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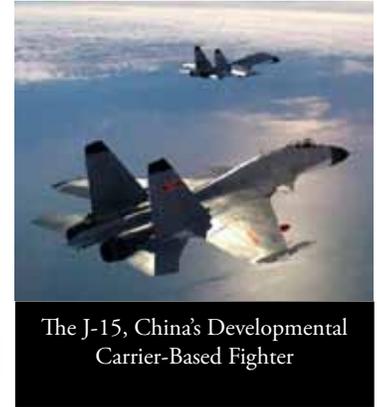
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In a Fortnight

By Peter Mattis

NEW DEPARTMENTS AND RESEARCH CENTERS HIGHLIGHT MILITARY'S CONCERNS FOR THE FUTURE

When on November 22, 2011 the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) created the new Strategic Planning Department—consolidating and upgrading some lower-level planning functions—few could have anticipated the plethora of bureaucratic changes and new research centers to follow (“Chinese Military Creates New Strategic Planning Department,” *China Brief*, November 30, 2011). The PLA followed this act on December 21 with the consolidation under the General Staff Department (GSD) of a new Training Department to oversee training for all the PLA services. Additionally, in December, the Academy of Military Science established at least three new research centers for the following: National Defense Policy, Military Operations Other than War and Military-Civil Integration (China News Service, December 30, 2011; *PLA Daily*, December 9, 2011). While it is too early to judge whether the bureaucratic reorganization will have a positive impact, the changes do indicate the priority on developing the personnel and knowledge necessary to fight and win wars under informatized conditions (*Wei Wei Po*, December 31, 2011; *PLA Daily*, December 22, 2011).

The most important development is the Training Department, because it reinforces a persistent theme over the last decade in PLA reforms to improve the quality of military personnel—whether pilots, noncommissioned officers or any other command and specialty position (“Chinese Air Force Officer Recruitment,

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Education and Training,” *China Brief*, November 30, 2011; “Reforming the People’s Liberation Army’s Noncommissioned Officer Corps and Conscripts,” *China Brief*, October 28, 2011). When he announced the department’s creation Chief of the General Staff Chen Bingde, invoking President Hu Jintao’s remarks, explicitly reinforced this point, stating the Training Department was to assist in “implementing [military] reforms with high standards and high quality” (*PLA Daily*, December 22, 2011). The presence of all the deputy chiefs of staff—generals Zhang Qinsheng, Ma Xiaotian, Sun Jianguo, Hou Shusen, Cai Yingting and Wei Fenghe—as well as senior Navy, Air Force, and Second Artillery leaders also show the importance the PLA attaches to this development (*PLA Daily*, December 22). Hong Kong media speculated the GSD Training Department was likely to have a positive impact over time, even if quality personnel cannot immediately spring forth (*Wen Wei Po*, December 31, 2011).

Running parallel to the renaming and redirected PLA Communications Department to the Informatization Department earlier this year, the Training Department is expected to play a leading role in designing training concepts that promote awareness of the PLA’s evolving use of information and systems integration in military operations. General Chen’s remarks on where training concepts should focus included a heavy emphasis on ensuring PLA soldiers understand the leading role of information and information-based jointness (*PLA Daily*, December 22).

At AMS, the new research centers are supposed to serve as nerve centers for subject matter experts across China, following a “small internal core, wide external reach” model to guide and conduct research. This includes hiring both PLA and non-military experts as well as non-Chinese defense analysts as required by PLA research needs (China News Service, December 21, 2011). The National Defense Policy Center will fall under the Military Theory and Strategy Department at AMS and is expected to play a leading role in drafting China’s defense white papers and the annual assessment of China’s strategic environment. Combined with a possible role in “Track II” diplomacy, this new AMS center also may serve as a PLA contribution to Hu Jintao’s desire to shape the international cultural and media environment (*Southern Weekend*, January 4; China News Service, December 21,

2011).

While the development and reform of these departments and new research centers probably is a good thing for the increasingly professional and self-aware PLA, the burgeoning growth of bureaucratic expertise in the military has the potential to weaken civilian oversight. The lack of direct experience in military affairs on the part of senior civilian leaders and the shortage of non-PLA-affiliated defense analysts mean the leadership probably does not have many options for independently evaluating polished, professional military analyses and policy recommendations.

Before giving up on Beijing’s ability to maintain awareness of the PLA’s bureaucratic machinery, two points are worth considering. Reportedly, President Hu personally was the impetus behind the creation of the Strategic Planning Department and this could mean Hu—and in the future, Xi Jinping—regularly will tap the department for information as it conducts its audits of PLA modernization (Phoenix News, November 24, 2011). Second, the three new AMS research centers involve issues that have non-PLA policy equities, which means the AMS analysts probably will be involved in research and discussions at many levels of the civilian government. For example, military-civil integration (*junmin ronghe*)—which the last set of August 1 PLA Day editorials emphasized—involves local discussions on mobilization, integration of secrecy protection work and prioritizing resource allocation. Not only would serious AMS research into this area inject more civilian perspectives into PLA leadership thinking, but also the research effort would expose PLA questions and concerns to the government and party systems. As a further positive sign, General Political Department chief Liao Xilong exhorted AMS to help build a common understanding across the Chinese government of military-civil integration (*PLA Daily*, December 9, 2011).

It may take some time to assess the impact of these organizational reforms; however, the PLA has laid out a trail of breadcrumbs about its concerns for the future of the force—a trail analysts should follow. One Chinese newspaper went so far as to compare last year’s organizational reforms as comparable to the reforms undertaken in 1985, 1998 and 2003 in terms of their importance for the PLA. This weighty judgment places

the formation of the Informatization, Strategic Planning and Training departments on par with, in chronological order, the military region restructuring, the creation of the current four general department structure (*si zongbu tizhi*) and the emphasis on joint operations (*South Metropolis Daily*, December 25, 2011). While this judgment may be premature, it should serve as a clarion call for analysts to evaluate systematically PLA assessments of its training and education programs, informatization, the formulation of national defense policy, and civil-military relations.

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The Grim Future of the Wukan Model for Managing Dissent

By Willy Lam

The apparently peaceful resolution of the “land grab” crisis in the Guangdong village of Wukan has been hailed as Beijing’s new model for tackling dissent. Last September, 15,000 peasants in Wukan in southeastern Guangdong Province, began staging protests against cadres who had illegally sold their land to a real estate developer. No compensation was paid to the residents. After Xue Jinbo, a respected village representative, died in police custody on December 11, Wukan residents booted out the local party and police officials and set up barricades on roads leading to the fishing village. Guangdong authorities responded by surrounding Wukan with a few thousand public security and People’s Armed Police (PAP) officers. Food, water and electricity supplies were cut off. Yet on December 22, Guangdong Vice-Party Secretary Zhu Mingguo, the province’s third-ranking cadre, negotiated a settlement with Lin Zuluan, the newly elected chief village representative. While the full details of the agreement had not been disclosed, Lin and other village representatives indicated Zhu had affirmed the villagers’ right to protests. The “provisional administration” headed by Lin was recognized. Several Wukan activists who had clashed with the police were released. The law enforcement officers withdrew. The

villagers removed their barricades and let off firecrackers in celebration (*Wall Street Journal*, December 23; *Ming Pao* [Hong Kong] December 22).

Many questions however have been raised about the Wukan incident. Has justice been done to the villagers? What lies behind the Guangdong authorities’ decision not to use force against Wukan’s singular act of defiance? More importantly, is there a consensus within the CCP’s top echelon that the conciliatory approach represented by the so-called Wukan model will be adopted for future cases of confrontation between disaffected social elements and the authorities? Given that some 65 percent of China’s “mass incidents” are due to misappropriation of land, has the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) administration come up with effective measures to curb the malpractice?

One day after his successful negotiation with Wukan’s self-elected leaders, Deputy Provincial Party Secretary Zhu re-visited Wukan. “We shall adequately handle Wukan’s problems according to laws and regulations, and in a fair and open manner,” said Zhu. He noted the authorities in Guangzhou, the provincial capital, had sent special “work teams” to Wukan to investigate the misappropriation and illegal use of land as well as corruption amongst cadres. Zhu disclosed that several Wukan officials had been detained for questioning. Moreover, Wang Yemin, head of one of the work teams, said last week that the elections in Wukan in February 2011—which produced the corrupt and now ousted village heads, —had been declared invalid. Polls for a new village administrative committee (VAC) will be held in early 2012 (*Xinhua*, December 29; *Nanfang Daily* [Guangzhou] December 24, 2011). Yet chief village representative Lin was skeptical about the outcome. He told the Hong Kong media that “more than 100,000 square meters of land have been taken away from us and it is not sure when the land will be returned.” Moreover, it is not clear whether the five or so “hooligans” temporarily “released on bail” by the police might face retribution. It is not uncommon for police to nab the alleged ringleaders of disturbances after peace has been restored and media attention has drifted away (*Ming Pao*, December 24; *South China Morning Post*, [Hong Kong], December 25).

Moreover, misgivings remain regarding the motives behind Guangdong Party Secretary and Politburo member Wang Yang’s decision to use placatory instead of iron-fisted strategies against Wuhan. It is true that

Wang, 56, nicknamed “Young Marshal” for his brisk decision-making style, has a relatively reformist reputation. Yet commentators in both the Hong Kong and foreign media have pointed out his anxiety to prevent the Wukan incident from worsening to the point where it might have jeopardized his chances of promotion to the Politburo Standing Committee at the upcoming 18th CCP Congress. This concern was compounded by the few dozen reporters from Hong Kong and foreign media that descended on Wukan in the week leading to the December 22 breakthrough (*New York Times*, December 31, 2011; *Apple Daily* [Hong Kong], December 28, 2011). It is noteworthy that in another recent confrontation between Guangdong residents and police—inhabitants of the town of Haimen protesting against the expansion of a power plant that has caused serious pollution—public security officers used traditional tactics to deal with the crisis. PAP officers used tear gas to disperse the demonstrators. Several protestors were badly beaten up, despite the pledge by Guangzhou that a temporary moratorium had been put on future plans of the plant (CNN, December 20; China Daily, December 23).

Does the Wukan case indeed mean that central- and local-level officials will henceforward lean toward relatively conciliatory and non-violent means to tackle protests by peasants and other disaffected elements in society? At least on the surface, Wang Yang’s handling of Wukan has won the support of the state media. The *People’s Daily* hailed Guangzhou’s efforts as an example of “accommodating and defusing contradictions and conflicts in a good way.” It praised Guangdong leaders for “grasping well the aspirations of the masses.” The commentary noted whether officials could satisfactorily resolve questions regarding the masses’ malcontents was a “yardstick of cadres’ ties with the people as well as their leadership ability.” The *Global Times* praised Guangdong leaders for “putting the interests of the public in the first place when handling land disputes” (*People’s Daily*, December 22, 2011; *Global Times* [Beijing], December 22, 2011; Bloomberg, December 22, 2011). The Wukan model also won plaudits from members of the remnant liberal wing of the party, a reference to the followers of radical, pro-West modernizers represented by the late party secretaries Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang. “I hope that the Wukan incident can push society to establish a system which is based on democracy and the rule of law,” said Hu Deping, the respected son of Hu Yaobang, “I

hope that when we are faced with similar problems in the future, we can resort to the rule of law and negotiation” (*South China Morning Post*, December 30, 2011; Sina.com, December 30, 2011).

A national meeting on law and order recently convened by the CCP Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission (CPLAC) seemed to endorse the conciliatory approach. CPLAC Secretary and Politburo Standing Committee member Zhou Yongkang called on cadres in the police, prosecutor’s offices and courts system to “cultivate a harmonious and stable social environment.” “We must enthusiastically prevent and defuse contradictions and disputes and promote social harmony,” Zhou said. “We must enhance and come up with innovative ways in social management, and boost the level of public services.” Zhou’s dictums squared with a series of instructions given by other Politburo members about promoting “large-scale reconciliation” so as to preempt and lessen the impact of socio-political contradictions (*Legal Daily*, December 24, 2011; Xinhua, December 21, 2011).

However, it is important to note that Zhou and other members of the ruling elite have not given up the CCP authorities’ time-tested strategy of tackling dissent: to switch between soft and tough tactics in accordance with the requirement of different circumstances. In the CPLAC conference, Zhou made reference to having “planned and implemented various types of operations to ensure stability and to counter emergencies, which have succeeded in safeguarding national security and social stability.” Apart from cracking down hard on subversive and “anti-state” elements in Tibet and Xinjiang, law enforcement units have pulled out all the stops to muzzle and even imprison dissidents, including NGO activists and human-rights lawyers who have represented disenfranchised urban and rural residents in hundreds of land-grab cases nationwide (*Ming Pao*, December 27, 2011; Human Rights Watch [New York], December 26, 2011).

Foremost among activist lawyers harassed by state security are internationally-renowned attorneys Gao Zhisheng and Ni Yulan. Last month, Gao was put back in prison on charges of “inciting subversion of state power.” In 2006, he was given a three-year jail term but was later granted a five-year probation, during which he was subjected to tight surveillance and occasional beatings by plainclothes police

officers (Voice of America, December 23, 2011; Reuters, December 16, 2011). Last week, the Beijing municipal court started proceedings against Ni, a female lawyer who had frequently acted on behalf of victims of illegal land appropriation. Ni, who was charged with fraud and causing civil disturbances, had to be carried to the court on a stretcher due to injuries reportedly caused by heavy beatings by police (The Associated Press, December 30, 2011; *The Guardian* [London], December 29, 2011). At the same time, the National People's Congress has proceeded with the revision of the Criminal Procedure Law. One change is to empower public security officers to detain people suspected of threatening state security in secret locations for indefinite periods—and without the need to inform their family members or legal representatives (*New York Times*, December 16, 2011; *Wall Street Journal*, December 12, 2011).

While national- and local-level cadres seem to be debating the best methods to handle dissent as well as “destabilizing social incidents,” the State Council has made new pledges about protecting the rights of farmers. At a national conference on rural work held last month, Premier Wen Jiabao pledged national and regional cadres would try their best to safeguard the economic and legal interests of peasants. “We can no longer sacrifice farmers’ land ownership rights to reduce urbanization and industrialization costs,” Xinhua News Agency quoted Wen as saying. “We must significantly increase farmers’ gains from the increase in land value.” Wen also said peasants should not be forced to give up their land even if they move to cities. “No one is empowered to take away such rights.” The premier added that “we must also pay attention to expanding the parameters of village self-government” (Xinhua, December 28, 2011; Reuters, December 28, 2011).

At least in theory, there are enough statues on the law books that forbid cadres and developers from forcing urbanites and peasants to leave their properties and land without the payment of adequate compensation. However, land and related transactions account for at least half of the revenues of regional administrations. In 2010, for instance, local governments raked in about 2.9 trillion yuan (\$460 billion) worth of income from land sales. Unfortunately, most local administrations are heavily in debt partly due to misguided investments in infrastructure and property-related ventures. Especially

after the global financial crisis broke out in late 2008, sub-national cadres are anxious to embark on infrastructure and other job-creation programs both to provide employment and to jack up the GDP expansion rate. Satisfactory economic growth is seen as indispensable for officials’ promotion prospects given the importance that GDP statistics figure in the assessment procedures of the Chinese cadre system. In mid-2011, the State Auditing Administration estimated local governments, together with government-related urban development investment vehicles, had run up debts totaling 10.72 trillion yuan (\$1.7 trillion). Western credit agencies reckoned that the figure could be as high as 14 trillion yuan (\$2.2 trillion). (“Local Debt Problems Highlight Weak Links in China’s Economic Model,” *China Brief*, July 15, 2011)

Since income from land sales are a principal means for local governments to service their debts as well as pay the salaries of civil servants, Beijing is prone to turn a blind eye to their property-related deals (*Apple Daily*, December 29, 2011; *Wall Street Journal*, December 15, 2011). In light of central authorities’ anxiety to uphold socio-political stability, it also is not difficult for regional cadres to justify their employment of police and PAP officers to quell protests of whatever nature. Unless, as Hu Deping pointed out, the CCP leadership is ready to uphold rule of law—and allow activist lawyers to defend the rights of the victims of land grab and official corruption—deep-seated social contradictions will remain despite a couple of cases of the apparently fair and transparent resolution of “mass incidents.”

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ECFA and the Elections: Implications for Cross-Strait Relations

By Dong Wang

The signing of the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan in June 2010 signified landmark progress in cross-Strait rapprochement, which began in May 2008 when the Kuomintang (KMT) came into power after eight years of being the opposition party in Taiwan. The ECFA has not only instilled new vigor into Taiwan's economy, but also opened tremendous new opportunities for cooperation and prosperity between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan. Indeed, aiming at significantly reducing tariffs and commercial barriers, the ambitious accord marked a significant breakthrough in terms of the normalization, institutionalization and liberalization of cross-Strait economic relations. The future of this progress however probably depends on the outcome of the coming election in Taiwan irrespective of ECFA benefits, because of Beijing's deep mistrust of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and DPP candidate Tsai Ing-wen's willingness to walk away from the "1992 Consensus," Beijing's precondition for cross-Strait negotiation.

ECFA and Cross-Strait Economic Integration

Several statistics illustrate the positive effects of ECFA. In 2010, cross-Strait trade volume hit a record high of \$145 billion, up 36.9 percent compared to the same period a year earlier. Taiwan's export to the Chinese mainland also reached the record high of \$115 billion, up 35 percent as compared to the same period in 2009 (Ministry of Commerce, January 20, 2011). In particular, following the implementation of "early harvest" plan in January 2011, Taiwan's export to the Chinese mainland in 2011 is expected to hit the record high of \$120 billion (*Commercial Times*, December 15, 2011).

2010 also witnessed the dramatic increase in Taiwanese investment in the mainland, with total realized investment reaching \$2.48 billion, up 31.7 percent as compared to the same period of 2009 (Ministry of Commerce, January 20, 2011). In addition, 2010 also saw normalization and

institutionalization of cross-Strait tourism, with over 1.5 million Chinese mainland residents visiting Taiwan and over 5 million Taiwan residents visiting the mainland. Since May 2008—the first time mainland tourists were allowed to visit Taiwan—over 3 million mainland tourists have visited (Central News Agency, January 4, 2012).

According to a Peterson Institute for International Economics estimate, the implementation of ECFA will increase Taiwan's 2020 GDP by about 5.3 percent from the current trend line [1]. Taiwan's economy grew 10.47 percent in 2010, the record high in more than two decades (Central News Agency, February 1, 2011). Consequently, Taiwan was among the few economies that achieved double-digit economic growth in the wake of the global recession. The continuous global economic downturn in 2011 has lowered the demand for Taiwan's exports, particularly in Europe and the United States, leading to a modest 4.38 percent growth of GDP in 2011. Analysts at Academia Sinica, Taiwan's leading research institute, estimate ECFA will serve as the main driver of Taiwan's exports in 2012 since the tariffs of more than 90 percent of the items on the "early harvest" list will be reduced to zero. As a result, Taiwan is expected to achieve a 5.15 percent growth in exports in 2012 and Taiwan's estimated overall economic performance will still top the region (Central News Agency, December 29, 2011).

Moreover, ECFA also has opened the door for Taiwan to negotiate Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with other regional actors, including Singapore, India, Philippine, Indonesia, New Zealand, South Korea and the United States; thus, in due time, it will lead to greater economic integration between Taiwan and the region [2]. Therefore, the ECFA has laid a strong basis for the co-development and co-prosperity of both sides across the Strait.

Challenges in Cross-Strait Relations in the Post-ECFA Era

The normalization, institutionalization and liberalization of cross-Strait economic and social relations have not only brought immense benefits to the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, but also greatly contributed to the peace and stability in East Asia. The Taiwan Strait has been turned from a potential flash point for conflict to a hub of development and prosperity. It should be noted that adherence to the "1992 Consensus", as political

leaders on both sides of the Taiwan Strait have repeatedly pointed out, has provided the core political basis for both sides to build mutual trust and embark on the historic rapprochement. Contrary to some assessments, the “1992 Consensus” remains one of the core principles of Beijing’s cross-Strait policy (“DPP’s Cross-Strait Policy Consistent with the ‘Status Quo,’” *China Brief*, December 20, 2011). The most recent example is a speech last month given by Jia Qinglin, Chairman of Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), in which he stated that the “1992 Consensus” was the consensus reached by both sides of the Taiwan Strait in 1992 that each side “orally expresses the insistence on the One China principle” (*China Daily*, December 19, 2011). Earlier, Wang Yi, Director of State Council’s Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO), had made it clear that, although Taiwan and the Chinese mainland “have different interpretations of the political meaning of One China,” both sides should “seek common ground while reserving differences” (*qitong cunyi*), which is the “essence” of the “1992 Consensus” [3].

Looking ahead, however, there are still uncertainties and challenges clouding the trajectory of cross-Strait relations in the post-ECFA era, particularly in light of the current heatedly contested election.

First, the DPP’s unveiled intention of ditching the “1992 Consensus” highlights the potential perils in the DPP approach to cross-Strait relations. When the DPP released the long-awaited, cross-Strait part of the DPP’s 10-year policy guidelines last August, Tsai publicly and unequivocally denied the existence of the “1992 Consensus.” Calling the term “1992 Consensus” an “invention”, Tsai claimed she would instead advocate a “Taiwan Consensus”, making it clear, from Beijing’s perspective, that she and her party would be ready to shake the foundation of the recent improvement in cross-Strait relations (*Taipei Times*, August 24, 2011). Throughout the campaign, the DPP has consistently denied the existence of the “1992 Consensus”, and accused the Ma administration of selling out Taiwan’s sovereignty by negotiating with Beijing on the basis of the “1992 Consensus.” The DPP’s move to deny the “1992 Consensus” may come as little surprise given the DPP’s pro-independence orientation. If this position became policy, it would be most damaging to the hard-fought trust developing between Beijing and Taipei.

Ma Ying-jeou and his administration have disputed Tsai’s antagonistic characterization of the “1992 Consensus.” Indeed, Ma’s administration has made a strong case that Beijing and Taipei had in fact recognized in 1992 the existence of the consensus of “One China with Respective Interpretations” (*yige zhongguo, gezi biao shu*). Apparently, the two sides did not engage in talks sitting on air. It is that ambiguity, which leaves sufficient space for each side to negotiate without caving on principles. The consensus is the simplest benchmark to sustain a modicum of trust across the Taiwan Strait. Regardless the label, the existence of at least a tacit cross-Strait “consensus” cannot be denied [4].

The root cause of Tsai’s denial of the “1992 Consensus”, as Beijing sees it, lies in the pro-independence obsession of the DPP. Unsurprisingly, Beijing has responded to Tsai’s cross-Strait policies harshly, calling her statements “unacceptable” and questioning whether her policy reflects a hidden intention to pursue *de jure* Taiwanese independence (State Council, Taiwan Affairs Office, August 24, 2011).

Should the DPP prevail in the 2012 election, Beijing fears ideological belief and political calculation might drive a Tsai administration to adopt an “ABK” (all-but-KMT) approach to building a “Taiwan Consensus.” If that happens, it would severely damage the political basis of cross-Strait relations with the potential to send relations into a downward spiral.

Second, the DPP’s loathing of ECFA is no secret. The DPP had protested fiercely against ECFA before it was approved in the Legislative Yuan in August 2010. Last June, one year after the signing of ECFA, Tsai and the DPP strongly attacked ECFA as having damaged the interests of Taiwan’s farmers and fishers. Tsai has flip-flopped several times as to what she will do about the ECFA if she wins the election. Should she prevail, a Tsai administration might not dare to abolish the ECFA altogether, as DPP officials and pro-Green scholars would say privately [5]. Regardless, the DPP probably will exploit any negative economic repercussions of ECFA to roll back the agreement. Tsai has made it clear that if elected, she would scrutinize ECFA, handling the agreement according to “international regulations and democratic mechanisms.” Moreover, she indicated her readiness to

put the agreement to a referendum “if people think it is necessary” (*Taipei Times*, August 24, 2011). Indeed, Tsai already has capitalized on ECFA’s alleged negative impact on traditional industries and agriculture to popularize opposition to it. Predictably, a DPP victory in the 2012 election could mean ECFA’s implementation would face serious hurdles, reversing the momentum of cross-Strait economic integration.

Whither Cross-Strait Relations?

ECFA has spurred speculation as to whether it will lead to political dialogue, military confidence building talks and eventually a cross-Strait peace agreement. Last October, Ma briefly floated the possibility of a “peace agreement” in the next decade, only to be deterred by a lack of popular support. For Beijing, while peaceful reunification remains the ultimate goal, it is fully aware that there is still a long way to go before the conditions might be ripe for political and military dialogues. For the near term, Beijing will follow the gradualist principles of “economy first and politics later, and the easy part first and the difficult one later” (*xianjing houzheng, xianyi bouman*) and focus on substantiating the integration of the two economies (State Council, Taiwan Affairs Office, March 16, 2011).

A DPP victory in the 2012 election—for the reasons stated above—might derail those goals. The poll results on January 3, 2012, the last day polls are allowed to be released before the January 14 election, show Ma enjoys a narrow lead over Tsai and People’s First Party candidate James Soong a distant third.

Tsai’s approach to cross-Strait relations apparently also has upset Washington. During her September 2011 visit to the United States, Tsai reportedly failed to reassure the Obama administration about her reliability on maintaining cross-Strait stability if elected. After Tsai met with U.S. officials, a senior Obama administration official told a reporter in blunt terms that Tsai “left us with distinct doubts whether she is both willing and able to continue the stability in cross-Strait relations the region has enjoyed in recent years” (*Financial Times*, September 15, 2011). In private, Washington reportedly has urged Tsai on several occasions to accept the “1992 Consensus”, only to be rebuffed (*United Evening News*, December 25, 2011).

How would Beijing deal with a Tsai’s victory? So far Beijing has been reticent to discuss publicly the prospects of a DPP victory. Beijing presumably worries a DPP victory would challenge further peaceful development of cross-Strait relations. Beijing believes the so-called “Taiwan Consensus” is a thinly-veiled appeal for independence, as the DPP insists Beijing renounces the use of force as a precondition for cross-Strait talks while asserting that all options for Taipei including independence should be open. These stances are diametrically opposite to Beijing’s core principle of “opposing Taiwan independence.” Unsurprisingly, Beijing regards the “Taiwan Consensus” as something utterly antagonistic. Beijing’s pessimism is evident in its warning and harsh criticism of Tsai’s 10-year policy guidelines. So far the official responses are still measured, with the TAO calling on Tsai to face new realities in cross-Strait relations and appealing to “not go backwards” (*bu zou huitou lu*) (State Council, Taiwan Affairs Office, August 24, 2011, July 28, 2011). Other commentators are less restrained in criticizing the DPP.

Some analysts might argue Tsai is much less radical than former DPP leader Chen Shui-bien. Being moderate and pragmatic, Tsai would not seek provocation and confrontation in cross-Strait relations [6]. Given Tsai’s declared cross-Strait policies, Beijing—based on its principles—has reasons to be concerned whether a Tsai administration would damage cross-Strait relations deliberately. It is likely that cross-Strait communications and exchanges would be shelved if Tsai, after elected, refused to accept the “1992 Consensus.” Cross-Strait relations also might cool down as tensions over sensitive issues concerning sovereignty and “international space” grow (*Central Daily News*, January 2, 2012). In sum, if Tsai gets elected, the current momentum of peaceful development in cross-Strait relations probably will slow because of mistrust. In that scenario, Beijing would be prepared to “bypass” Tsai to reach out to the opposition, as it did during Chen’s second term. Moreover, Beijing would try to reach a strategic understanding with the United States over the management of cross-Strait relations, as it did with President George W. Bush.

If Ma wins reelection, Beijing—and hopefully the region—probably will read the result as a sign that cross-Strait stability can be expected. In this best scenario, though, Beijing also would be well-advised to avoid overly-optimistic expectations and impatience at the

pace of forward movement in cross-Strait relations. To do otherwise will only hurt the goals Beijing holds dear. Even if Ma wins, his victory does not necessarily give him the mandate to move quickly on more sensitive issues such as military and political dialogues. How fast and far a new Ma administration and, for that matter, any administration in Taiwan, can go in cross-Strait relations will eventually be decided by the people in Taiwan. For now and the foreseeable future, the overwhelming majority of the Taiwan people would prefer status quo rather than immediate reunification or independence (*China Times*, December 17, 2011) [7]. Therefore, for Beijing's leaders, a wise strategy would be to follow the patient wisdom of the ancient aphorism that says "where water flows, a channel can be formed" (*shuidao qucheng*), if they truly believe history is on their side.

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Notes:

1. Daniel H. Rosen and Zhi Wang, "Deepening China-Taiwan Relations through the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement", Peterson Institute for International Economics, *Policy Brief*, No. PB10-16, June 2010.
2. Mignonne Man-jung Chan, "Implications of the ECFA for Taiwan, Cross-Straits Development and Regional Integration," *Prospects and Perspectives 2010*, Taipei: Cross-Strait Interflow Prospect Foundation, Chapter 13, pp. 75-86; Chu-Chia Lin, "ECFA: Impacts and Implications," Conference Paper for "The Relevance of the EU Experience in Conflict Transformation for the Taiwan Strait," Chatham House and European Union Center in Taiwan, London, September 8-9, 2011.
3. Wang Yi's remarks when receiving the delegation of the KMT Youth Work General Association in Beijing, March 25, 2011, available at http://www.chinataiwan.org/wxzl/gtbwx/201103/t20110328_1800809.htm
4. For a detailed account of the "1992 Consensus", see Su Chi and Cheng An-kuo eds., "Yige Zhongguo, geji biaoshu" *gongshi de shishi* [The Historical Facts of the Consensus of "One China with Respective Interpretations"], Taipei: Guojia zhengce yanjiu

jijinhui [National Policy Research Foundation], 2002.

5. Author's interviews, Taipei, August, 2011.
6. See, for example, Bonnie Glaser and Brittany Billingsley, "Taiwan's 2012 Presidential Election and Cross-Strait Relations: Implications for the United States," CSIS Freeman Chair in China Studies, Center for Strategic and International Studies, November 2011, Washington, D.C., p. 6.
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How Pakistan's Unstable Tribal Areas Threaten China's Core Interests

By Christina Lin

With all eyes focused on the consequences for the United States and NATO of the accidental air strikes, which killed 24 Pakistani soldiers, little attention has been paid to another big player who will be greatly impacted by Pakistan's refusal to go after militants that are using the country as a refuge: China. Pakistan-based militants in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) are increasingly a threat to China's core interests: national stability and territorial integrity. In July, Turkestani Islamic Party (TIP) militants trained in FATA launched yet another attack against China with bomb explosions in Kashgar, Xinjiang, ahead of China's launch of "China-Eurasia Expo" in Urumqi under the auspices of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). TIP wants Xinjiang to be an independent Islamic state and the China-Eurasia Expo is a centerpiece of China's Eurasia strategy of developing its western provinces and rebuilding the Silk Road of trade and commerce across the Eurasia heartland (*Beijing Review*, September 15, 2011; *China Daily*, September 6, 2011; Xinhua, September 1, 2011). Outraged at Pakistan's inability to clean up its own backyard, Chinese Communist Party-controlled press was immediate and harsh in decrying this incident

(*China Daily*, August 12, 2011; Xinhua, August 1, 2011). This quickly prompted a scurrying of Pakistani leaders—military intelligence chief Lt. Gen. Ahmed Shuja Pasha, Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar and President Asif Ali Zardari—to Beijing to mend relations with its patron (*Dawn*, August 25, 2011; *New York Times*, August 1, 2011).

In these meetings, China allegedly demanded to set up military bases in FATA or in the Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA) that borders Xinjiang province (*Asia Times*, October 26, August 10, 2011). After the bombing, the Chinese government reportedly deployed at least 200,000 security personnel to pursue Uyghur terrorists in the region, more than the 140,000 coalition troops currently in Afghanistan (*Asia Times*, August 31, 2011). China also is revising its anti-terror law to possibly allow military intervention abroad (Xinhua, October 27, October 24, 2011). One official commentary warned that “If the violent forces in Xinjiang gain ground, China may be forced to directly intervene militarily in Pakistan and Afghanistan, but this is clearly not the situation China would like to see” (Xinhua, September 27, 2011; “China and Pakistan: Evolving Focus on Stability within Continuity,” *China Brief*, November 30, 2011). While these reports may be speculative, taken together, they suggest Beijing’s concerns—especially with a less active U.S. presence in Pakistan—may be rethinking fundamental tenets of its security policy.

FATA-Based Militants’ Threat to China’s Core Interests

That Beijing might demand a military base in this hotbed would underscore its view on the gravity of the FATA threat against China’s core interests: realizing its western development strategy across Eurasia; continued economic growth for Chinese Communist Party (CCP)’s legitimacy and survival; and sovereign control over Xinjiang to deter “splittism” in other parts of the country, such as Tibet and Inner Mongolia as well as to preserve its claims on Taiwan. Chinese Defense Minister Liang Guanglie spelled out China’s core interests at the IISS 10th Asia Security Summit last June:

“The core interests include anything related to sovereignty, stability and form of government. China is now pursuing socialism. If there is any attempt to reject this path, it will touch upon China’s core interests. Or, if there is any attempt

to encourage any part of China to secede, that also touches upon China’s core interests related to our land, sea or air. Then, anything that is related to China’s national economic and social development also touches upon China core interests” (*Straits Times*, June 6, 2011).

China also fears TIP’s close ties with al-Qaeda in FATA and increasing Chinese “Turkistan-ization” of al Qaeda. Trained by al-Qaeda in FATA, TIP already has claimed a number of attacks in Xinjiang as well as against Chinese economic interests in Pakistan. The extent of TIP militants’ network of terrorist activities in Pakistan was revealed in 2009 when they threatened the Chinese Embassy in Islamabad through a letter to kidnap Chinese diplomats and consular officers. In a video on August 1, 2009, TIP leader Abdul Haq al Turkistani urged Muslims to attack Chinese interests to punish Beijing for what he described as massacres against Uyghur Muslims during their uprising in Xinjiang (*Asia Times*, August 10, 2011). Abdul Haq had been appointed a member of al-Qaeda’s *majlis-e-shura* or executive council in 2005, but was subsequently killed in a 2010 U.S. drone strike and succeeded by Abdul Shakoor Turkistani, a Chinese Uyghur well known for his friendly terms with major Taliban groups in Waziristan (*Asia Times*, October 26, 2011). A few weeks before the death of Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda appointed him as new commander of its Pakistan forces and training camps (*Times of India*, May 11, 2011). Beijing thus has legitimate fears that Pakistan’s inability to crack down on TIP and al-Qaeda in FATA will undermine China’s hold over Xinjiang and sabotage China’s access to strategic minerals and markets across the Eurasian heartland.

Political Dimensions of the Threat

It was not surprising therefore when Beijing dispatched its elite commando forces, the Snow Leopard, near Pakistan’s borders in the aftermath of the Kashgar bombing and stepped up its “Strike Hard” campaign (*China Daily*, August 13, 2011). Xinjiang is a strategic region for China. Three times the size of France and one sixth of China’s land area, it share borders with eight countries: Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. It is rich in energy resources and a key transport corridor for China to access energy and strategic minerals from Central Asia, Caspian region and

the Middle East [1].

Instability in Xinjiang is a threat to CCP credibility and legitimacy. Senior CCP officials seem to think that if the government is seen as weak and unable to control Xinjiang, this may encourage separatism in other regions, such as Tibet, Inner Mongolia, Taiwan and potentially elsewhere. Moreover, the CCP needs continued access to energy and strategic minerals in Central Asia to help feed its voracious economic growth. The SCO is China's vehicle to project its influence across this pivot of the Eurasia heartland.

In 1996, then-President Jiang Zemin presided over a Politburo Standing Committee meeting that addressed Xinjiang's stability. In a document called "Document #7," CCP issued directives to resolve regional issues. Document #7 outlined three main security concerns: (1) outside influence in destabilizing Xinjiang; (2) erosion of state's authority as religiously-motivated groups challenge authority at the local level; and (3) economic impoverishment in the region as a catalyst for discontent. CCP's courses of action to address these issues are threefold: (1) resolve problems of foreign influence through multilateral diplomacy with Central Asian republics; (2) crack down on challenges to state authority; and (3) promote economic development to resolve impoverishment [2]. This Document #7 served as the blueprint for China's "Develop the West" Silk Road Strategy to stabilize Xinjiang and spur local economic growth.

Economic Dimensions of the Threat

Terrorist attacks from al-Qaeda-trained TIP potentially threaten a core tenet of China's strategy of stabilizing Xinjiang—as an "inseparable part of China", for resource extraction and as a springboard into Central Eurasia. More than 43 percent of investment allocated by the central government to expand domestic demand was used for projects in western regions (Xinhua, October 16, 2009). Xinjiang is also a vital section of the continental rail route, the Eurasia Land Bridge, which connects China with Europe (*Beijing Review*, August 11, 2011).

On April 23, 2010, in a meeting held by the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central

Committee, President Hu Jintao stated, "it is a major and urgent task of strategic significance for us to boost the economic and social development of Xinjiang to achieve lasting stability in the region." According to Wang Ning, an economist with the Academy of Social Sciences in Xinjiang, the development of the region would speed up the political, economic and cultural exchanges between China and Central Asian states and contribute to regional prosperity and stability. To that end, China's Civil Aviation Administration plans to have six new airports in the region by 2015, bringing the total number to 22. There are also plans for new flight routes to link Xinjiang's capital Urumqi to Istanbul, Dubai, Samarkand in Uzbekistan, Yekaterinburg in Russia and Tbilisi in Georgia (Xinhua, July 2, 2010).

Kashgar, a key hub near China's far western border, is emblematic of both Beijing's outreach and vulnerability. Kashgar is being developed into a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) and together with Pakistan's northern provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan, this will form the central plank in the emerging architecture for new silk routes. There are ideas to establish a trans-border economic zone on both sides of Pakistan and China by establishing manufacturing hubs, trade houses and clearing houses as well as the use of yuan for cross-border trade settlement (*Global Times*, September 18, 2011). Since FATA borders Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan and the latest terrorist attack was in Kashgar, collectively the foundational stone of China's Silk Road development strategy, China would not be able to launch this central plank if FATA militants became a more significant destabilizing force.

Military Dimensions of the Threat

One key aspect of Xinjiang that is sorely neglected in press coverage regarding terrorism is China's nuclear arsenal. Xinjiang hosts China's nuclear test site Lop Nur and elements of the Second Artillery Corps, China's strategic missile force. Some of the Second Artillery's vaunted tunnels—the so-called "Underground Great Wall" for hiding missiles and nuclear warheads—also surround Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang and site of the July 2009 riots that killed 200 people and injured almost 2,000 others. Persistent unrest on a national scale has left at least China's Xinjiang-based nuclear warheads vulnerable, like during the Cultural Revolution (*Washington*

Post, November 29, 2011; *People's Daily*, July 6, 2009) [3]. Should such unrest occur again—probably on a scale even more substantial than 1989—these weapons might become vulnerable to seizure by Uighur militant groups.

Implications of Pakistan's Inability to Neutralize FATA Militants

If Pakistan continues its lax attitude towards FATA militants and attacks on Chinese soil increase in severity and frequency, Beijing would likely see this as a continued threat to national sovereignty and territorial integrity. China already appears to be taking several courses of action to redress this problem.

Increased PLA Presence in Pakistan

One course of action, as mentioned earlier, is the reported demand for PLA bases in the FATA in addition to its current troop presence in northern Pakistan. When it comes to China's territorial integrity, China has a history of responding forcefully when its borders are violated or threatened: in 1950 it invaded North Korea; in 1962 it invaded India; in 1979 it invaded Vietnam; and, since the 1990s, it has confronted other claimants in the South China Sea several times. PLA engineers have been assisting in earthquake recovery since last January; however, it's not clear how long they will stay or whether the PLA contingent lacks security elements for its protection (*India Today*, January 4; *Financial Times*, November 3, 2011; *Asia Times*, October 26, 2011; *Asia Times*, August 1, 2011;). Beijing has not tolerated any direct violation of its territorial integrity (outside of compromises in territorial dispute negotiations), suggesting it might attempt to deal with FATA militants more effectively within Pakistan if Islamabad cannot. The recent fallout between the United States and Pakistan also suggests Pakistani weakness that could spur Beijing to act or pressure Islamabad to boost the Chinese presence in the country. Islamabad's demands of Washington correspond almost point by point with the Taliban's list of demands in November as conditions for entering into peace negotiations: Pakistan's review of its U.S. ties, suspension of NATO supply lines and closure of Shamsi Air Base (*Asia Times*, December 3, 2011; *Long War Journal*, November 28, 2011; Associated Press, November 21). This further underscores Pakistan's weakness in face of militants and could prompt China to pressure Islamabad to support Chinese bases in the

FATA or FANA. On January 4, Chief of Army Staff General Afhfaq Parvez Kayani left for Beijing on a five-day official visit at the invitation of Chinese authorities to discuss the complete range of Sino-Pakistani security and defense relations (*Pakistan Today*, January 4). This visit deserves some scrutiny to assess how Beijing sees Pakistan's security situation and what, if anything, China can do to protect its interests.

Slowing Future Chinese Investments in Pakistan

Another course of action is further withdrawal and deterrence of future Chinese investments in Pakistan. On November 22, militants targeted a convoy carrying Chinese engineers in a bomb attack in Balochistan. In September, China's Kingho Group withdrew from a \$19 billion coal deal in Balochistan after bombings in Pakistan's major cities. In November, Pakistan sent a large delegation from Sindh to Beijing to try to garner Chinese investments. Downplaying security concerns, the delegation reiterated how Pakistan has taken special measures to protect China's 120 projects and over 13,000 staffers throughout Pakistan (*Xinhua*, November 22, 2011; *Global Times*, November 18, October 25, 2011; *Wall Street Journal*, September 30, 2011). China's massive investment losses in Libya and evacuating its 36,000 workers however are still fresh in Chinese minds—reminding them of the high cost of investing in highly unstable countries, especially in one that is the central base of several dozen terrorist organizations. With TIP's close links with al-Qaeda that explicitly targets Xinjiang and Chinese citizens and al-Qaeda's cooperation with other terrorist organizations, Beijing has legitimate fears that the status quo in the FATA is increasingly unsustainable.

Conclusion: Pakistan Between a Rock and a Hard Place

In light of recent U.S./NATO-Pakistani fallout, Islamabad is trying to play the China card and their "all weather friend" as an alternative to the United States. However, upon closer scrutiny, Chinese aid pales in comparison to U.S. aid and is not a feasible replacement in the near or medium term. Nor does Beijing want to take on the U.S. burden. For example, Center for Global Development published a report in May revealing that average recorded grant assistance to Pakistan for FY2004-2009 from China was \$9 million compared with the United States at \$268 million. Oxford University also published a report

in February that revealed U.S. FDI flow in Pakistan averaged 28 percent of total share from 2001-2009, while China stood at a meager 2 percent of total share in the same period. As for military aid, a few defense deals between China and Pakistan is no comparison for U.S. military assistance at \$2.5 billion in addition to economic assistance at \$1.8 billion in 2010 [4].

There also is growing perception in Beijing that it must take proactive measures to protect its interests abroad (*Asia Times*, December 17, 2011; “Mekong Murders Spur Beijing to Push New Security Cooperation,” *China Brief*, November 11, 2011). Its willingness to deploy paramilitary forces to patrol the Mekong in December in response to the October killing of 13 Chinese sailors underscores how changing security pressures may lead Beijing to diverge from its previous policies of “nonintervention” and deploying troops abroad. China has long contributed to UN peacekeeping missions overseas, but this is the first time it will carry out sustained operations in another country without a UN mandate. By deploying more than 300 armed police to the lawless triple-border area of the Golden Triangle (Laos, Thailand and Burma) in a joint patrol, coupled with its new domestic anti-terror laws to pave way for military intervention abroad, this may be an indicator of how China will address TIP militants in the lawless AfPak border area of FATA to safeguard its growing economic interests if Pakistan fails to control its militants.

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Notes:

1. Hasan H. Karrar, *The New Silk Road Diplomacy: China's Central Asian Foreign Policy Since the Cold War*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2009; James A. Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.
2. Hassan H. Karrar, *The New Silk Road Diplomacy*, pp.72-75; Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*; “Record of the Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Chinese Communist Party Concerning the Maintenance of Stability in Xinjiang,” March 19, 1996, available online

at <http://caccp.freedomsherald.org/conf/doc7.html>

3. Mark A. Stokes, “China’s Nuclear Warhead Storage and Handling System,” Occasional Paper, Project 2049 Institute, March 12, 2010.
4. Muhammad Arshad Khan, “Foreign Direct Investment in Pakistan: The Role of International Political Relations”, TMD Working Paper Series No. 039, University of Oxford, February 2011; “Aid to Pakistan by the Numbers”, Center for Global Development, available online at http://www.cgdev.org/section/initiatives/_active/pakistan/numbers.

Problems and Prospects for China’s Ship-Based Aviation Program

By Daniel J. Kostecka

Probably the most cited example of China’s desire to expand its naval power beyond Chinese coastal waters is Beijing’s pursuit of aircraft carriers capable of operating conventional fixed-wing fighter aircraft. Chinese interest in acquiring aircraft carriers spans decades but financial, technological, political and strategic constraints have prevented serious pursuit of this capability. In April 2005, the unfinished Soviet Kuznetsov-class aircraft carrier *Varyag*, that China purchased from Ukraine in 1998, went into dry dock at Dalian Shipyard in northern China for an extensive refitting. For the past several years, anyone with access to the Internet has been able track the extensive modifications to the old ship by viewing photographs posted on a number of blogs and websites. In August 2011, the ship finally left port under its own power to begin what will likely be an extensive series of sea trials. In addition to work on the ex-*Varyag*, Chinese officials are willing to discuss China’s interest in aircraft carriers with increasing candor (*Tzu Ching*, April 1, 2006). This includes positive statements in April 2009 regarding aircraft carriers by China’s Defense Minister Liang Guanglie and the commander of the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), Admiral Wu Shengli, as well as a March 2010 editorial in the English language version of the *Global Times* stating that it is time for the world to

prepare for China's aircraft carrier (*Global Times*, March 11, 2010; *Zhongguo Tongxun She*, April 22, 2009). Just as important as the ship are the aircraft the PLAN will operate off of the ship. This article will examine current developments in Chinese ship-based aviation as well as shortfalls in PLAN ship based weapon systems and training.

Fixed-Wing Developments

While the PLAN continues to refit and modernize the new carrier, the composition of the ship's air group also is taking shape. The PLAN's carrier fighter, the developmental J-15 is a domestically-produced, carrier-capable variant of the Russian-designed Su-27 Flanker. The Russian Navy employs such a fighter, the Su-33D Flanker, off its lone carrier, the Kuznetsov, and the PLAN operates one regiment of the land-based Su-30MK2 strike fighters and one regiment of land-based Chinese built J-11B Flanker fighter aircraft. In October 2006, Russian press reported on negotiations between China and Russia for the purchase of between 12 and 50 Su-33D Flanker fighters for the PLAN (*Kommersant*, October 23, 2006). In March 2009, however, Russian press reported negotiations stalled indefinitely due to disagreements over the total number of aircraft Russia would produce for China. Specifically, Moscow was concerned China was willing to only guarantee the purchase of between 2 and 14 Su-33s because China intended to reverse engineer the fighters (*Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, March 10, 2009). Russian concerns are fueled by China's domestic production of its own unlicensed land-based Flanker variant, the J-11B. With negotiations for the purchase of Su-33s terminated, China is using its experience producing the land-based J-11B to produce its own carrier-capable Flanker. China is producing such a fighter, designated the J-15, with one Internet site claiming the first prototype of this aircraft made its maiden flight on August 31, 2009 and its first takeoff from a land-based ski-jump at a test facility taking place on May 6, 2010 (*Kanwa Asian Defense*, May 1, 2010; *Chinese Military Aviation*, July 7, 2010). While these reports cannot be confirmed, recent pictures show prototypes of the J-15 in flight, including at least one that is painted in the light gray paint scheme favored by the PLAN for its fighter aircraft (*Chinese Military Aviation*, July 7, 2010). Additionally, video of a J-15 prototype in flight is now available on YouTube [1]. While the J-15 appears to be a near copy of the Su-33, it is reasonable to assume that

internally it will likely possess the same radar, avionics suite, and weapons capabilities as the J-11B.

Rotary-Wing Developments

In addition to fighter aircraft, the PLAN needs to acquire support aircraft for its carriers, most notably, helicopters. PLAN carriers probably will employ a mix of helicopters for anti-submarine warfare (ASW), search and rescue (SAR), airborne early warning (AEW) and general utility duties. However, at this time rotary-wing aviation is a significant weakness for the PLAN. The PLAN's current fleet of helicopters is inadequate to support its current force structure and it is in ship-based rotary-wing aviation that the PLAN suffers from one of its most significant near-term deficiencies. Currently, the PLAN operates about 35 frigates and destroyers equipped with landing pads and hangars. Other ships equipped with helicopter facilities include the aviation training ship *Shichang*, two Type-071 LPDs, the Type-920 hospital ship and the PLAN's three most modern at sea replenishment ships. At this time, the PLAN's inventory of helicopters is approximately 35 to 40 aircraft. Only about 20 to 25—the domestically produced Z-9s and Russian made Ka-28s, which serve as ASW and SAR helicopters—are capable of operating from destroyers and frigates though there is deck and hangar space for 30 to 35 helicopters in the fleet. Additionally, there are approximately 15 medium-sized Z-8s capable of operating off of larger ships such as the Type-071 LPD and the Type-920 hospital ship.

This situation will only get worse as the PLAN adds more helicopter-capable surface ships to the fleet. In addition to the Type-071 LPD, press reports claim China plans to develop the Type-081 LHD helicopter assault ship, similar in size and capability to the French Mistral-class LHD—or approximately half the size of a U.S. Navy Wasp-class LHD. The PLAN's most modern frigates and destroyers such as the Jiangkai-II FFG and the Luyang-II DDG are equipped with helicopter facilities and they are replacing older ships that cannot operate rotary-wing aircraft. With an insufficient number of helicopters for its current force structure, the PLAN needs to add a significant number of rotary-wing aircraft order to support its destroyers and frigates, and its future fleet of aircraft carriers and amphibious assault ships. This will likely be accomplished in the near term through the purchase of additional Ka-28s from Russia and the production of additional

Z-9s and Z-8s (*Vremya Novostey*, February 8, 2010). These solutions however are not optimal. China prefers domestic weapon systems to foreign purchases and the Z-9 is limited in capability due to its small size, and the Z-8 suffers from engine problems. A potential future solution is a militarized variant of the Z-15, China's co-produced variant of the Eurocopter EC-175. The commercial variant of this platform however is not expected to begin production until 2012; thus, any specialized military variants probably will not see production for at least several years (People's Net, December 17, 2009; China Defense Today, March 15, 2008). Additionally, beyond the acquisition of new platforms, organizing, training and equipping an expanded rotary-wing force will take a significant amount of time and effort.

In addition to helicopters for ASW and SAR, given that China's first carrier, the *Varyag*, is equipped with a ski-jump launch mechanism and the strong possibility that at least its first domestically produced carrier will be likewise equipped, the PLAN needs to develop and procure a rotary-wing based airborne AEW platform. This is because heavier fixed-wing AEW platforms such as the U.S. Navy's E-2C Hawkeye are unable to launch from aircraft carriers without the assistance of steam catapults. Other navies that operate ski-jump equipped carriers such as the Royal Navy, the Indian Navy, and the Russian Navy all operate rotary-wing AEW platforms in lieu of a much more capable fixed-wing aircraft. According to Russian press and internet reporting, China is taking delivery of up to nine Ka-31 AEW helicopters while internet photographs indicate that China has fielded a prototype of an AEW-variant of the Z-8 medium-lift helicopter (*Vremya Novostey*, February 8, 2010; *Chinese Military Aviation*, November 11, 2009) [2]. At this time it is unknown which one will be chosen as the primary AEW helicopter for the PLAN's aircraft carrier force. It is possible the PLAN sees an indigenous platform based on the Z-8 as a long-term solution while Ka-31s imported from Russia will serve as gap fillers. Alternatively, the Z-8 prototype also could be a test bed for an AEW variant of a more modern helicopter, such as the developmental Z-15.¹¹ Any of these would be much less capable than a fixed-wing AEW platform, such as the America E-2C Hawkeye.

Pilot Training

One final element of China's aircraft program is pilot training. Little is known about this crucial aspect of the program, causing a great deal of myth and conjecture to form around this issue. One of the most significant myths related to PLAN aircraft carrier pilot training revolves around an alleged carrier pilot training program at the Dalian Naval Academy. The September 5, 2008 issue of *PLA Daily* printed an article entitled "Dalian Naval Academy Recruits Pilot Cadets for the First Time" that discussed the recruitment of 50 pilot cadets, selected to receive a four year education in ship-based aircraft flight. Since then, it has been assumed in a variety of publications that this article was discussing the recruitment and training of the PLAN's first class of carrier aviators.

While the story is compelling, it is highly unlikely the article refers to the education and training of PLAN pilots for fixed-wing aircraft operations for several reasons. First, Chinese press articles routinely refer to helicopters operating from PLAN warships as shipboard or ship-borne aircraft thus it should not be assumed the article is necessarily referring to training for fixed-wing carrier aviators. Second, the Dalian Naval Academy does not have a pilot training program. PLAN pilot candidates attend either the PLAN's Aviation Engineering College in Yantai for two years or the PLA Air Force's (PLAAF) Aeronautics University in Jilin for two years, followed by an additional two years at either the PLAN's Flight Academy in Huludao or a PLAAF Flight Academy, respectively [3]. The Dalian Naval Academy trains surface warfare officers, naval political officers, and maritime engineers. While it is possible the PLAN could expand pilot education and training to the Dalian Academy, there is no evidence to suggest this has occurred. Third, it is highly unlikely the PLAN's initial cadre of carrier pilots will be comprised of "nuggets" fresh out the Flight Academy. Instead, the PLAN will probably draw its first generation, and possibly successive generations of carrier aviators, from the ranks of experienced aviators in its active duty fighter force.

Although the Dalian Naval Academy is not known to have a pilot training program, it does have a program designed to train officers as controllers and managers for shipboard helicopter operations. In March 2002, *People's Navy* reported on the launch of an 18-month program

at the Dalian Naval Academy to train officers as aviation branch chiefs to serve on board surface combatants. This program marked a significant step for the PLAN in the management of shipboard helicopter operations because aviation branch chief duties had previously been an additional duty for officers who often possessed little or no knowledge of aviation. The subsequent graduation of the first class of officers from this program was reported in July 2003 in the *PLA Daily*. Based on these facts, it is likely the September 5, 2008 *PLA Daily* article refers to an expansion of the program begun in 2002 due to recognition on the part of the PLAN that it needs enhanced training for officers assigned to manage rotary-wing flight operations. This is reinforced by the English language website for *PLA Daily* which lists “Shipboard Helicopter Command” as one of the bachelor degree programs offered at the Dalian Naval Academy. While the possibility of this program expanding in the future to include training officers in the management and control of fixed-wing operations from aircraft carriers is not known at this time, it is reasonable to assume such an expansion will occur in the coming years.

Conclusion

As the PLAN continues to modernize with new ships capable of operating aircraft at sea including aircraft carriers, amphibious assault ships, and major surface combatants, the PLAN’s requirements for ship based aviation are increasing dramatically. The most visible aspect of the PLAN’s developing ship based aviation capability is the J-15 carrier fighter now in testing. Beyond that “big ticket” program, however, the PLAN has significant shortfalls in less visible but equally important areas such as ship-based rotary-wing aviation and training. The successes and setbacks of the J-15 and its integration with the ex-*Varyag* will no doubt receive a great deal of attention from China watchers and will likely be the subject of massive amounts of speculation as the ex-*Varyag* continues its sea trials. It is other less exciting areas of naval aviation that ultimately determine the effectiveness of PLAN ship-based aviation. The PLAN’s future success or failure in developing a training pipeline, not just for its pilots but for those tasked with managing shipboard flight operations will go a long way in determining whether or not carrier aviation becomes an institutionalized component of the PLAN

or a boutique capability relegated to a few elite pilots. Further, the PLAN’s ability to organize, train and equip a larger and more capable ship-based helicopter force for its increasing number of helicopter capable warships, represents a critical element of its modernization that must be addressed if the PLAN desires to be a truly modern navy that is capable in all major elements of naval warfare. Sea based aviation is complex and dynamic and how the PLAN manages all of its diverse components will ultimately determine its success or failure in this area.

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Notes:

1. “J-15 Next-Generation Carrier-based Fighter Caught on Camera,” *YouTube*, July 8, 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=trYUWQvKees>
2. “Z-8 AEW Helicopter Unveiled,” *China Defense Blog*, October 19, 2009, <http://china-defense.blogspot.com/2009/10/z-8-aw-helicopter-unveiled.html>.
3. See China’s Navy 2007, Office of Naval Intelligence. This document can be found at www.fas.org/irp/agency/oni/chinanavy2007.pdf.
