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In a Fortnight

By Peter Mattis

CAN XI JINPING GROW POLITICAL POWER OUT OF THE BARREL OF A GUN?

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership transition from President Hu Jintao to Vice President Xi Jinping has proceeded at a breakneck pace and, arguably, not since Deng Xiaoping have the levers of power been so concentrated in one leader's hands. Deng's strength came from his unique set of personal relationships at the party and the military's top echelons. Although he belongs to an elitist coalition built upon ex-CCP General Secretary Jiang Zemin's "Shanghai Faction," Xi is not necessarily of Jiang's faction and, like his predecessor, may be another "first among equals." The question is does Xi need to create a personal power base—or faction—at the center and, if so, how can he leverage his institutional positions to create it. Because Xi simply cannot exploit the security forces and investigative apparatus for personal motivations, consolidating political influence becomes a function of using policy to bind others to him and isolate potential opponents. This factions-based approach suggests analysts should look for the political motivations behind Xi's new initiatives rather than succumbing to cynicism about the latest anti-corruption drive that seems destined to fail without structural political reform.

Xi appears to have gained control over several of the important "mountain tops" (*shantou*) in the party and the security services, ostensibly giving him control or influence over a number of traditional levers of power. The smooth transition of

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the Central Military Commission's chairmanship to Xi's hands and Central Discipline Inspection Commission Secretary Wang Qishan's general alignment with the princelings already are well known. The demotion of the Central Political-Legal Committee (CPLC) secretary position to the Politburo level and the seeming political weakness of the otherwise powerful minister of public security may have given Xi more influence over law enforcement and domestic intelligence than he would have had under normal conditions ("New Police Chief Shows Reliability But Not Power," *China Brief*, February 1). Moreover, speculative but plausible news coverage from Hong Kong suggests CPLC chief Meng Jianzhu may be reporting directly to Xi (*Ming Pao*, January 30). Evidence of Xi's role overseeing the political-legal apparatus should become solid if he takes over some of the leading small groups previously held by Zhou Yongkang, the last CPLC chair.

Xi also seems to have gained a position of substantial influence over the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and People's Armed Police (PAP) far earlier than his predecessor; while ex-President Jiang Zemin finally has stepped aside—perhaps with a little push. Since the 18th Party Congress, Xi has been making the rounds to inspect PLA and PAP elements, and each time he has been surrounded by the most senior and appropriate officials. Hong Kong observers suggested Xi's intense schedule was a sign of how much value he places on his relationship with the PLA (*Ta Kung Pao*, February 4). For example, visiting PAP elements in Beijing, Xi brought along the CPLC Secretary Meng, Minister of Public Security Guo Shengkun as well as CMC Vice Chairmen Fan Changlong and Xu Qiliang (*South China Morning Post*, January 30; *Global Times*, January 30). Similar inspections have included bases from each of the PLA's three services and one branch (Xinhua, February 6; *Global Times*, February 5; Xinhua, December 5, 2012).

Although former president Jiang and President Hu have pledged to remain aloof from party affairs, Xi may have helped ease Jiang out. Reportedly, Xi was not expected to attend the funeral of General Yang Baibing, but made a surprise appearance anyway (Duowei News, February 1). The innocent explanation is that Xi's father, Xi Zhongxun, had ties to the Yang family, particularly the older brother ex-President Yang Shangkun, who had worked closely on reform with Xi Zhongxun. The less benign explanation is that Xi was setting out to distinguish himself from Jiang Zemin, who narrowly survived an attempt by the Yang brothers to usurp his position as general secretary in the early 1990s. Though speculative, this latter interpretation is bolstered by Jiang's concurrent demotion in published protocol order of ranking CCP cadre (Xinhua, January 21). With the CMC chair in hand and Jiang apparently stepping back, soon-to-be President Xi—at a minimum and unlike Hu—almost certainly will not have his predecessor breathing down his neck in military affairs.

Using a factional lens calls for a reevaluation of Xi's anti-corruption and personal austerity drive as well as his suggestion that the party needed to be willing to accept sharp criticism (Xinhua, February 7). As the emphasis on understanding Chinese factions has declined as an analytical tool, the tendency is to examine these initiatives as regular public policies that can be assessed on their achievement of objectives, e.g. reduction of graft and ostentatious government spending. Factionalism, however, offers a different way to examine Xi's new initiatives. Although scholars have disagreed over the composition of factions, most analysts agree factions are usually tacit in nature and become more so the further away from the factional core an official gets. Policy announcements consequently can be used as trial balloons to test the strength of a faction and/or leader by seeing whether lower-level officials will act.

With the appearance of party unity and adherence to party discipline paramount, some initiatives that are politically sensitive, such as anti-corruption drives, can be and have been used as political tools to bring down competitors. For example, Hu Jintao used a combination of corruption investigations and institutional discipline to bring down Shanghai Party Secretary Chen Liangyu in 2006. The official justification for Chen's removal emphasized his departure from CCP-approved behavior rather than any animus from Hu ("The Soapbox and the Truncheon: Hu Jintao's Amorphous Power," *China Brief*, July 19, 2012; Xinhua, September 26, 2006).

Xi's call for corruption investigations to capture low- and high-level cadre ("flies" and "tigers," respectively) and to enforce clean government could have factional undertones (Xinhua, January 22). His influence over the investigative apparatus allows him to push for selective enforcement and protect those closest to him. Those outside Xi's elitist

coalition, however, face tough choices: either cooperate, reinforcing the perception Xi's power, or resist, violating so-called "party discipline" and potentially opening oneself up to attacks from ambitious lower-level officials. With many of outgoing-President Hu's protégés set for advancement and the senior-most leadership positions in the next party congresses, the danger of being caught out in this delicate dance between cooperation and resistance is real ("Communist Youth League Clique Maintains Clout Despite Congress Setback," *China Brief*, November 30, 2012).

Looking back at the emergence of new factional groups, it seems too early to say that Xi is running his own faction that dominates Chinese politics; indeed, he may even lack a party-based coterie ("All the General Secretary's Men," *China Brief*, February 15). Although many of Xi's fellow Politburo Standing Committee members probably are sympathetic to his statist objectives, the princeling-dominated party center does not necessarily give Xi himself overwhelming authority ("China's New Leaders to Strengthen the Party-State," *China Brief*, November 30, 2012). He needs the opportunity of the 19th Party Congress in 2017 to promote loyalists to the Politburo and its standing committee as Jiang did in 1997 and Deng Xiaoping did during the personnel reshuffles of the late 1970s. Until then, Xi sits at the apex of power with the levers in hand. The test of whether factionalism continues to explain Chinese politics will be how well the prominent China Youth League (*tuanpai*) figures—Li Keqiang, Hu Chunhua, Sun Zhengcai and Zhou Qiang—fare in the next ten years. If the institutionalization of Chinese politics really is proceeding apace, these figures should rise to the top at the next two party congresses. With so much power seemingly concentrated in Xi's hands, the question becomes whether CCP norms or factional politicking will rule the day.

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All the General Secretary's Men: Xi Jinping's Inner Circle Revealed

By Willy Lam

Barely three months after assuming the posts of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) general secretary and Central Military Commission (CMC) chairman, Xi Jinping has done well in buttressing his authority within the party's upper echelons. Xi's remarkable consolidation comes in spite of the fact that he is not associated with any comparably powerful clique within the party apparatus—unlike predecessors Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, who are heads of the Shanghai Faction and the Communist Youth League (CYL) Faction, respectively. Apart from being the premier arbiter of party affairs, Xi has secured control over foreign and national security policies by virtue of becoming the chair of the Foreign Affairs Leading Small Group. Equally significant, the 59-year-old supremo has seized hold of the country's "political-legal" (*zhengfa*) machinery, which oversees the police, state intelligence, the procuratorate and the courts. Moreover, since both Hu and Jiang have made at least rhetorical pledges that they would not interfere with the new leadership that was confirmed at the 18th Party Congress last November, Xi could go about running the country without fear of party elders breathing down his neck (*Liberty Times* [Taipei], February 3; *Ming Pao* [Hong Kong] January 31).

While Xi is sometimes called a leader of the "Princelings Faction"—a reference to the offspring of party elders—it is noteworthy that particularly for those born in the 1950s and after, most *gaogan zidi* (sons of top cadres) have gone into business rather than politics. The exception is the People's Liberation Army (PLA), which boasts several dozen princeling officers with the rank of major general or above. It is not surprising, then, that the military has remained princeling Xi's premier power base ("Communist Youth League Clique Maintains Clout Despite Congress Setback," *China Brief*, November 30, 2012). After graduation from Tsinghua University in 1979, Xi worked for three years as the personal secretary of then-Minister of Defense Geng Biao. He got this plum job through the recommendation of his father, liberal party elder Xi Zhongxun (1913–2002). The PLA being a bastion of *gaoganzidi*, Xi has maintained good ties with an elite corps of princeling generals through his long career as a senior cadre in Fujian and Zhejiang Provinces

(China Review News [Hong Kong], February 2; *South China Morning Post* [Hong Kong], November 27, 2012).

At least three CMC members have revolutionary bloodlines. For example, Air Force Commander General Ma Xiaotian is the son of a former senior cadre in the PLA Political Academy, Senior Colonel Ma Zaiyao. Navy Commander Admiral Wu Shengli is the son of Wu Xian, a former vice governor of Zhejiang Province. Yet the princeling-general within the CMC that is closest to Xi is undoubtedly Director of the General Armaments Department General Zhang Youxia. Zhang is the son of former General Logistics Department (GLD) commander General Zhang Zongxun, who served with Xi Zhongxun in China's northwestern region before 1949. It is not surprising that General Zhang was one of the first members of the top brass to profess allegiance to "Chairman Xi." In his Chinese New Year message last week, General Zhang told staff in his department to "implement Chairman Xi's important policy instruction" of "fulfilling the China dream and the dream of a strong army" (*PLA Daily*, February 7; *People's Daily*, October 25, 2012).

Several princeling generals who failed to be promoted in the run-up to the 18th Party Congress also are considered advisers to Xi on foreign and military affairs. Foremost among them is GLD Political Commissar Liu Yuan, the son of China's first state president Liu Shaoqi. General Liu is a much-published theoretician on geopolitical issues, including how to tackle Washington's alleged "anti-China containment policy." Other members of Xi's informal network of military strategists include General Liu Yazhou, who is Political Commissar of the National Defense University, and Chen Zhiya, a senior researcher in a PLA think tank on international strategy. Liu and Chen are the son-in-law of state president Li Xiannian and the son of former Deputy Defense Minister General Chen Geng, respectively. Xi is also on good terms with generals who had spent time in the Nanjing Military Region (MR), which covers Zhejiang and Fujian. Foremost among this group is GLD Commander General Zhao Keshi, who worked in this strategically important MR from 1988 to 2012. In addition, General Zhao, who was Nanjing MR commander from 2007 to 2012, is close to senior members of the Shanghai Faction, such as former Vice President Zeng Qinghong, who remains one of Xi's high-level mentors (*Apple Daily* [Hong Kong] February 5; *Ming Pao*, February 3; Sina.com, February 13, 2012).

That Xi has taken over the political-legal apparatus was revealed indirectly during his high-profile inspection of a Beijing-based division of the People's Armed Police (PAP) late last month. Xi indicated that the PAP must remain "an armed force that is under the absolute leadership of the party." For the first time after he became general secretary, Xi raised the imperative of upholding political stability (*weiwen*). "The PAP must have a deep understanding of the complexity of the *wei-wen* situation—as well as the important role that the PAP plays in *weiwen* work," he said, "The PAP must seize the initiative and remain on a high degree of alertness. It must be ready when called upon, be prepared to fight and to score victories." Accompanying Xi on this pivotal trip were Politburo member and Secretary of the Central Political-Legal Commission (CPLC), Meng Jianzhu as well as the newly appointed Minister of Public Security Guo Shengkun, who doubles as the First Political Commissar of the PAP (China News Service, January 29; *People's Daily*, January 29). Under the Hu Jintao administration, when the PBSC consisted of nine members, the CPLC was headed by former PBSC members Luo Gan and later, Zhou Yongkang. Now that the PBSC has been reduced to seven cadres, CPLC Secretary Meng, who is an ordinary Politburo member, reports directly to Xi (*Liberty Times*, February 6; *Ming Pao*, January 30).

While Xi appears to have succeeded in bolstering his authority over the military and police forces, his networking skills seem surprisingly weak within the party and government apparatuses. Having spent the better half of his career in Fujian and Zhejiang Provinces, the princeling does not seem to have built up a large coterie of associates and followers in the party-state hierarchy. This is evidenced by the fact that Xi's trusted aides in the party's inner sanctum of power are cadres whose *guanxi* or relationship with the general secretary cannot be said to be intimate. Take for example, Director of the General Office Li Zhanshu and Director of the Organization Department Zhao Leji, both of whom were inducted into the Politburo at the 18th Party Congress.

Xi first got to know the 62-year-old Li during the former's stint as deputy party secretary and then party secretary of Zhengding County, Hebei Province, from 1982 to 1985. During much of this period, Li, who is a Hebei native,

was party boss of neighboring Wuji County. After Xi left Hebei, however, the two have pursued careers in different professional and geographical settings. In fact, due to his having served as head of the Hebei branch of the CYL for four years in the late 1980s, Li sometimes is identified as an affiliate of the CYL Faction. Xi and Li were able to renew their old friendship when the latter served in Shaanxi from 1998 to 2003 in posts including party secretary of Xi'an, the provincial capital. Although Xi has never worked in his home province, he paid regular visits to Xi'an and other Shaanxi cities to keep up ties with his relatives (*Oriental Daily News* [Hong Kong] November 16, 2012; *South China Morning Post*, September 2, 2012). Much of Xi's relationship with the 55-year-old Zhao is based on their being fellow natives of Shaanxi. Zhao, who spent the bulk of his career in the remote western Qinghai Province, was party boss of Shaanxi from 2007 to 2012. During these five years, Zhao apparently won Xi's gratitude by taking very good care of members of the labyrinthine Xi Zhongxun clan (*People's Daily*, November 21, 2012; Xinhua, July 1, 2011).

The relative paucity of Xi's *guanxi* network also is evidenced by the fact that several of his policy advisers were introduced to him by trusted party elders such as Shanghai Faction stalwart Zeng Qinghong. Foremost among them are the two deputy directors of the Central Committee Policy Research Office, Shi Zhihong and He Yiting. Shi, whose specialty is drafting party documents, served as Zeng's personal secretary when the latter was director of the Central Committee General Office from 1993 to 1999. Another key adviser and speechwriter is Li Shulei, who served as Xi's deputy when the latter was president of the Central Party School from 2007 to 2012. Yet compared to his predecessors Jiang and Hu, Xi seems to lack close aides whose personal loyalty to the party boss has been anchored upon decades of service (China Review News [Hong Kong], February 3; *Ta Kung Pao* [Hong Kong], November 11, 2012).

A sizeable proportion of the members of ex-president Jiang and President Hu's inner circles were made up of their colleagues and underlings. By contrast, surprisingly few of Xi's former associates in Fujian and Zhejiang Provinces had made it into the senior ranks of the party or state. Take, for example, long-time Tianjin cadre He Lifeng, who was just named the Chairman of the municipal Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). He served together with Xi when the latter was vice mayor of Xiamen in the mid-1980s. At the 18th Party Congress, however, Mr. He merely retained his slot as an alternate member of the Central Committee—a sign that the 57-year-old's upward trajectory may be dented (Ifeng.com [Beijing], January 28; *Ta Kung Pao*, January 23). The newly-appointed Governor of Guizhou Chen Min'er, who headed Zhejiang's Department of Propaganda when Xi was party boss there, may have more potential for promotion. Chen, age 58, was one of only nine Sixth Generation cadres to have been appointed full Central Committee members at the 18th Party Congress (China News Service, February 2; *China Times* [Taipei], December 19, 2011). Yet the chances are not high that Chen could snatch a Politburo-level post before Xi's expected retirement at the 20th Party Congress in 2022.

Xi's connections with academics, public intellectuals and other professionals who might help the supremo think outside the box also seem scant relative to his peers and predecessors. Former Vice President Zeng often sought the advice of scholars from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences or editors from Beijing-based official newspapers. Former premier Zhu Rongji is known to have tapped the views of nationally-known economists such as Professor Wu Jinglian. Premier-in-waiting and CYL Faction stalwart Li Keqiang reportedly has put together a large personal think tank that consists of professors and former classmates from Peking University, his alma mater (China Review News, December 23, 2012; CNTV.com, May 5, 2011). A couple of months before the 18th CCP Party, Xi held a long session with the son of late party chief Hu Yaobang, Hu Deping, on ways and means to resuscitate economic and political reforms. A retired vice ministerial-level official, Hu is a public intellectual who is well-respected for his untiring advocacy of political reform. Apart from the 70-year-old Hu, whom he knew due to the closeness of their fathers, however, Xi does not seem to have an extensive circle of experts who are well-placed to offer him fresh or unorthodox ideas (*Ming Pao*, October 29, 2012; Sina.com [Hong Kong], September 8, 2012).

It is probably too early to say in what ways the composition of Xi's power base and support network may affect China's policymaking. The preponderance of military figures within his inner circle, coupled with the country's increasingly tense confrontation with Japan and

the United States, could predispose the commander-in-chief toward pursuing more pugilistic foreign and military policies. The dearth of relatively liberal aides among his corps of advisers could affect the extent to which Xi might be pushing political liberalization. During his tour of Guangdong Province in December, Xi pointed out that he was looking for "high-caliber" cadres who "have confidence in the [socialist] road, as well as confidence in [the party's] theories and systems" (*People's Daily*, December 11, 2012; *Wen Wei Po* [Hong Kong] December 11, 2012). The onus is on Xi to show Chinese as well as foreign observers that his team is capable of not only holding the fort of CCP supremacy but also hacking out new pathways for reform.

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Radar Incident Obscures Beijing's Conciliatory Turn toward Japan

By Andrew Chubb

On February 5, Japanese Defense Minister Onodera Itsunori told the world that a Chinese Navy frigate had pointed "something like fire-control radar" at a Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) destroyer some 100-150 kilometers north of the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands on January 30. He said the same may have happened to a MSDF helicopter on January 19, though this remained unverified (*Daily Yomiuri*, February 7; *Sydney Morning Herald*, February 7).

This marked the first direct involvement of People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy ships in the ongoing confrontations around the islands since Japan's government purchased three of them from a private Japanese owner on September 10 last year. Accordingly, much reportage and analysis has characterized this as part of an ongoing series of escalatory Chinese actions in the East China Sea. Yet the radar incidents ran counter to a distinctly conciliatory trend since mid-January in China's official rhetoric, diplomatic action, media discourse and even maritime activities.

Part of Xi's Plan?

Chinese officials told the Lowy Institute's Linda Jakobson that a Diaoyu response leadership task force formed in September under Xi Jinping's leadership devised a step-by-step plan to force the Japanese government to acknowledge the existence of the sovereignty dispute. According to Dr. Jakobson, "the most recent escalation reflects the next step" in the implementation of such a plan (The Diplomat, February 8; *Asahi Shimbun*, February 4; *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 5, 2012).

There are compelling reference points to support the idea of a centrally-mandated Chinese strategy of steadily increasing pressure on the Japanese position in the waters and skies around the islands. The most salient are the regularization of previously-occasional maritime law enforcement patrols in contested waters since September; the first-ever recorded incursion by a PRC government plane into Japan-administered territorial airspace on December 13; and the scrambling of PLA fighter jets to confront Japanese F-15s on January 10 and 19 (*Asahi Shimbun*, February 6; *South China Morning Post*, January 11; Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs [MOFA], December 18, 2012).

Beijing's official reaction to Japan's allegation—more than two days of silence followed by flat denials by both the foreign and defense ministries—however, raises the possibility that the radar incidents were not a continuation of this pattern of deliberate escalation. Upon finding its voice on February 8, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) accused Japan of "completely creating something out of nothing," while a Ministry of National Defense statement confirmed both encounters but said fire-control radars simply had not been used. These responses contrasted sharply with the ministries' usual refrain when Chinese behavior in such areas has been questioned—namely, asserting that such activities are "routine" and "completely normal."

The long silence would seem to imply that the incidents were a product of decisions made by actors outside the party center, possibly a mid-level PLA Navy commander was responsible. The MFA and MND's effective disavowals of the PLA's actions are not the only signs that the Chinese central leadership may have adjusted its approach to the Diaoyu crisis. Indeed, a range of conciliatory behavior over the past few weeks also suggests such a shift.

Sino-Japanese Diplomatic Thaw

From January 14, starting with Vice Foreign Minister Fu Ying's meeting with Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Senator Kenji Kosaka, a succession of visits by China-friendly Japanese politicians were accorded prominent coverage in the official and popular media, dressed in positive imagery and photo-ops with Chinese leaders. Beijing also invited former Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio for a four-day visit, and his January 16 meeting with Jia Qinglin ran on both CCTV's flagship 7pm national news bulletin and the front page of the People's Daily (*People's Daily*, January 17; CCTV, January 16; *Daily Yomiuri*, January 12). Hatoyama's apology the following day for crimes committed by Japanese soldiers during the Second World War was hailed by CCTV as "unprecedented," and images of his visit to the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall were splashed across the front pages of major daily newspapers (*Japan Times*, January 19; CCTV, January 17).

Next, and most importantly, came Yamaguchi Natsuo, leader of the New Komeito party, a junior coalition partner in Abe Shinzo's government, who arrived on January 22 carrying a handwritten letter from the Japanese prime minister. His arrival was reported immediately in state television news updates, and the Chinese MFA spokesman Hong Lei quickly welcomed the visit by saying: "This facilitates both sides to step up communications, settle disputes and promote healthy bilateral ties" (*South China Morning Post*, January 23).

Chinese media coverage presented Yamaguchi as a powerful, moderate element in a Japanese government previously depicted as beholden to "rightists" with militarist ambitions. CCTV's evening current affairs magazine show ran a segment that emphasized the New Komeito party's positive historic role in Sino-Japanese relations, and told viewers it was now "once again a ruling party" that would directly influence the LDP's judgments. The show even presented Japanese newspaper analyses stating Abe's decision to send Yamaguchi "expressed the Japanese government's intention to improve bilateral ties" (CCTV, January 22). In a further illustration of Beijing's intention to shape the public mood to become more amenable to warming ties, a People's Daily commentary questioning the sincerity of Japan's stated intention to mend relations appeared only in the paper's overseas edition (*South China Morning Post*, January 24).

Aside from scheduled meetings with two Chinese government-affiliated friendship associations, Yamaguchi's itinerary was not declared publicly, and it remained unclear whether party General Secretary Xi Jinping would agree to meet with him or receive Abe's letter. At one point on January 24, major internet news portals displayed leading headlines proclaiming "Japanese envoy visits China for two days with no result, has not obtained audience with Xi Jinping."

On January 25, the last day of the trip, Xi did receive Yamaguchi in the Great Hall of the People. According to the *People's Daily*'s front-page, top-right, photo-illustrated lead report on the meeting, Xi Jinping said China "remains committed" to Sino-Japanese relations and urged both sides to "look at the big picture." Invoking the legacies of Zhou Enlai and Tanaka Kakuei, who re-established Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations in 1972, Xi said: "Like the older generation of leaders, we should show a sense of national and historical responsibility and political wisdom, overcome the difficulties in bilateral relations and push relations forward." (*People's Daily*, January 26).

Determined to De-escalate?

The high-profile, high-volume Chinese media coverage of the warming diplomatic ties indicates the leadership perceived little in the way of constraints on their freedom of action resulting from oppositional public or party opinion. Between Hatoyama's arrival on January 16 and Yamaguchi's meeting with Xi on January 25, a number of negative bilateral developments occurred, any of which may have prompted Xi to decline to meet with Abe's emissary had the leadership been worried about a domestic backlash.

- On January 15, Defense Minister Onodera implied that Japanese fighter planes may fire warning shots at Chinese aircraft in airspace above the disputed islands (*Asahi Shimbun*, January 16). Popular Chinese media reported this as "explicit confirmation" that tracer bullets would be fired, spurring discussion of Japan's hostility and the likelihood of war breaking out.
- On January 18, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, speaking at a joint press conference alongside Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida, stated for the first time that the United States was "oppose[d]" to acts that "seek to undermine Japanese administration" of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands (U.S. State Department, January 18).
- On January 22, Abe declared Japan would continue to send military aircraft to Senkaku/Diaoyu airspace whenever it so wished, and reiterated the position that no dispute over the islands' sovereignty existed, rejecting Yamaguchi's well-publicized proposal of "shelving" the island dispute (*South China Morning Post*, January 24).
- On January 24, Japan Coast Guard (JCG) vessels used water cannons on a Taiwanese fishing boat carrying Diaoyu activists, which was under escort from the Republic of China Coast Guard, 17 nautical miles from the islands. Dramatic footage and photographs of the skirmish were aired on China's commercial television and widely published online.

Yet the Xi-Yamaguchi meeting not only went ahead, the stream of visits by Japanese statesmen continued afterwards with the arrival of former Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi along with other current LDP politicians on January 29. More upbeat remarks from Chinese officials followed, including the Chinese Ambassador at Geneva Liu Zhenmin saying the Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute could be "controlled", and PLA Deputy Chief of Staff Qi Jianguo telling U.S. lawmakers "China will never cause a maritime conflict by choice" (*Asahi Shimbun*, February 4; AP, January 25).

There has been a concrete aspect to the Chinese de-escalation, which domestic "nationalist" constituencies also have failed to constrain. The January-February period has seen a surprising quantitative decline in the frequency of Chinese government boats entering the 12 nautical miles (nm) of territorial waters around the disputed islands. According to Japanese Coast Guard reports, Chinese boats made 11 entries into the 12nm zone in the 34 days between December 5 and January 7 (NHK, January 7; *Daily Yomiuri*, December 5, 2012). In the next 34 days from January 8 to February 11, Japanese authorities, however, found Chinese boats entering the territorial waters only three times (*Kyodo News*, February 11; Japanese MOFA, February 7; *Jiji Press*, January 30). Operational wear and tear on the Chinese side probably are not behind this drop-off. During this period, China Maritime Surveillance (CMS) ships conducted several patrols in the "contiguous zone" adjacent to the territorial waters from which they could have entered the 12nm zone with little extra effort or resources.

On two further occasions, China's State Oceanic Administration and an embedded Xinhua correspondent publicly claimed that CMS vessels entered the territorial waters, but the JCG does not appear to have counted either of these instances (Xinhua, February 9; State Oceanic Administration, January 19). This could be a sign that fatigue is affecting the JCG's ability to monitor the area, but, even if the Chinese claims are correct, the reduction in CMS 12nm zone entries remains clear (from 11 down to five). China's ships recently have spent longer periods of time inside the zone, including 13 hours on January 7 and 14 hours on February 4. Staying longer inside the zone—long enough to be sure to attract a formal, diplomatic protest from Japan, which can then be high-handedly rejected—may be a less provocative, and, thus, more economical and risk-averse way for Beijing to maintain the impression of ongoing patrols among the public back home.

Managing Multiple Discourses

Over the past several weeks, Beijing also has shown its ability to separately manage and shape multiple domestic discourses among different constituencies on international and military affairs. While "combat readiness" has become a party and military watchword of the early Xi Jinping era, Chinese authorities have been actively putting a dampener on expectations for military action among the general public of late (*South China Morning Post*, January 21). In effect, the party appears to be trying to

increase combat readiness among the military at the same time as decreasing it among the public. Numerous media commentaries have appeared in party-controlled popular media in recent weeks arguing explicitly that China must avoid getting involved in a war.

Through December and early January, the *Global Times* editorial pages carried numerous declarations of enthusiasm for a Diaoyu war, always in the name of "the Chinese people." On January 16, the paper, however, unexpectedly opined "The Chinese media have seen a growing number of discussions about war recently...the whole society needs to make a thorough reflection. War is a terrible thing. No matter who is the enemy, any war will bring great shock to Chinese society, risking severe damage to national economy" (*Global Times*, January 16). Other commentaries arguing against or downplaying the prospect of a war for Diaoyu appeared on January 22, February 4 and February 8. All were widely republished on major Chinese internet news portals.

The most remarkable anti-war contribution has come from General Liu Yuan, son of Liu Shaoqi and Political Commissar of the PLA's General Logistics Department. The *Global Times* on February 4 published an extract from General Liu's study notes on the "spirit" of the recently completed 18th CCP Congress under the headline, "Protect the Period of Strategic Opportunity, War is a Last Resort." With broad sweeps of Chinese doctrine (in particular the title), classical Chinese strategy and nationalistic rhetoric, the piece was a blistering attack on warmongering in general and the idea of a war to seize occupied islands in particular.

China's economic development already has been shattered by war with Japan twice before, Liu Yuan observed, and it "absolutely must not be interrupted again by some accidental incident." Like Gou Jian and Han Xin, legendary kings of yore, China must abandon its short-term pride and work for long-term glory. "The United States and Japan are afraid of us catching up, and will use all means to check China's development, but we absolutely must not take their bait" (*Global Times*, February 4)> In the context of today's Chinese defense and military discourse, there can be few more effective ways to discredit military adventurism than to cast it as a U.S. trap.

While sensational, hawkish analyses from academic pundits bearing PLA military rank are common in the China's popular media, detailed commentaries from genuine operational PLA Generals are rare. Perhaps best known outside China for his outspoken anti-corruption crackdown, General Liu is believed to be a close ally of Xi Jinping with a personal relationship stretching back to days of princeling privilege and mutual suffering during the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution (*China Leadership Monitor*, No. 36, January 6, 2012). To the extent that the two also might share ideological conditionings and convictions, Liu Yuan's February 4 article bodes well for Xi's future management of the East China Sea tensions.

Conclusion

Radar-locking incidents aside, Beijing's behavior in recent weeks seems aimed at calming tensions. The opacity of the Chinese party-state and military make the incidents on January 19 and January 30 difficult to explain with certainty. Pointing radars at the Japanese helicopter and warship may have been a messy local interpretation of an ongoing centrally-mandated strategy to increase pressure on Japan around the islands, though the MFA and MND's denials at least show the central leadership is not willing to endorse such actions openly. It is also possible that the delayed official response was a stratagem aimed at projecting a false impression of dysfunction, or of the PLA having acted unilaterally. Whatever the case, the propaganda windfall for Japan has been rich. China appears reckless, aggressive and dangerous, despite having reached out diplomatically, pacified domestic public opinion and scaled back its maritime incursions over the past few weeks. A lack of direct management of the issue by a central leadership with an immense domestic policy burden is most likely part of the explanation. With their powerful warning against "some accidental incident" derailing the "Chinese Dream" of a great national rejuvenation, the publication of General Liu's 18th Party Congress study notes seems a significant step among Beijing's current measures to avoid a conflagration.

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The PLA Prepares for Future Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations

By Michael S. Chase

China's Ministry of National Defense recently announced that the first test flight of its Y-20 large transport aircraft took place on January 26. The development and testing of the Y-20 reflects the PLA Air Force's determination to enhance its strategic projection capabilities. As PLA National Defense University (NDU) professor Liang Fang put it, "along with the expansion of our national interest, the heavy air freighters will ensure that we are able to safeguard our interests overseas" (*China Daily*, January 28; Ministry of National Defense, January 28). The protection of China's growing overseas interests is emerging as an increasingly high-profile problem for Beijing—one with important implications for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) as reflect by the development of the Y-20. According to Gu Weijun, a researcher with the PLA's Academy of Military Science (AMS), "economic 'going global' requires military 'going global' as escorts, and in the future, it will be inevitable for China to use its troops overseas" (*Global Times*, June 29, 2010). One important way in which China may need to address this problem is by being prepared to evacuate its citizens from foreign countries in times of turmoil. Recent events demonstrate the salience of this problem. According to Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs official Yue Yucheng, "The three overseas evacuations from Egypt, Libya and Japan evacuated a total of 48,000 Chinese citizens—five times the number of Chinese personnel evacuated from overseas over the last 30 years" (*Foreign Affairs Review*, November 2011).

Following these evacuations, the possibility that Beijing will need to organize similar missions to safely withdraw its citizens from precarious situations overseas in the future appears to be growing. Two trends are contributing to the increasing likelihood that China will need to execute such evacuation missions in the future. First, Chinese workers are going abroad in growing numbers, and many are concentrated in potentially dangerous and unstable areas of the globe. Second, the Chinese government faces rising domestic pressure to protect its citizens overseas, and it appears as though Beijing wants the Chinese public to see it as willing and able to meet these rising expectations ("Assessing China's Response Options to Kidnappings Abroad," *China Brief*, May 11, 2012). Consequently, not only does the frequency of evacuation operations appear likely to grow, their domestic political importance also seems set to increase. As one Chinese writer puts it, "Protecting the safety and security of the lives and property of Chinese overseas and other such interests has become a practical issue facing China's government; if protection is effective, it will be conducive to strengthening the centripetal force, cohesiveness, and sense of identity of the state and the people, but if protection is ineffective, it may not only result in harm to the stability of the state and the unity of the people, it may also have an influence on China's international status and international image" (*Contemporary Military Affairs*, June 5, 2011).

The PLA's Role in Evacuation Operations

Although a broad range of Chinese institutions are involved in the protection of Chinese citizens overseas in general and evacuation operations in particular—the lead role in many respects belongs to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)—the prominence of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in such activities appears to be growing. For the PLA, non-combatant evacuation operations (NEOs) are among the "diversified military tasks" it is expected to be able to perform in support of the Communist Party leadership's domestic and international objectives. China's growing regional and global role has brought with it increasingly complex and far-reaching political, economic and security interests as well as new traditional and non-traditional security challenges for the PLA. This requires the PLA to acquire the requisite capabilities and develop contingency plans for a number of such challenges—one of the most prominent of which is non-combatant evacuation operations.

Such operations are likely to become an increasingly high-profile mission as suggested by the Chinese media's extensive coverage of the Libya evacuation. The PLA's unprecedented involvement in that mission, which included the deployment of a PLA Navy (PLAN) frigate and four PLAAF IL-76 transport aircraft to the region, may foreshadow an even larger role in future evacuations. As PLAN researcher Li Jie writes, as more and more Chinese go abroad, "providing maximum protective measures" for them when they are in danger, including by evacuating them when necessary, is becoming an

increasingly critical mission for the PLA, one that it is duty-bound to perform (*Modern Ships*, April 1, 2011). Methods such as chartering civilian aircraft to evacuate Chinese citizens have been adequate in many cases, but some PLA scholars clearly expect the military to play a larger role in future operations. As AMS researcher Gu Weijun puts it, "during recent riots in southern Kyrgyzstan, the Chinese government dispatched chartered planes to withdraw our citizens who were living there. But the protection of overseas citizens and expatriates cannot do without military measures. China can refer to the methods of foreign nations and employ armed protection and evacuation measures when its overseas citizens and expatriates face large-scale attacks" (*Global Times*, June 29, 2010).

Chinese publications are replete with general discussions of the importance of protecting citizens overseas and conducting NEOs when necessary, and China's accomplishments in evacuating its citizens have been impressive in some respects. Indeed, by most accounts, the PLA performed its limited role in the Libya evacuation quite effectively. The PLA also is developing and deploying a number of capabilities that could prove useful for future evacuation missions. At the same time, however, it is less clear that the PLA's doctrine, training and ability to coordinate effectively with the MFA and other organizations are as well advanced. Interagency coordination is especially critical as reflected by the emphasis on cooperation between the military and the State Department in U.S. joint doctrine and training for NEO operations. Similarly, the PLA must be prepared to communicate and coordinate effectively with the MFA and other governmental and non-governmental organizations, including state-owned enterprises and private businesses. Well-informed observers have concluded Beijing is still working to address these coordination challenges [1]. Moreover, in future NEOs, the degree of difficulty may be higher, raising questions about how effectively the PLA could handle more stressing evacuation scenarios.

PLA Assessments of the Nature and Likelihood of Future Evacuation Contingencies

For Chinese analysts, the need to protect or evacuate Chinese living overseas is a function of growing threats to their security. According to Gu Weijun, "for reasons such as political struggles, terrorist attacks, labor disputes and natural disasters, Chinese citizens and expatriates living abroad have encountered more and more attacks in recent years" (*Global Times*, June 29, 2010). It is also consistent with demands for the PLA to handle non-traditional security threats. Indeed, Chinese military publications on "diversified military tasks" and "non-war military operations" highlight the importance of a number of types of such operations for the PLA, including non-combatant evacuation operations. Foreshadowing the PLA's participation in the Libya evacuation, a 2009 volume indicated that such operations would involve dispatching military aircraft or ships to rescue Chinese citizens and overseas Chinese from countries where the security situation is deteriorating rapidly or major incidents of anti-Chinese violence or turmoil are taking place [2]. Chinese authors recognize, as more Chinese citizens and businesses go abroad and as they live in some of the world's worst neighborhoods, this type of operation may become increasingly common. As PLA Navy (PLAN) researcher Li Jie puts it, "Along with the day by day growth of China's national power, its overseas interests are constantly expanding, and the interests of Chinese and Chinese living abroad are obviously expanding." Consequently, Li writes, "undoubtedly, evacuation and escort incidents like the one in Libya will continue to occur in the future, and will be an increasing trend… and the duty of the people's army to provide emergency rescue and protection of the masses will clearly grow larger" (*Modern Ships*, April 1, 2011).

Relevant PLA Capabilities

Chinese military authors suggest the PLAN and PLAAF are likely to play particularly important roles in future evacuations [3]. As for specific platforms, Chinese writers highlight a number of naval and air capabilities—including large amphibious ships, aircraft carriers, and large transport aircraft—as important assets that will be required to execute future NEOs.

Large amphibious ships may be designed primarily for combat operations, but they also can be useful for missions such as NEOs. Indeed, notwithstanding the prominent role of the *Xuzhou* in the Libya evacuation, one of the naval capabilities that Chinese authors highlight as most directly relevant to future evacuation operations appears to be large amphibious ships. Chinese authors indicate evacuation operations are one of several potential "non-

Table 1. Select Capabilities Highlighted by Chinese Writers			
Capability	Service	Number Available	Additional Information
Yuzhao-class (Type 071) amphibious transport docks (LPDs)	PLAN	3	The first Yuzhao-class LPD, *Kunlunshan*, was launched in 2006; the second and third were launched in 2011; Yuzhao-class LPDs can carry troops, amphibious vehicles, helicopters, and Yuyi-class air-cushioned landing craft.
Il-76 Large Transport	PLAAF	Chinese media reports the PLAAF possesses a "small number" of Il-76s (*China Daily*, January 28)	Imported from Russia; Beijing sent four Il-76s to Libya to assist in the evacuation of Chinese citizens in 2011.
Y-20 Large Transport	PLAAF	N/A (under development)	China's first domestically developed large transport aircraft; first test flight conducted in January 2013.

war military operations" that could be carried out by the PLAN's large amphibious ships. According to one Chinese analyst, large amphibious ships are "an excellent choice" for operations such as international assistance, evacuation of citizens and escort missions [4]. Similarly, in an article highlighting the accelerated development of new dock landing ships, Li Jie suggests the PLAN's Yuzhao-class amphibious transport docks (LPDs) are relevant to a number of potential scenarios, including protection of Chinese citizens overseas: "In future struggles to safeguard our nation's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests in the Near Seas, the security of our international strategic channels in the intermediate or Far Seas areas, and even in non-war military actions, which will gradually increase, including protection of the interests of overseas Chinese nationals and international humanitarian assistance, dock landing ships…will have an impressive performance" (*Modern Ships*, April 1, 2012). The PLAN's new aircraft carrier also figures prominently in some Chinese discussions. In particular, Li Jie highlights the role the PLAN's aircraft carrier could play not only in resolving territorial disputes and safeguarding China's maritime rights and interests close to home, but also in future non-war military actions farther from China's shores, including "fighting terrorists and pirates, maintaining the security of maritime transportation lines, and evacuating overseas citizens" (*People's Daily*, September 24, 2012; *Modern Ships*, May 1, 2011).

Large transport aircraft can be a critical capability for NEOs instead of or in addition to chartered commercial flights. Accordingly, the PLAAF is also an important player with significant capabilities relevant to non-combatant evacuation operations. For example, a PLAAF assessment of Hu Jintao's direction to build a "powerful people's air force" lists evacuation of Chinese citizens from global hotspots as one of the tasks the PLAAF must be prepared

to carry out as it becomes a more globally capable force [5]. Other Chinese authors also highlight the importance of transport aircraft for future evacuation missions. This is one of several missions for large transport aircraft, which are seen as crucial to enhancing the "strategic projection" capabilities China needs to protect its increasingly far-flung interests. According to one media report, for example, "the military transport aircraft is a sign of a country's strategic projection capability" (*People's Daily*, August 14, 2012). The PLAAF's capabilities in this area are limited, but they appear to be improving. The PLAAF currently relies on imported IL-76 transport aircraft for its strategic airlift capabilities, but "in response to the new historic missions' requirements to protect China's global interests, the PLA Air Force is attempting to increase its long-range transportation and logistics capabilities, to achieve greater strategic projection" [6]. Specifically, Beijing is working to enhance the PLAAF's strategic airlift capabilities with the recently tested Y-20 strategic transport (Ministry of National Defense, January 6).

Conclusion

Two years ago, the Libya evacuation signaled a growing requirement for Chinese government and military involvement in the protection of Chinese nationals abroad to include future evacuation operations ("Angola Operation Shows China Testing Overseas Security Role," *China Brief*, September 7, 2012). Because of the growing number of Chinese working overseas in potentially dangerous areas and because of the need to appear responsive to domestic concerns about China's ability to protect its citizens overseas, Beijing must ensure that it is capable of handling similar crises in the future. This mission is primarily the responsibility of the MFA, but it probably will involve an expanded PLA role as it develops more options for Beijing. It will thus require the PLA to work in cooperation with the MFA and other organizations to plan and carry out future evacuation operations.

From an institutional perspective, there are benefits to the PLA as a result of its growing role in protecting China's overseas interests and external military operations other than war. For example, at least for the PLAAF and PLAN, the success of the Libya evacuation and the perceived need to be prepared to rescue Chinese nationals from other crisis-torn areas in the future highlights the military's role in protecting Chinese citizens and evacuating them from overseas hotspots. This enables the PLA to display its growing capabilities to domestic and international audiences. At home, it allows the PLA to show its value by protecting Chinese citizens overseas. Abroad, it permits the PLA to portray its growing capabilities as ones that China can employ constructively and responsibly.

Yet there are challenges and risks for the PLA as well. The stakes could be high, especially given the domestic requirement of being seen as capable of protecting Chinese citizens overseas and the importance the party leadership appears to attach to China's international image. Moreover, in future evacuation missions, the PLA may face more difficult situations than it has encountered thus far, increasing the risk that something could go wrong, and thus potentially falling short of expectations at home or undermining its desired image abroad. The PLA is clearly making progress, but ensuring it will be able to successfully execute evacuation operations under more difficult conditions if called upon to do so may require further improvements in its capabilities, doctrine, training and ability to coordinate with the MFA and other organizations.

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Notes:

1. According to Mathieu Duchâtel and Bate Gill, "coordination between government ministries, the armed forces, state-owned enterprises and private businesses—problematic under most circumstances—remains unclear when it comes to protecting citizens abroad." See, Duchâtel and Gill, "Overseas citizen protection: a growing challenge for China," SIPRI Newsletter, February 2012, available online <http://www.sipri.org/media/newsletter/essay/february12>.
2. Gai Shijin and Zhang Peizhong, *Duoyanghua Junshi Renwu Lun* [On Multiple Military Missions], Beijing, China: Changzheng Chubanshe [Long March Press], 2009, p. 68.

3. Ibid., pp. 157–158. According to the authors, in these types of operations, the air force and navy may need to work jointly to establish air safety corridors (*kongzhong anquan zoulang*) and set up safety zones (*anquan qu*), as part of the overall effort to withdraw Chinese citizens from the threatened areas.
4. Ye Qi, "Qiantan Zhongguo daxing liangqi zuozhan jianting de weilai [A Brief Discussion of the Future of China's Large Amphibious Warfare Ships]," *Dangdai haijun* [Modern Navy], No. 11, 2011, pp. 42–44.
5. Shang Jinsuo, Li Zhen, Li Liguang and Ye Haiyuan, "Hu Jintao guanyu jianshe qiangda de renmin kongjun sixiang yanjiu [A Study of Hu Jintao's Thinking on Building a Powerful People's Air Force]," *Zhongguo Junshi Kexue* [China Military Science], 2011, No. 5, pp. 13–17.
6. Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2012*, May 2012, p. 6.

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Shared Threat Perceptions Begin Renewal of Sino-Russian Arms Trade

By Stephen Blank

Despite the fulsome exchanges between Russia and China concerning their bilateral relationship, Sino-Russian military ties have, in recent years, been quite volatile. It now appears, however, that those ties are once again moving forward, largely due to shared perceptions of a U.S. threat. One key threat perceived by both Moscow and Beijing is the U.S. missile defense system ("China Steps Up Rhetoric Against U.S. Missile Defense," *China Brief*, October 19, 2012). On January 14, Gu Guoliang, director of the Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, stated China is "greatly concerned" about the enhanced development of the United States-led ballistic missile defense (BMD) program. He voiced concern in particular for the planned expansion of the system into the Asia-Pacific region—a concern echoed by Russian counterparts—especially as U.S. plans announced last fall include the Philippines as a possible location for BMD elements in addition to Japan and South Korea (Japan Times, January 28; China-U.S. Focus, January 14; Vzgliad Online, September 7, 2012).

Commenting on the planned expansion, Gu also noted the BMD program "has implications for the credibility of China's limited number of nuclear weapons." He added, "If the United States continues its development of the BMD program, China will have to take measures to secure the credibility of its nuclear second-strike capability" (*Japan Times*, January 28; China-U.S. Focus, January 14). This Chinese response echoes the warnings by Western analysts like Lora Saalman who believe that even if U.S. missile defenses were limited, unsuccessful, or ultimately incomplete, China would deem it necessary to take preemptive measures to ensure the security of its nuclear deterrent [1]. Other commentators have noted the growing chorus of Chinese voices calling for an open alliance with Russia against the United States. Both sides see the other's "comprehensive development" as being in their interest and as a strategic opportunity. Thus there are "endogenous forces" on both sides bringing the two countries closer together (*People's Daily* January 25). The Chinese government, however, has already begun to act.

On January 8, China's incoming president, Xi Jinping, said strengthening relations with Russia was a priority for China and told the secretary of Russia's Security Council, Nikolai Patrushev, that China would work toward a comprehensive bilateral strategic partnership with an emphasis on coordination and mutual political support. Patrushev noted both sides share a common concern about U.S. missile defenses, particularly those elements in the Asia-Pacific region such as the United States' second planned X-band radar in Japan (*Russia Today*, January 9; RIA Novosti, January 9; Xinhua, January 8). Following Patrushev's call to coordinate actions, China's senior legislator, Wu Bangguo, told Russian officials on January 28 that China would prioritize the development of a strategic partnership with Russia (*China Daily*, January 28). Since both sides agree on Syria, North Africa, Korea and other contentious issues, as well as the rising threat from U.S. missile defenses, these outcomes should hardly come as a surprise.

Those announcements signaled not just enhanced future cooperation but also a green light for new Russian arms sales to China of advanced weapons systems that Beijing has long coveted. Despite the long-standing Russian mistrust caused by China's piracy of Russian weapons and technology, "broader geopolitical considerations are at play that may trump the strong reservations that the Russian defense industry would have in selling their advanced arms to China," according to Tai Ming Cheung, director of the Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation at the University of California – San Diego (*Defense News*, January 21). These new sales comprise both submarines and aircraft. One example is the deal for Russia to sell China Amur-class submarines and gradually shift to co-production, involving technology transfer and allowing China to be the first to import these systems, announced in December 2012. While these submarines will add to China's existing anti-access and area denial strategy (A2AD), they also add to the country' conventional capabilities beyond the A2AD mission. The Amur 1650 Lada-class submarine is a "radically new submarine with new power plant, new automated command-and-control system, new weapons control systems and new acoustics." This deal will also be the first Sino-Russian venture in co-producing a submarine. Meanwhile, the contract will supposedly address long-standing Russian grievances about intellectual piracy (*Defense News*, January 21; *Jane's Defence Weekly*, December 27, 2012).

Perhaps the most significant sales, however, are of aircraft. Although China has just unveiled its Y-20 military transport aircraft that will significantly enhance its power projection capabilities, Russia is selling Il-76MD military transports under a new contract for ten aircraft, replacing a 2005 contract that fell apart. Since Russia is building a new version of a transport, the IL-476, China may well express an interest in that when it comes online (Interfax, January 25). Yet it does appear that this purchase corroborates a Taiwanese article indicating that despite the Y-20—which apparently will not be ready till 2017—China might need to buy up to 100 large transports from Russia (Central News Agency, December 28, 2012). In addition, China has recently bought over 100 AL31F/FN engines and 52 Mi-171 helicopters from Russia and is discussing a plan to build jointly in Beijing up to 30 Ka-32 A11 BC helicopters annually. China, however, will not be getting the new IL-476 with its multi-role transport technology anytime soon (*Kanwa Asian Defense Review*, January 1). Instead, it is likely to go to India first.

Still more importantly, it now appears that Moscow is selling the Su-35 fighter to Beijing. There is a tangled story behind this sale. In late 2009 during bilateral meetings, Chinese officials angrily denounced Russia for not abiding by several agreements to sell China weapons it wanted, thereby causing significant delays to the PLA's development plan. The weapons in question were the Il-76, S-400 air defense system and the Su-35 fighters (*Kanwa Intelligence Review Online*, February 28, 2010). By 2011, due to Russia's mounting anger at China's "cloning" of Russian weapons, an apparent decision was reached not to sell China "strategic weapons, including arresting wires for aircraft carriers, nuclear submarines and nuclear technologies (*Kanwa Intelligence Review Online*, October 10, 2011). In 2012 China strongly denied any interest in the Su-35 despite Russian rumors of a deal that had fallen apart due to Russian concerns about China's reverse engineering of the Su-35 ("Beijing Denies Russian Rumors of Su-35 Purchase," *China Brief*, March 15, 2012). Yet, now it appears that China had all along, as in 2009-10, been eager to acquire the Su-35 and that Russia is now prepared to sell them to China. China evidently returned to Russia for these systems because it still cannot manufacture competitive engines for its own fighters (*South China Morning Post*, December 7, 2012). By buying this fighter it will be able to acquire as well Saturn AL-1178 engines that it can then use for its fifth-generation stealth fighter, the J-20. Russia also was able to induce China to sign a document saying it would not reverse engineer the Su-35. Enforcing this agreement, however, will be quite problematic once the planes are in Chinese hands. In addition, Russian sources are claiming that the ultimate purchase will not be for 24 Su-35s but for a figure closer to 40 of the aircraft (OSC-FBIS, January 23; *Want China Times*, December 10, 2012).

Finally, perhaps the most interesting sale or potential sale relates to bombers. Obviously, if Moscow and Beijing are cooperating on strategic systems, bombers may figure as a reliable second-strike platform against U.S. missile defenses or other targets. Just as Russia is working on its PAK-DA fifth-generation bomber, so too does China

seek to develop a bomber with sufficient range to strike the continental United States—as might be predicted from Gu Guoliang's remarks above. China apparently now argues the main requirement for such a bomber is that it carries more long-distance cruise missiles. China's bomber requirements are unclear, even murky, but it is clear that China is seeking to modernize and extend the lifespan of its existing bombers. In some cases, as with the H-6, for example, Russian influence on the construction seems visually apparent. It is also unclear what Russian bomber systems China might seek to acquire, although it is reported that Russia has been marketing the Su-34. China, however, has not indicated a desire to buy that system yet (*Defense News*, January 28; *Want China Times*, December 31, 2012).

Thus, it is interesting that apparently for the third time, Russian recently resurfaced the rumor that Moscow was selling China the TU-22M3 (Backfire) bomber. Despite its outdated design, if China were to acquire the Backfire, it would enhance China's power projection capabilities and enable it to strike into the South China Sea. It would also enhance its limited capability to launch aerial strikes against U.S. carrier battle groups. China would supposedly rename it the N-10 and use it for attacks from the sea against low-altitude targets, making radar detection difficult. As a predecessor of modern stealthy systems with an extended range, this could be a formidable strike weapon. Furthermore, if Moscow supplied the Kh-22 (NATO designation: As-4 Kitchen) supersonic air-delivered cruise missile, this long-range anti-ship cruise missile could change the balance in the South China Sea (OSC, January 26; China News Center, January 24; Vzgliad Online, January 22). Certainly, it would add to China's long-range air strike capabilities around China's periphery. Nevertheless, these stories once again proved to be premature, if not patently false. Rosoboroneksport, Russia's official arms seller, promptly and categorically denied the story the very next day (ITAR-TASS January 24). It is noteworthy that in this connection China did not comment at all, suggesting perhaps that it did seek the system unofficially but was turned down before it could even negotiate the terms of a deal.

It is clear that the arms sales that have been made and that are in the pipeline suggest a higher degree of Sino-Russian strategic military cooperation than has been the case in the recent past. They also confirm that Russian arms sales, despite the claims of Russian analysts, are not just business but highly political affairs. These sales are clearly aimed at not only garnering profits for the Russian defense industry and Russian elites, but also signaling a strong political intent despite the well-known difficulties in arms sales to China (*Global Times*, January 17). We have yet to see concrete and specific examples of the sale of strategic systems that would nullify the aforementioned Russian ban on selling such systems. Nor have we seen specific examples of cooperation other than in political and diplomatic fora. This does not, however, mean that analysts should relax their vigilance or simply dismiss declarations of bilateral anti-U.S. strategic collaboration. In the past, observers frequently have been surprised, often quite nastily, by either Russian or Chinese progress in military affairs and weapons development. Neither is it only a question of developing a weapons system. Rather, analysts constantly must be on the lookout for novel and imaginative operational concepts using systems already in existence. The sales listed here suggest analysts should be prepared for more bilateral strategic and military cooperation against U.S. interests—even if they cannot now pinpoint the exact nature of that cooperation.

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Notes:

1. Lora Saalman, "China and the US Nuclear Posture Review," Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy, February 28, 2011, available online <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/china_posture_review.pdf>.

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