, and it does not associate itself with Chavez' "Bolivarian Socialist" agenda or any other political project in the region.

China's deepening relationship with Venezuela is a high stakes gamble, motivated by strong, but different interests on each side. For the Chavez regime, Chinese assistance enables it to continue on its Bolivarian socialist course without having to compromise with Western governments, companies and financial institutions, and without having to control the rampant corruption and patronage that helps maintain the loyalty of key members of the government and military. For China, the relationship supports a range of both commercial and political objectives, ranging from reliable access to primary products at reasonable prices to sales of products and services in strategically important high value-added sectors—such as telecommunications and computers, autos and heavy equipment, logistics and transportation infrastructure and military and aerospace industries. Military and aerospace sales to Venezuela have also opened up opportunities for commercial and military engagement with other states in the region while generating substantial profits for Chinese companies and banks.

Each side pursues its self interest in the relationship facing the possible consequences of an all-or-nothing gamble. For Venezuela, the danger is the unsustainability of committing ever greater portions of future resource exports to China to pay current obligations, while giving Chinese companies and banks increasing leverage in the productive, consumption and financial sectors of the Venezuelan economy. This leverage may give Beijing an increasing de facto role in deciding the fate of the regime in Caracas. For China, reciprocally, the danger is twofold: (1) being drawn into the Chavez's fight with the US through its coordination with the former and its role as an economic enabler of the regime, and (2) being stuck with tens of billions of dollars in loans and sunk investments that a post-Chavez government may not honor.

Perhaps more than any other country in Latin America, Venezuela is a test case for the ability of the PRC to pursue its "resources and markets" agenda, while not being drawn into the same struggles to protect its investments, nationals and other interests that caused trouble for US relations with the Latin America for most of the previous century.

Chinese Assistance to Chavez

Chinese aid to the current Venezuelan government involves a combination of cash, loan-funded work, and investment commitments. The Chavez regime has used such support, in part, to cover important short-term needs, generating symbolic benefits, and ensuring future production in primary product export industries of interest to the PRC. Since 2008, Beijing has loaned Venezuela $32 billion (only partially delivered), including three infusions of $4 billion into the "heavy investment fund" first established in 2008, as well as a separate $20.6 billion loan, half denominated in Chinese currency, facilitating the purchase of Chinese goods and services. China Development Bank alone is reportedly supporting 137 separate projects in Venezuela (*Canal de Noticia*, September 14).

In addition, Chinese companies have committed to invest $40 billion in the Venezuelan oil industry by 2016. The deals include $16.4 billion to develop the Junin-4 oil block, Sinopec investments to develop the Junin-1 and Junin-8 blocks and a commitment by China National Overseas Oil Corporation (CNOOC) to develop the Mariscal Sucre gas deposits off the Eastern shore of Venezuela (*El Universal*, December 2, 2010).

In the mining sector, although China has provided loans and technical advice to support the extraction of iron and the development of other products such as aluminum, bauxite and coal, it has not invested in the sector, except for an ill-fated gold mine joint venture with the Canadian

firm Crysallex (*El Universal*, February 11).

The Chavez government, for its part, has used Chinese funds to cover a broad range of short-term needs, creating political risks for the regime. Part of the $20 billon loan was used to purchase 300,000 Chinese Haier brand appliances for sale in state stores to offset the inflationary effects of the Caracas' currency devaluation in January 2010. Similarly, following Caracas blackouts in 2010 due to a severe drought and years of neglect of the power grid, the government developed a plan to build nine major power plants, using Chinese companies and paid for by funds from the same Chinese loan—including the "El Chorin" hydroelectric facility and seven thermoelectric plants [1]. In March 2011, after record floods highlighted a national housing shortage, Caracas contracted with the Chinese CITIC group to construct 20,000 houses, followed in August 2011 by a $700,000 contract for 6,000 more (*El Universal*, August 26).

Many of the infrastructure projects funded by Chinese loans compliment Chinese investment in Venezuela's extractive sectors. In September 2011, for example, the Chavez government signed $470 million in contracts with three Chinese mining companies, to improve infrastructure to facilitate the export of minerals to Asia, complementing previous commitments, such as the $7.5 billion upgrade a 472-kilometer segment of railroad across the interior of the country from Tinaco to Anaco, announced in July 2009 (*El Universal*, September 6).

Military and Space Collaboration

China also has become a key supplier of military hardware and associated maintenance and training packages to Venezuela—including K-8 light attack aircraft, Y-8 and Y-12 transports and radar systems as well as a range of non-lethal equipment—helping the regime to overcome U.S. efforts since 2005 to deny such equipment to the regime (*El Universal*, June 2). It also has sold the regime two satellite systems: the Venesat-1 telecommunications satellite, which it launched for the regime in October 2008, and the Venezuela Remote Sensing Satellite (VRSS), which is anticipated to launch in late next year (*El Universal*, May 23). The Venesat-1 included construction of two ground control stations in the country and training of Venezuelan personnel. For China, these sales have been valuable in enabling its companies, such as the defense conglomerate NORINCO and the space services company Great Wall, to prove their military and space products and services and expand their presence in Latin America. Thanks in part to the active advocacy of President Chavez, these Chinese companies also have generated follow-on sales to Venezuela's allies, including the sale of radar systems to Ecuador as well as both K-8 aircraft and the "Tupac Katari" communications satellite for Bolivia (*El Economista*, August 7; Agencia Venezolana de Noticias, August 12).

Commercial Benefits to China

The activities mentioned in the previous paragraphs are extraordinarily beneficial to China in multiple and often hidden ways. Most of the loans are short-term contracts to be repaid in deliveries of Venezuelan oil, thus allowing Chinese banks to manage their risk. The loan agreements however use a below-market reference price for the oil delivered, making the value of the goods that Venezuela must pay back far greater than the quantity loaned. Adding even more benefit to the PRC, virtually all of the loaned funds have been earmarked for the purchase of Chinese goods and services. In the three September 2011 agreements in support of mining, for example, Venezuela committed $200 million to buy heavy equipment and services from Wuhan Steel, $200 million to the Metallurgical Corporation of China (MCC) to expand the port of Palua, and another $161 million to MCC construction to dredge the Orinoco river (*El Universal*, September 6). Most of $300 million of the loan package for starting a new Venezuelan regional airline was actually earmarked for the purchase of Chinese Y-8 aircraft (*El Universal*, April 20). The housing project was

not only contracted to a Chinese company, but involved purchases of 210 tractors and other heavy equipment from the Chinese company XCMG (Agencia Venezolana de Noticias, August 26).

Beyond direct sales, a number of Chinese companies are establishing manufacturing and distribution centers in Venezuela in partnership with state-affiliated companies. These include construction of Venezuelan factories by both major Chinese telecommunications firms, Huawei and ZTE, a $200 million Chery auto factory in Aragua that began production this month, an additional Great Wall Industries auto factory , and talks of factories by XCMG and the appliance manufacturer Haier (*El Universal*, April 20; May 14, 2010).

Implications and Challenges

As China becomes more deeply involved in projects in Venezuela, it is likely to face the same types of imperatives regarding as have Western companies and governments making large loans and investments in Latin America.

As it has provided ever greater quantities of capital to the Chavez government, Beijing has become increasingly active in overseeing how the money is being used. Beginning in May 2010, for example, teams from China Development Bank (CDB) made a series of visits to multiple sites throughout the country to analyze the situation and evaluate Venezuelan economic needs, including ongoing and potential future work by Chinese companies. The CDB evaluation trip culminated in the delivery of a report from CDB President Chen Yuan to President Chavez on China's "support for the planning of the development of Venezuela" (*La Patilla*, September 15).

Beyond project oversight, as money is invested engineering PRC refineries to process high-sulfur Venezuelan crude, Chinese oil companies will have an increasing economic stake in avoiding supply interruptions, the potential for which is great in Venezuela, including strikes, problems with the transportation infrastructure, or unpredictable policy actions and failures in project implementation by Venezuelan government organizations, such as what happened in 2006 when the regime backed out of a commitment to sell the heavy petroleum product Ormulsion to China after the latter had invested in a power plant to use the fuel.

At the individual level, as more Chinese arrive in Venezuela for negotiations, training, technical support and oversight of operations, they will have to deal with the same risks of murder, theft and kidnapping that other foreign companies have had to contend with in the country. Chinese government agencies and companies will have to decide how to best protect their people. China has few private security firms and even more limited experience at integrating Venezuelan private security firms into their operations.

At the political level, China also faces the risk that regime change—perhaps arising from the death of Chavez from the prostate cancer which he is currently suffering or the October 2012 elections—could give rise to a new government from current opposition figures. The opposition has questioned openly the constitutional authority and contractual basis upon which the obligations with China are being incurred.

Ironically, China's increasing role as the economic underpinning of the Chavez regime gives it important leverage in any future leadership transition. China, more than any other country, could help to bring down the Chavez regime by refusing to release new loan funds or embargoing the sale of products to Venezuela, especially if done in combination with other key suppliers such as Colombia, Brazil and Argentina. The threat of doing so helps it to ensure that Chavez does not treat China in the fashion that it has treated Western countries and multinationals when servicing debts and adhering to deals disadvantaging the Venezuelan state become overly burdensome. It also may be part of a core dilemma faced by the Venezuelan opposition in the next political crisis:

whether to agree to honor debts to China and questionable deals that will burden Venezuela for decades to come as the price for coming to power.

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Notes:

1. Evan Ellis, "Chinese Engagement with the ALBA Countries: A Relationship of Mutual Convenience?" Paper presented to the conference "The Economic, Political and Foreign Policy Implications of ALBA," University of Miami, May 10, 2011.

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Sino-Russian Relations: Renewal or Decay of a Strategic Partnership?

By Jingdong Yuan

Sino-Russian relations appear to be picking up the tempo with frequent high-level visits taking place in recent months. Last week, the top Chinese military officer, Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission, Gen. Guo Boxiong, met with Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and top Russian military brass in Moscow. Both leaders emphasized that the bilateral military ties remain a key component of the Sino-Russian relationship (*PLA Daily*, September 23). These official activities and exchanges are part of the celebration marking the 10th anniversary of the signing of Treaty of Good-Neighborly Relations, Friendship and Cooperation between China and Russia. Chinese President Hu Jintao traveled to Moscow in mid-June for a three-day visit to celebrate the special relationship. The joint declaration signed by Presidents Hu and Dmitri Medvedev recalls the significant progress made over the past decade and charts a new course for the next ten years with a focus on expanding economic and military ties. Beijing and Moscow have also decided to elevate the bilateral relationship from the "strategic partnership" to a "comprehensive strategic and cooperative partnership" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 17).

At least at the official level, the Sino-Russian relationship continues to display all the trappings of an amicable partnership characterized by regular summit meetings, high-level visits, military exchanges, and frequent consultation in bilateral and multilateral settings such as the BRICS meetings, G-20 and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)—the last also marking its first decade of establishment. As long as both China and Russia continue to view U.S. dominance as detrimental to their aspiration for great-power status and their core national interests, observers can expect the imperative for cooperation will remain despite recent troubles in the relationship.

Partnership Blues

Since China and Russia established a strategic partnership in 1996, bilateral relations have experienced periods of rapid development, heightened expectations, disappointments, and renewal. From Beijing's perspectives, a stable Sino-Russian relationship is beneficial to both countries and remains one of its foreign policy priorities.

Chinese analysts readily acknowledge the importance of Sino-Russian relations and largely in positive terms, but they also point to different interests and priorities between the two, recognize the lackluster performance in bilateral trade and investment, and express deep frustration with unfulfilled promises and a lack of progress in energy cooperation [1].

Beijing and Moscow have coordinated their policy positions and adopted mutually supportive approaches on a range of international issues from non-weaponization of space to respect for state sovereignty. What has often been characterized as a strategic partnership however has at times experienced strain and setback. Beijing was clearly taken aback when the Putin administration in 2000-2004 sought to forge closer ties with Washington and retracted on its opposition to U.S. withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM), even though China and Russia just had pledged solemnly their joint opposition to such a move [2].

Russia's military operations against Georgia in 2008 put China in an awkward position. Beijing kept silent on the event but was not pleased with Moscow's subsequent recognition of the two breakaway republics Abkhazia and South Ossetia, given China's own concerns with separatist activities in Xinjiang and the Taiwan issue. While SCO provides a platform for China and Russia to cooperate on anti-terrorism, energy security and regional stability in Central Asia, the two countries differ on membership expansion, priorities for the organization and implicitly compete for leadership [3].

Military ties and defense cooperation always have been an important pillar in the strategic partnership between the two countries. Indeed, China certainly has benefited tremendously from procurement of advanced Russian weapons systems and military technology transfers. Top military leaders hold regular talks; joint military exercises such as Peace Mission and port calls help enhance mutual understanding of the two armed forces.

In recent years, however, Chinese interests have shifted from purchases of off-the-shelf weapons systems to acquisition of military technologies, joint development and license production. Bilateral arms trade volumes subsequently have declined. Russia has been cautious in expanding bilateral military cooperation beyond arms sales for fear of future competition from Chinese defense industry in the international market. The more important reason however may be Russia's concern over the rise of China. Indeed, Chinese analysts have pointed to Russia's growing military deployment in the Far East in recent years, including tactical nuclear weapons, in preparation for future unspecified contingencies [4]. Meanwhile, Russia has been willing to sell advanced weapons systems to India and Vietnam, and is pushing for increased arms sales to some Southeast Asian countries (*Global Times*, August 31).

For two large continental countries sharing a strategic partnership, bilateral economic ties have remained underdeveloped. Sino-Russian trade, at around $55.4 billion in 2010, trails behind most of China's other key trading partners. Bilateral investments are appallingly low with accumulated Chinese direct investment in Russia at $2 billion by 2009. Chinese businessmen complain about the Russian investment environment and wide-spread corruption among officials as major impediments, while Moscow charges China with dumping low-quality consumer goods and other illicit trading practices. It is clear that Russia is unwilling to become a supplier of raw materials and energy to China while Chinese products swamp its market (*China Daily*, April 13; Richard Weitz, "China-Russia Relations and the United States: At a Turning Point?" Second Line of Defense, April 12, 2011).

This may explain the slow pace of and Chinese frustration with energy cooperation over the past decade. Different expectations, disputes over costs and pricing and Russia's opportunistic pursuit of its energy leverage have led to repeated delays and unfulfilled promises. On the one hand, Moscow is averse to becoming an energy appendage to China; on the other hand, rising price in oil provides Russia with huge revenues and enhances its bargaining power vis-à-vis energy importing countries, including China. The drawn-out negotiation over and the constant changes in the construction of the Angarsk-Daqing pipeline have both raised the costs and lowered the confidence in Sino-Russian

energy cooperation. Chinese oil companies have faced barriers in investing in Russia's energy sector and Moscow has not reacted positively to Chinese energy cooperation with Central Asian countries such as Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. Bilateral talks on Russian supply of natural gas to China have been dragging for over a decade without closing the deal. Chinese media suggests Gazprom seeks $40 billion in advance prepayment for Russian guarantee of a 30-year supply of natural gas to China (*Global Times*, August 19) [5].

Strategic Partnership in the Next Decade

Marking two important anniversaries in 2011, Chinese and Russian leaders recognize the value of their strategic partnership even though their respective interests and priorities sometimes take precedence over their taunted friendship. Overall, however, the relationship however remains positive and the institutional foundation developed over the years will provide Beijing and Moscow the necessary compass and sufficient incentives to strengthen cooperation on a number of fronts.

China will continue to value a stable Sino-Russian relationship and promote closer partnership where both countries will benefit. On the strategic front, maintaining the over 4,000-kilometer border peacefulyl and keeping a friendly neighbor has been one of the key diplomatic achievements Beijing has accomplished since the end of the Cold War. At the same time, working closely with Russia through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization allows China access to energy resources in Central Asia and to secure SCO member states' support and collaboration in combating ethnic separatism in its remote northwestern region.

Beijing has been attentive to developments in Russian-U.S. relations, especially in the wake of their "reset" and the conclusion of the New START Treaty on nuclear arms reduction as well as how these would affect China's interests and the Sino-Russian strategic partnership. The Medvedev government is seeking to develop a closer relationship with the Obama administration and this policy orientation has already affected how Beijing and Moscow coordinate their approaches to issues ranging from Iran to Libya [6].

Managing Sino-Russian relations requires vision and forward-looking perspectives. Beijing recognizes Moscow's nostalgia for its glorious past and its aspiration for playing an important role in both regional and global affairs, and has accorded due respect to its northern neighbor. Understandably, China's phenomenal rise and demographic changes in the two countries also stoke Russian paranoia about an impending Chinese take-over of the Far East. Addressing these concerns requires not only closer dialogues between officials but also greater contacts and better understanding between the two peoples.

China and Russia both recognize they need to do more to facilitate bilateral trade and encourage investment. Beijing and Moscow have set targets for achieving $100 billion and $200 billion in annual trade before 2015 and 2020, respectively. During his recent visit to Russia, Wu Bangguo, head of the Chinese National People's Congress, put forth four proposals for deepening bilateral economic ties, including cooperation on energy, science and technology exchanges, and border region trade (*People's Daily*, September 15).

With the Skovorodino-Daqing pipeline finally opened for operation on New Year's Day 2011, Sino-Russian energy cooperation entered a new era. Russia would export 15 million tons of crude oil annually to China for 20 years (*Wall Street Journal*, September 27, 2010). China's growing demands for energy, its strategy to diversify energy imports from the Middle East and Africa as well as its ongoing cooperation with Central Asian states could provide incentives for Russia to expand and speed up energy cooperation with China.

Looking Forward

The celebration of a decade of the Sino-Russian Friendship Treaty and the elevation of the

"strategic partnership" to a "comprehensive strategic cooperation and partnership" turn a new page in the relationship between the two countries. The key words here are "comprehensive" and "cooperation," which suggest the need to anchor the bilateral relationship in a broader and more substantive footing. There are strategic imperatives for strengthened coordination and cooperation between China and Russia in defending their national interests, including stability, sovereignty and external security. Beijing looks set and confident in moving the relationship to the next level.

Despite the rhetoric and frequent bilateral high-level exchanges in recent months, challenges remain for Beijing and Moscow. One is the leadership transition in China in 2012-2013 that will see new generations of civilian and military leaders taking up new positions. While Russian leaders will remain mostly the same, with the only change being the swap between Putin and Medvedev, it will take some time for the leaders of the two countries to get acquainted. Secondly, past disappointments in realizing ambitious targets in bilateral trade targets and promises in energy cooperation suggest promoting bilateral economic ties may be easier said than done. Observers reasonably can expect impediments ahead, largely as a result of the two countries' divergent expectations, capacities and priorities within a changing global economic environment. Finally, coordinating and aligning their policies at the strategic level probably will prove increasingly difficult as a more nationalist Putin returns to office and as Chinese and Russian interests drift in different directions. The drift probably will continue unless and until both feel greater threats from the United States—the only salient rationale for this largely superficial partnership that has so far appeared more convenient than strategic.

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Notes:

1. Zhao Mingwen, "Zhong'e guanxi de fazhan ji zhanwang [Developments and Prospects of Sino-Russian Relations]," *Heping yu fazhan* [Peace and Development], No. 2, 2011.
2. Chen Xianliang and Zhang Mei, "E duihua zhengce de bianhua ji zhongguo celue yingdui [Changes in Russian China Policy and China's Response]," *Dongbeiya luntan* [Northeast Asian Forum], no. 2 (2009).
3. Zhao Huasheng, "Zhong'er guanxi zhongde shanghai hezuo zuzhi (SCO in Sino-Russian Relations)," *Heping yu fazhan* [Peace and Development], No. 1 (2010).
4. Zhao, "Developments and Prospects of Sino-Russian Relations."
5. Wang Haiyun, "Zhong'e nengyuan hezuo de youli yinsu yu zhiyue yinsu (Facilitating and Constraining Factors in Sino-Russian Energy Cooperation)," *E'luosi xuekan* [Russian Studies], No. 3, 2011.
6. Yu Bin, "China-Russia Relations: Politics of Two Anniversaries," *Comparative Connections*, September 2011.

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Non-Commissioned Officers and the Creation of a Volunteer Force

By Kevin McCauley

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is conducting a major reform of the Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) corps in recognition of the key role NCOs can play supporting force modernization, warfighting and new missions. Since 1999, quality improvements and a significant

expansion of the NCO corps are creating a more professional and volunteer military force with a decreasing reliance on two-year conscripts, recruits and volunteers (Xinhua, March 23, 2005) This year's white paper "China's National Defense in 2010," as well as a series of PLA press reports marking the new guidelines for NCO management over the last few months have highlighted the importance of developing a quality NCO corps, as well as problems in attracting and training skilled personnel [1]. This article examines the development of a professional NCO corps and its impact on PLA modernization and warfighting capabilities.

The Noncommissioned Officer Corps: A Brief History

The PLA believes that establishing a large, skilled, professional NCO corps is necessary to support the construction of an informationized military and win modern wars; meet complex security threats and diversified military tasks; create a pool of qualified personnel to operate and maintain high-tech weapons and equipment; and cultivate high-quality squad leaders to support more independent operations at the tactical level (*PLA Daily*, November 4, 2009; August 24, 2009; Xinhua, December 27, 2004). Increased numbers of NCOs who have been given improved training, education and technical skills will support all the services and branches, particularly the PLA Air Force (PLAAF), PLA Navy (PLAN) and PLA Second Artillery Force (PLASAF). These are modernizing to a greater extent and with more advanced equipment than the ground forces. These NCO squad leaders will command at the tactical level and lead squads in combat in ground force, airborne and marine combined arms battalions.

The PLA issued the first "Military Service Law of the People's Republic of China" in 1955 creating a separate compulsory military service system along with the existing volunteer system. The law stipulated length of military service and established the grades and ranks of the enlisted force that lasted until the start of the Cultural Revolution. In 1978, the PLA combined conscripts and volunteers into a single system that allowed conscripts to remain as volunteer soldiers for a total of 16 years. This was the beginning of a nascent NCO system [2].

The 1988 "Regulations for PLA Active-Duty Enlisted Personnel" established the system of preferential treatment and demobilization for both conscripts and volunteer soldiers. These regulations also reestablished the system of grades and ranks for the enlisted force. Officers who remained on active duty became known as noncommissioned officers (*shiguan*) [4].

The General Staff Department (GSD) established six NCO schools that offer two-year high school equivalency and three-year associate degree programs. By the late 2000s the GSD had also added two- and three-year NCO programs to 29 of the PLA's 67 officer academic institutions (Xinhua, July 18, 2005). In 1995 the GSD and Ministry of Labor issued trial methods for implementing occupational skill requirements for technical soldiers in a further effort to improve the force (*PLA Daily*, November 4, 2009; January 14, 2008).

Establishing a large group of personnel with advanced technical skills is critical to support the increasing pace of PLA modernization. Changing tactical doctrine and new missions such as counterterrorism, maintaining stability, disaster relief and peace keeping also require high-tech capabilities and greater leadership skills at the lowest echelon (*PLA Daily*, November 4, 2009). In 1999, these developments—and the PLA's assessment that the original volunteer servicemen system was too narrow in scope and limited in scale—lead the PLA to initiate extensive reform and expansion of the NCO corps. This reform included improvements in the selection process, training, administration and benefits to attract and retain qualified personnel that continue to the present to support the PLA's transformation efforts (*PLA Daily*, November 4, 2009; October 13, 2004).

The revised conscription law that went into effect in 1999 reduced the compulsory service period of all enlisted personnel to two years. The shortened service period resulted in the demobilization of conscripts just when they have achieved competency at their position, only to be replaced by an influx of untrained conscripts, thus reducing the combat readiness and capability of units. This development added to the importance of establishing a large, technically skilled NCOs corps to maintain continuity and combat readiness in an increasingly high-tech force and reduce the reliance on conscripts (Xinhua, July 14, 2009). NCOs have been selected primarily from conscripts who have completed two years of compulsory service, although this is beginning to change as the PLA recruits civilians with specialized skills and higher educational levels directly as NCOs (Xinhua, March 23, 2005).

Current Developments

NCOs hold specialized technical and squad leader positions. The number of authorized NCOs in the PLA has risen from a few hundred thousand in 1999 to more than 800,000 in 2009 and, now, may be closer to 900,000 (Xinhua, July 14, 2009; *PLA Daily*, November 12, 2008). In July 2011 the PLA reported that more than half the enlisted personnel were NCOs (*PLA Daily*, July 18). This expansion of the NCO corps is creating a more professional volunteer force, despite some lingering problems. According to the PLA, NCOs comprise 80 percent of the complement on some naval ships,and more than 80 percent of NCOs hold important professional posts (*PLA Daily*, April 20; November 12, 2008). They account for 58 percent of enlisted personnel under the General Logistics Department, fill all squad leader positions and constitute over 60 percent of troops in high-tech units (*PLA Daily*, November 12, 2008; July 2, 2006).

The percentage of NCOs in the PLAAF, PLAN and PLASAF likely approach 60 percent of the enlisted force, although the numbers will vary between units within the services and branches. For example, infantry, antiaircraft artillery, surface-to-air missile and airborne units probably have lower percentages of NCOs than high tech units such as communications, radar, aviation, surface-to-surface missiles and combat vessels (*People's Daily*, January 10, 2006). During PLA restructuring, NCOs filled a few hundred thousand officer positions in an effort to rebalance the ratio of officer to enlisted personnel (*PLA Daily*, November 12, 2008).

Subsidies and other compensations were added in 1999 to increase retirement and demobilization benefits and welfare policies. These include insurance, housing and medical benefits to attract and retain qualified personnel. Pay and benefits also have been raised, dependent housing improved and rules on vacation and leave adjusted (*PLA Daily*, November 12, 2008). NCOs, in some but not all specialties, can now have a military career serving a maximum of 30 years (Xinhua, October 4, 2009).

The PLA is upgrading and adjusting all of its current academic institutions and training programs with

Table 1. New NCO Rank Structure

NCO ranks	Maximum Service Time in Years	Service Grades
Corporal Sergeant	6	Junior NCO
Sergeant First Class Master Sergeant Class Four	8	Intermediate NCO
Master Sergeant Class Three Master Sergeant Class Two Master Sergeant Class One	More than 14	Senior NCO

additional financial support and training resources to resolve several problems, such as a low NCO training rate and insufficient resources to train NCOs for high-tech equipment maintenance and repair. The PLA also plans an expansion of NCO schools. Classroom training is combined with on-the-job training, correspondence or on-line training and use of local educational resources (*PLA Daily,* November 4, 2009). In 2002, the PLA began requiring NCOs to increase the number of specialties and skills they have in order to receive a promotion to the next level. For example, command NCOs must have "three specialties and four skills" and technical NCOs must have "one specialty and multiple skills" (*PLA Daily*, September 11, 2002).

Since 1999, the PLA has identified a number of continuing challenges for establishing a large and high quality NCO corps. The PLA has initiated a series of reforms and adjustments to address the selection process, education and training, management and pay and benefits. Recent reports however indicate problems continue to hinder attracting, retaining and training highly skilled personnel (*PLA Daily*, August 16; July 10; June 27, January 25). The process of reforms and adjustments to the NCO corps will likely last a considerable time.

PLA Air Force NCOs

PLAAF conscripts can enter the NCO corps by selection based on merit or by passing an entrance at a PLAAF officer college or the PLAAF's Dalian Communications NCO School (Xinhua, January 20, 2009). The PLAAF also targets technical schools affiliated with the aircraft industry for recruiting NCOs. For example, the Air Force Military Vocational University was established in 2008 to provide a wide range of educational opportunities to serving officers, NCOs and compulsory servicemen with promotions tied to course completion (*PLA Daily*, July 4, 2008). In addition to serving in technical positions in aviation, communications and radar units, NCOs also are filling posts previously held by junior officers, such as mess officers. In addition, they help train conscripts and junior NCOs; serve as acting platoon leaders and maintenance flight leaders; and serve as squad leaders [5].

PLA Navy NCOs

The Navy Bengbu NCO School trains Navy and Marine NCOs. The NCO school is a technical school with two or three year programs including chemical defense, communications, navigation, logistics, machinery, mechanical/electrical and weapons courses. It received upgrades in 2000 including information technology improvements (Xinhua, January 20, 2009; *PLA Daily*, August 12, 2002). NCOs can also attend a two or three year program at one of six PLAN officer academies. Many PLAN NCOs hold technical posts, but they also include trainers, commanding officers on some smaller support vessels, acting platoon leaders and squad leaders (*PLA Daily*, August 13, 2009) [6].

PLA Ground Force NCOs

The ground forces have three NCO schools: the Beijing Maintenance NCO School, the Wuhan Ordnance NCO School and the Xuanhua NCO Communications School. The specialized technical NCOs graduating from these three NCO schools provide equipment support, including field repair of advanced equipment in the ground forces (*PLA Daily*, April 5, 2007). NCO squad leaders within the ground forces support a changing doctrine at the tactical level. Efforts to make maneuver battalions operate more independently is placing greater responsibilities on both officers and NCO squad leaders to coordinate and fight an increasingly complex combined arms battle (*PLA Daily,* October 9, 2010). NCOs also are supporting battalion staffs during exercises to make up for the limited number of officers assigned to that echelon (*PLA Daily,* August 16, 2010).

PLA Second Artillery Force NCOs

The Second Artillery Qingzhou NCO School

had more than 700 graduating students in 2010 in key technical areas, including missiles, satellite communications and electronic warfare; provides courses on more than twenty new types of equipment; and conducts field and simulation training (*PLA Daily*, August 16, 2010; November 4, 2009; Xinhua, January 20, 2009). NCOs conduct maintenance and repair to the key technical areas and equipment taught at the Qingzhou NCO School, as well as operating the equipment. PLASAF NCOs also provide support during emergency and disaster relief operations (*Jiefangjun Bao,* November 3, 2009).

Conclusion

The PLA recognizes that developing a professional NCO corps is critical to the success of its effort to create a modern, informationized military, meet new missions and implement doctrinal change at the tactical level. The expansion of the NCO corps increasingly is creating a volunteer force, with a decreasing reliance on two-year conscripts. The large NCO corps provides a large skilled force to operate and maintain advanced equipment as well as mitigates the effects of the yearly influx of untrained conscripts. This helps maintain a higher level of unit readiness, and allows units to progress more rapidly into complex training and exercises.

The PLA has created NCO schools, NCO programs at officer academic institutions and correspondence courses to provide more advanced education for the increasingly professional NCO corps. These technical NCOs appear to be making the greatest contribution to PLA transformation efforts, especially in the PLAAF, PLAN and PLASAF. NCO contributions to leadership within the PLA, however, are limited to the lowest tactical levels.

While the NCO corps is better positioned to support modernization goals as more high tech equipment is developed, there are significant issues that are affecting the quality and limiting the impact of the NCO corps. PLA reforms and adjustments since 1999 have attempted to redress these problems, but the development of a fully professional and highly skilled NCO corps is still in its early stages and will require considerable time to complete.

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Notes:

1. The *PLA Daily* ran a series of articles in August 2011 on NCO development including continuing issues hindering the quality of the NCO corps. Additional articles in that paper included the following: "Winning 'Battle of Noncommissioned Officers'—First Commentary on Vigorously Strengthening the Construction of Noncommissioned Officer Teams", July 18; "Newly revised NCO management regulations issued," June 27; "Raise the Building of the Noncommissioned Officer Contingents to a New Level," July 10; and and "NCO selection qualification system to be implemented in 2012," January 25.
2. *Military Science*, Vol. 2*, Chinese Military Encyclopedia*, Beijing: Academy of Military Sciences Publishing House, July 1997, p. 563.
3. Ibid., pp. 401-405.
4. *People's Liberation Army Air Force 2010*, National Air and Space Intelligence Center, August 1, 2010.
5. *China's Navy 2007*, Office of Naval Intelligence. This document can be found atwww.fas.org/irp/agency/oni/chinanavy2007.pdf.

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