



**In This Issue:**

IN A FORTNIGHT  
By Peter Mattis.....1

FIERCE DEBATE ERUPTS OVER THE MEANING OF THE “CHINA DREAM”  
By Willy Lam.....3

THE 2013 DEFENSE WHITE PAPER IN PERSPECTIVE  
By Dennis J. Blasko.....6

CHINA’S DEFENSE WHITE PAPER: A NEW CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR SECURITY  
By Timothy R. Heath.....10

CHINA’S STRATEGIC RECALIBRATION IN BURMA  
By Prashanth Parameswaran.....13



Chen Zhou, One of the Principal Drafters of the Recently-Released Defense White Paper

*China Brief is a bi-weekly journal of information and analysis covering Greater China in Eurasia.*

*China Brief is a publication of The Jamestown Foundation, a private non-profit organization based in Washington D.C. and is edited by Peter Mattis.*

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**In a Fortnight**

By Peter Mattis

OUT WITH THE NEW, IN WITH THE OLD: INTERPRETING CHINA’S ‘NEW TYPE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS’

During Chinese President Xi Jinping’s trip to the United States last year in February, he urged Beijing and Washington to “set a good example of constructive and cooperative state-to-state relations for countries with different political systems...an example that finds no precedent and offers inspiration for future generations.” Then the acknowledged leader-in-waiting, Xi emphasized the importance of building “a new type of relationship between major countries in the 21st century”—a phrasing that would become “new type of great power relations” (*xinxing daguo guanxi*) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 20, 2012). Last year, this phraseology could have been an opening answer, subject to negotiation, to then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s challenge to write a new story about “what happens when an established power and a rising power meet” (U.S. State Department, March 7, 2012). Xi Jinping’s speech in Moscow during his first overseas trip as president and the subsequent elaboration of a “new type of international relations” (*xinxing guoji guanxi*), however, suggests Beijing is putting forth a new idea about the international system that challenges at least some of the tenets of the existing order (*International Herald Leader*, April 11; *People’s Daily*, March 23).

Following Xi’s first mention of the need to recalibrate U.S.-China relations toward a more positive vision of great power relations, his predecessor Hu Jintao elaborated

four sets of actions both sides needed to continue. They were assuage mistrust through senior-level dialogues and regular communications among principals; continue and expand win-win cooperation in traditional fields, such as law enforcement, and non-traditional fields, such as energy and the environment; minimize the impact of outside factors and third parties on the U.S.-China relationship; and share international responsibilities to maintain a “healthy interaction” in the Asia-Pacific (Xinhua, June 20, 2012).

Shortly thereafter, Cui Tiankai, then-Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and now Chinese Ambassador to the United States, along with co-author Pang Hangzhao provided a lengthy and official elaboration of a “new type of great power relations.” Cui and Pang unsurprisingly echoed Xi and Hu’s basic framework, but highlighted at least three obstacles to achieving this new vision for U.S.-China relations. The first was strategic mistrust. The second was conflicts over China’s “core interests” or, rather, U.S. interference in those interests. The third was brewing competition in the Asia-Pacific (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 20, 2012).

Although Beijing and Washington both had important roles to play in managing a “new type of great power relations,” Cui and Pang placed the responsibility for resolving the aforementioned problems squarely on the United States. China’s commitment to the U.S.-China relationship, as always, was never in doubt. They wrote “what the United States has done in matters concerning China’s core and important interests and major concerns is unsatisfactory.” In most respects, according to Cui and Pang, Beijing was not part of the problem: “There have been some problems recently in China’s neighborhood. China is not the maker of these problems, and still less the perpetrator of the harm. Rather, it is a victim on which harm has been imposed” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 20, 2012). Overall, the message appeared to be a statement that Washington needed to accommodate China’s rise without reciprocal Chinese concessions to similarly long-standing U.S. principles and policies (“China’s Search for a ‘New Type of Great Power Relationship,’” *China Brief*, September 7, 2012).

At the Moscow State Institute of International Relations late last month, Xi gave a speech where he called upon the world to observe a “new kind of international

relations” with win-win cooperation and common development at the core. The latter means countries must respect each state’s right to pursue its own political and economic development. Xi noted the world’s increasing interdependence and non-traditional security threats meant that states should not pursue security unilaterally, but should rely on cooperative security, collective security and common security (*hezuo anquan, jiti anquan* and *gongtong anquan*) to address their threat environment (*People’s Daily*, March 24). Although it would be easy to dismiss these comments as rhetorical flourish, they have since been picked up and elaborated on in other media outlets with varying degrees of authoritativeness.

The most recent and authoritative explanation came in a “Voice of China” (*zhongsheng*) editorial run earlier this week, coinciding with the visit of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey. The article also specifically quoted Xi’s Moscow address, reprinting some of the same language even when not quoting the speech directly. In an interdependent global village, Zhongsheng argued, security comes from cooperative measures and allowing other states space for their security, rather than unilateral measures (*People’s Daily*, April 23).

An unsigned editorial, entitled “Xi’s Security Outlook,” published after Western media speculation about whether Xi rebuked North Korea in his speech to the Boao Forum explained the president’s comments on security in interdependent world thusly:

“This new concept of shared security is in stark contrast to the parochial approach, which tends to view security based on one’s own interests and needs. Driven by such an undesirable approach, a country will always calculate its own gains first whenever there is a regional or global security crisis. From the Syria crisis to maritime territorial disputes in the East and South China seas, in the final analysis many of the world’s security woes today can, one way or another, be traced back to the pursuit of selfish gains in disregard of regional and global security needs” (*China Daily*, April 10).

Qu Xing, a scholar with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-run think tank China Institute of International Studies, also elaborated on President Xi's remarks in an interview with the *International Herald Leader* that was redistributed through *Reference News (Cankao Xiaoxi)*. Qu explained that the “new type of great power relations” was only one integral if subordinate component of the larger “new type of international relations.” The focus of the great power-version, according to this scholar, was eliminating the curse of conservative, established powers, initiating competition to prevent peaceful development. Perhaps most interestingly, Qu said engaging Russia, which he considers an influential great power, under Xi's rubric should pull Washington toward greater acceptance of Chinese positions and better bilateral relations—an updated form of triangulation even if China does not pursue a formal security agreement (*International Herald Leader*, April 11).

The evolution of “new type of great power relations” into “new type of international relations” signals Beijing is doubling down on its past principles of foreign policy. At a time when Chinese scholars and public intellectuals are advocating a different approach to some of Beijing's biggest foreign policy problems and principles, President Xi seems to be sticking to the old path (*Foreign Policy*, April 23; “Is Enough Finally Enough for China and North Korea?” *China Brief*, March 15). Even though Xi's statements about contributing to collective security are a nod in the right direction, the view of sovereignty and the need to allow state's their space echo the League of Nations rather than the United Nations. Under the former, sovereignty was absolute; under the latter, sovereignty is conditional. The best way to characterize this would be that a “new type of international relations” is a small step forward for China, but a step backward for the international community.

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## Fierce Debate Erupts over the Meaning of the “China Dream”

By Willy Lam

Since becoming General Secretary at the 18th Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) last November, Xi Jinping has talked about the “China Dream” (*zhongguo meng*) at least five times. On all these occasions, Xi has equated the China Dream with “fulfilling the great renaissance of the Chinese race,” adding that “this is the greatest dream of the Chinese race in recent history.” Given that Xi lacks the reputation of a theorist, the China Dream already has been considered as a major slogan of the Xi Jinping-Li Keqiang era, which is set to run until the 20th Party Congress of 2022. Questions, however, have arisen as to whether the “fulfillment of the China Dream” can be raised to the same level as seminal dictums pronounced by Xi's predecessors, such as ex-presidents Hu Jintao and Jiang Zemin. Hu coined catchphrases such as “constructing a harmonious society” and implementing the “scientific outlook on development,” while Jiang is best remembered for his “Theory of the Three Represents” (Tianya.cn [Beijing], April 1; Sina.com [Beijing], March 13). Of much more significance is the fact that, owing to the vague yet all-embracing connotations of the China Dream, cadres and intellectuals of different persuasions are locked in a fierce debate about the slogan's relevance to the future of reform, particularly political liberalization.

At its simplest level, the China Dream or the renaissance of the Chinese race simply means an economically prosperous and militarily strong China. When Xi first put forward his pet idea while inspecting an exhibition of recent history at the China National Museum in last November, he laid down two specific objectives about economic progress. By 2021, the centenary of the CCP's establishment, China should meet the target of “constructing a *xiaokang* [moderately prosperous] society.” Furthermore, by 2049—the centenary of the founding of the People's Republic—China will have developed into a “modernized socialist country that is rich, strong, democratic, civilized and harmonious” (Xinhua, November 29; People's Daily Online, November 29). According to Wang Yiming, a senior economist at the National Development and Reform Commission, China's GDP is expected to hit 90 trillion yuan (\$14.6

trillion) by 2020, at which point per capita GDP may breach the psychologically important watershed of \$10,000 per capita. Wang further projected that by 2050, the country's GDP could reach 350 trillion yuan (\$56.6 trillion), and per capita GDP could reach 260,000 yuan (\$42,000) (China News Service, March 7; sme.gov.cn [Beijing] March 6).

How about socio-political development, particularly the flowering of democratic ideals? Upon being elected State President at the National People's Congress (NPC) last March, Xi dropped hints about some form of commitment to egalitarianism when he revisited the China Dream leitmotif. He indicated that "the China Dream is the dream of the [Chinese] race as well as the dream of every Chinese [person]." The supremo further pledged that all Chinese should "have the chance of distinguishing themselves in their lives." "They should enjoy opportunities of having their dream come true," he added, "They should have the opportunity of growing up and making progress in tandem with the motherland and the times" (CCTV News, March 17; China News Service, March 17).

It is apparent, however, that Xi, who is also Chairman of the policy-setting Central Military Commission (CMC), was not referring to Western or universal precepts of equality and democratic rights. After all, Xi has vowed that while the CCP administration "will avoid old roads that are closed and fossilized, it will also not go down the slippery path that involves changing the flags and colors" of socialism with Chinese characteristics (China.com.cn, December 14, 2012; *Southern Daily* [Guangzhou], November 17, 2012). Indeed, in his NPC speech, Xi laid down three prerequisites for attaining the China Dream: "The China Dream can only be fulfilled via going down the China road; realizing the China Dream necessarily means propagating the China spirit; and realizing the China Dream requires concentrating and crystallizing China's strength" (Xinhua, March 17; People's Daily Online, March 17). This essentially ruled out the introduction of Western ideas and institutions of governance. Moreover, the Xi-Li administration has through a series of administrative restructuring concentrated more power than ever in a few high-level, non-transparent party organs, such as the Central Committee Secretariat ("Centralized Power Key to Realizing Xi's 'China Dream'," *China Brief*, March 28).

Conservative opinion-makers have warned that Xi's slogan must not be interpreted as an endorsement of "bourgeois-liberal" values. Wang Yiwei, a political scientist at Beijing's Renmin University, has laid into liberal intellectuals "who want to equate 'the China Dream' with all-out Westernization." It was wrong to equate the China Dream with ideals such as "the dream of constitutional governance or the dream of human rights and democracy," he noted. Professor Wang added that the China Dream actually meant "the Sinocization of Marxism through taking into consideration China's own conditions, so as to open up the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics" (Xinhua, April 16; Global Times, April 16). In a commentary on the same subject, the usually hard-line *Beijing Daily* pointed out that Xi's rallying cry was aimed at promoting patriotism as well as obedience to CCP edicts. The paper noted "We must meld together the country's dream and the dream of the [Chinese] race with each individual's dream." The commentary went further, adding "The China Dream is about goals that Communist party members struggle hard to achieve...It also represents the [collective] aspirations of all Chinese men and women" (People's Daily Online, December 19, 2012; *Beijing Daily*, December 18, 2012).

Despite the fact that Xi has the past decade avoided touching upon the sensitive issue of political reform or ideological liberalization, a number of free-thinking intellectuals have given a liberal interpretation of the "China Dream." Leading dissident Bao Tong, who is the former personal secretary of disgraced General Secretary Zhao Ziyang, called upon Xi to "return the dream to the people." Bao, who is under 24-hour police surveillance, indicated that Xi at least recognized that the "subject" (*zhetu*) of the China Dream was individual Chinese and not the state. "Xi has made clear that the China Dream should be realized according to the private ownership system," Bao noted in an article last March for Radio Free Asia. "The China Dream must not be monopolized by the state," he wrote, "The country should allow us common folks to each dream his own dream." Bao added that his own dream was that all Chinese "can have freedom of expression...and freedom from fear of being harassed and censored" (Radio Free Asia, March 21). Similarly, Peking University law professor and internationally-known public intellectual He Weifang offered his personal reading: "The most important goal of a modernized nation is to allow the people to have

dignity, freedom and [civil] rights so that each person can work hard to fulfill his own dream” (*Deutsche Welle* Chinese edition, March 21).

It is significant that even scholars who are affiliated with units that are at the center to the party establishment apparently have given a relatively unorthodox spin to the “China Dream.” For theorist Zhou Tianyong, who teaches politics at the CCP Central Party School (CPS), the China Dream meant that “every Chinese can work and live in the midst of democracy, equality, fairness, justice [and] righteousness—and in a well-ordered harmonious society.” Professor Zhou added that “the state should come up with policies so that each person who tries hard should have the chance [to realize his dream].” Xin Ming, another well-known CPS scholar, put forward a similar characterization of the “China Dream.” Xin pointed out that the China Dream should have the following connotations: “a sufficient level of democracy, well-developed rule of law, [the enshrinement of citizens’] sacrosanct human rights...and the free and full development of every citizen” (Caixin, April 17; *Wen Wei Po* [Hong Kong] April 13).

Discord over the meaning and significance of the China Dream also manifests itself in different interpretations over the rallying cry’s implications for foreign policy. Xi has made it clear that the ideal of the China Dream is not confined merely to the People’s Republic and its citizens. In an interview with journalists from BRICS nations last March, Xi pointed out that “China being the world’s second largest economy, the China Dream also will bring opportunities to the world” and “The China Dream will be realized through a road of peace.” While speaking at the Moscow Academy of International Relations, he reiterated “The China Dream will bring blessings and goodness to not only the Chinese people but also people in other countries.” It was while touring Tanzania that the new head of state gave the clearest indication of the global significance of the China Dream mantra. While waxing eloquent on the “African dream” and the “world dream,” Xi said: “Together with the international community, the Chinese and African peoples will work toward realizing the global dream of sustained peace and joint prosperity” (China News Service, March 26; *wenming.cn* [Beijing], March 19). These statements, which were tailor-made for a global audience, seemed indicative of Xi’s desire to highlight Beijing’s commitment to “peaceful

development” and to dispel the “China threat” theory.

It must be noted, however, that there is clearly a military—and globally assertive—aspect to the China Dream and “the renaissance of the Chinese race.” While inspecting divisions of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) last December, Xi reiterated that the China Dream also meant “the dream of a strong China” and “the dream of a strong military.” “To attain the great renaissance of the Chinese race, we must uphold [the principle of] the synthesis of a prosperous country and a strong army, and we must assiduously build up and consolidate national defense and a strong military,” Xi noted (People’s Daily Online, December 13; China News Service, December 13). On numerous occasions, Xi also called upon PLA officers and soldiers to “get ready to fight and to win wars” (“Commander-in-Chief Xi Jinping Raises the Bar on PLA ‘Combat Readiness,’” *China Brief*, January 18).

Moreover, the PLA top brass seems keen on interpreting the China Dream in such a way as to justify its lobbying for more economic resources and a greater say in national affairs. In a recent editorial entitled “The whole army must provide resolute and strong support to guarantee the realization of the China Dream,” the *PLA Daily* indicated that the defense forces would “struggle hard for the fulfillment of the dream of a strong China and a strong army.” “Only when national defense construction is up to scratch will there be a strong guarantee for economic construction,” the PLA mouthpiece added, “Boosting national defense construction also will give a significant push to economic and social development” (*PLA Daily*, March 18; China.com, March 18).

Compared to predecessors ex-presidents Jiang and Hu at a comparable stage of their tenure as party chief, Xi has been able to much more quickly and solidly firm up his power base in the party, government and military. Now the 59-year-old head of the “Gang of Princes” must prove to both Chinese and foreign audiences that he is at least as capable as his father, former Vice Premier Xi Zhongxun, of thinking outside the box and offering unconventional yet effective solutions to China’s myriad problems. Otherwise, Xi risks going down history as yet another unscrupulous politician who has failed to deliver improvements in the people’s living standards and civil rights while using patriotic and high-sounding slogans to cover up the party elite’s many shortcomings.

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## The 2013 Defense White Paper in Perspective

By Dennis J. Blasko

After every Chinese Defense white paper is released the first question invariably asked is “What’s new?” The unsatisfying, but accurate, answer is “It depends on what you already know about the Chinese armed forces.”

The white papers repeat long-established policy and usually contain some new information and updates to earlier versions. Their opening sections serve as a barometer for Chinese government’s views of the international security environment. Although military personnel have the lead in drafting the defense white papers, the text is coordinated with other central government ministries and the final product is issued by the Information Office of the State Council—not by the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). White papers, however, are not the vehicle the Chinese government would use to announce new policies.

White papers build on information provided in previous editions. Readers studying a specific subject should examine each of the eight white papers, beginning in 1998, to see how that topic is or is not addressed in each one.

It is unfortunate, but true, that readers need to be familiar with the content in previously issued white papers to judge the latest edition [1]. While the Chinese government has provided a lot of information in the series of Defense white papers, knowledgeable readers always will find that subjects are not discussed at all or in sufficient detail to

answer many longstanding questions, especially about the military budget or new weapons and equipment entering the PLA.

For a different perspective on many of topics covered by the Chinese and for significantly greater detail about weapons capabilities and numbers, readers also should consult the U.S. Department of Defense’s annual reports to Congress about the Chinese military.

### A Taxonomy of “New” Information

Several types of “new” information may be found in each white paper. First, some “new” information simply brings readers up-to-date with developments concerning topics that had previously been discussed in prior white papers. This often is the most prevalent form of information, frequently addressing basic national security and military policy issues.

Second, some “new” information may be a “first” for inclusion in a white paper. This sort of information usually has already been released in the official Chinese media to less fanfare and attention.

Third, some white papers contain “new” information that is the first time the Chinese government has ever divulged this specific fact or figure. This information usually amounts to a very small proportion of any single white paper’s content.

Fortunately, the Chinese take the extra step of translating each white paper into English for the benefit of foreign readers, their main target audience. Comparing the Chinese and English versions can be a fruitful language exercise and helpful in understanding the exact meaning of some terms.

### What’s “New” in the 2013 white paper?

The first new element in the 10,000-word white paper published on April 16, 2013 is not so much in its content, but in its form. The report’s main author, Major General Chen Zhou of the Academy of Military Science, points out that this edition is “a thematic white paper that focuses on the diversified employment of China’s armed forces,” as opposed to the comprehensive papers of previous years (China Military Online, April 18). As

such, this year's emphasis is on what the Chinese armed forces are doing to defend sovereignty, support national economic development as well as contribute to peace and stability.

Before discussing these topics, the white paper starts with a section on the international situation and the missions of the armed forces. Though "peace and development remain the underlying trends of our times" (a theme first identified in the 1998 white paper), these trends are faced with "new opportunities and challenges." The preface reiterates China's basic defense policies, such as China's defensive posture and its commitment not to seek hegemony, military expansion or interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. Foreign audiences frequently dismiss such statements as "boilerplate" or the "party line," but, for Beijing, they serve as a statement of China's strategic intentions.

While mentioning "signs of increasing hegemonism, power politics and neo-interventionism," the international environment portrayed was considerably less hostile than might have been expected. For example, there was only one direct reference to the United States, "The [United States] is adjusting its Asia-Pacific security strategy," and an indirect statement that "Some country has strengthened its Asia-Pacific military alliances, expanded its military presence in the region, and frequently makes the situation there tenser." This tone is considerably less confrontational than found in previous papers, such as in 2000 when the U.S. was mentioned by name over half dozen times, in particular for its arms sales to Taiwan.

Despite having been included in every other white paper, arms sales to Taiwan were not mentioned this year. The absence of this subject does not indicate it is no longer a priority issue for China. In fact, the topic was raised a week later during Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey's visit to China (Xinhua, April 22).

Similarly, cross-Strait relations were described as "sustaining a momentum of peaceful development" and Taiwan independence forces mentioned only once. On the other hand, stronger words were directed at Japan, which "is making trouble over the issue of the Diaoyu Islands." Still, the tone of this language toward Japan was restrained compared to how the Chinese might have

described the state of the bilateral relationship. India is not mentioned in this section.

Despite the tenor of the treatment devoted to the international situation, the white paper leaves no doubt of China's commitment to defending its national sovereignty and territorial integrity—which are an official part of China's "core interests." The white paper states China will defend itself by implementing the "military strategy of active defense" (based on the premise "We will not attack unless we are attacked; but we will surely counterattack if attacked") and developing "new ideas for the strategies and tactics of people's war."

The third section of the paper is devoted to defending national sovereignty through "the diversified employment of the armed forces aims to maintain peace, contain [deter] crises and win wars." This section is a recitation of longstanding elements of defense policy supported by discussions of the PLA's "scenario-based exercises," trans-military region deployments, force-on-force exercises and "blue water" training to prepare for these missions. Much of this information has been reported before in the Chinese military and civilian media and interested readers easily can augment this information—often with much greater detail.

One last not-so-new, new element to this white paper is the identification of the goal "to build a strong national defense and powerful armed forces which are commensurate with China's international standing"—a task previously specified in the 18th Party Congress Work Report in November 2012 (Xinhua, November 16, 2012). Many foreign analysts have long attributed a similar goal to China as it seeks "its rightful place in the world" [2].

Perhaps intentionally for the domestic readership, on the same day the white paper was published the Chinese-language military newspaper *PLA Daily* described a much more severe situation: "Hostile western forces have stepped up the strategy to westernize and divide our country and to do everything possible to curb and contain China's development" (*PLA Daily*, April 16). Similar language was used in *China's National Defense in 2008*: "[China] faces strategic maneuvers and containment from the outside." The authors of the 2013 white paper, however, appear to have decided to take a more conciliatory tone toward foreign threats.

## What's Really "New"?

The white paper actually did contain some new information that previously had not been released by the Chinese government. For the first time, it announced personnel numbers for the PLA Army's "mobile operational units" of 850,000, along with 235,000 for the Navy and 398,000 for the PLA Air Force. These numbers, however, do not represent the total PLA active duty force of 2.3 million, which was last reported in the 2006 edition.

In the same paragraph as the Army numbers, the paper states, "The PLA Army (PLAA) is composed of mobile operational units, border and coastal defense units, guard and garrison units." The 850,000 figure does not include "border and coastal defense units, guard and garrison units," nor does it include Army personnel assigned to the four General Departments in Beijing and their affiliated organizations, the seven Military Region headquarters, or the personnel in the local headquarters at provincial, prefectural, and county levels (described by the 2004 and 2006 white papers), or those in the Army's system of military academies and universities. Second Artillery personnel also are not included in the 850,000 (some estimates assess the Second Artillery to have about 100,000 personnel).

By subtracting the personnel numbers for the Navy and Air Force from the PLA's total strength of 2.3 million, 1,667,000 personnel remain. That number represents the combined strength of both the Army and Second Artillery. The 850,000 number is a subset of the 1.667 million—or, slightly more than half of the total Army and Second Artillery manpower.

The white paper also identified each of the 18 "combined corps" (or group armies) and listed which Military Region (military area command) they are subordinate. This is a new degree of transparency for an official Chinese source, but several foreign sources, including the Pentagon's reports to Congress, have provided this (and greater) level of detail for decades.

Also new is the description of three alert levels for the PLA from Level III, the lowest, to the highest Level I. The white paper, however, did not provide any further elaboration of what these alert levels meant for preparations and readiness.

Another new number is the 68 incidents of "serious violence" the People's Armed Police has "participated in handling" from 2011 to 2012. Given the tens or hundreds of thousands of "mass incidents" reported in China, 68 incidents appear to represent a very small percentage of the total [3]. Like many "statistics with Chinese characteristics," the white paper, however, does not define what "serious violence" or "handling" the incidents are. Though this is a "new" data point, it is unclear exactly what it means.

Despite the flaws in the new numbers, their inclusion was a positive sign and should be of value when foreigners have the chance to discuss these issues with knowledgeable Chinese.

## What Was Not Included?

By limiting its scope to the "diversified missions" of the armed forces, some subjects previously addressed in other white papers were not addressed this year. For example, in response to a question about whether China had changed its "No First Use" (NFU) nuclear weapons policy, Major General Yao Yunzhu noted that this year's paper does not have a section on "National Defense Policy." In previous editions, that section usually contained the specific NFU commitment (China-U.S. Focus, April 22). In other editions, the NFU statement was found in an "Arms Control and Disarmament" section, which also was not included in 2013. Nonetheless, the latest paper describes the Second Artillery's nuclear counterattack role in language consistent with established NFU policy and Yao assured the world that there had been no change to Chinese policy, though she did acknowledge that "calls for a policy change on the official NFU pledge are repeatedly heard in the Chinese media."

Likewise, because of the limited scope of the white paper, there was no discussion of the defense budget. In previous years, the white paper included a section on "Defense Expenditures," which provided more information about the defense budget than was released during the official budget announcements made during the annual National People's Congress. Perhaps a future white paper can offset this omission by making defense expenditure its primary theme.

While this year's and other white papers provide a lot of



data and statistics, they do not attempt to analyze that information. For example, the 1,842 Chinese personnel participating in UN peacekeeping missions are far less than one percent of the total PLA manpower strength. Moreover, using statistics for each individual mission provided on the UN website, it can be seen that Chinese participation in no case amounts to the majority of personnel on the mission and usually falls between one and seven percent of the mission's personnel [4]. Similar analysis could be performed for the individual ships that have participated in the Gulf of Aden missions compared to the total number of PLA Navy surface combatants or the numbers of troops who have participated in exercises with other countries. Such analysis would show that many more PLA personnel have been involved in domestic disaster relief efforts or in support of national development projects than have been deployed overseas on peacekeeping, maritime escort, or training operations and exercises. Nonetheless, the white papers are a good starting point from which to begin more detailed analysis.

Since the white papers are targeted at foreign audience and have an important role in China's deterrence objectives, it should come as no surprise that they do not include assessments of the PLA's capabilities. The Chinese military media frequently carry stark evaluations made by unit commanders and staff officers of shortcomings in PLA personnel abilities, command and control, organization, training and logistics. This body of data contributes to the "Two Incompatibles" (*liangge buxiang shiying*) assessment of PLA capabilities attributed to Hu Jintao, which roughly says, "the level of PLA modernization is incompatible with the demands of winning a local war under informatization conditions and our military capabilities are incompatible with the demands of carrying out the Army's historic missions." This assessment was seen most recently in the *PLA Daily* commentator article of April 16 and is intended to acknowledge the progress made in modernization and training in recent years but also to urge the troops to continue the hard work ahead.

Finally, the white paper did not mention Xi Jinping's appointment as chairman of the Central Military Commission (the 2004 report noted Hu Jintao's assumption of that post). Nor did it mention Xi's guidance to the armed forces to "build a people's military that obeys the party, can fight and win wars, and has an

excellent image" (*wei jianshe yi zhi ting dang zhibui, neng da shengzhang zuofeng youliang de renmin jundui*). This statement reflects the continuation of the armed forces' priorities of maintaining loyalty to the Communist Party, striving to raise their operational capabilities, and acting as models for the rest of society—rather than loyalty to any specific personality.

## Conclusion

The 2006 and 2008 white papers identified 2049 as the completion date for the multi-faceted military modernization process that began in the late 1970s. This transformation aims to create a smaller, more technologically-advanced PLA and includes comprehensive changes to its personnel, training, education and logistics systems, major modifications to force structure, doctrinal updates to accommodate new missions and the introduction of new equipment. The pace of the process increased in the mid- to late-1990s, boosted by an influx of funding and newly-available domestic electronics. The PLA still lacks the support of a professional non-commissioned officer corps and recent combat experience in modern joint and combined arms warfare. The senior PLA leadership understands the difficulties in this undertaking and recognizes that it can only make gradual changes in the modernization process trajectory, because of the human and experiential factors. Xi's guidance, along with details found in the white paper, indicate continuity in the course of Chinese military modernization as it prepares to perform the deterrence, warfighting and non-traditional security tasks assigned by the Communist Party leadership.

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## Notes:

1. The 2013 white paper *The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces* is available at the Ministry of National Defense website <[http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Video/2013-04/19/content\\_4443469.htm](http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Video/2013-04/19/content_4443469.htm)>. Previous Chinese defense white papers are available at the Chinese Central Government's

Official website <[http://english.gov.cn/official/2005-08/17/content\\_24165.htm](http://english.gov.cn/official/2005-08/17/content_24165.htm)>.

2. For one relevant example of this analysis, see James A. Lewis, “Cyber War and Competition in the China-U.S. Relationship,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 2010, available online <[http://csis.org/files/publication/100510\\_CICIR%20Speech.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/100510_CICIR%20Speech.pdf)>.
3. Manfred Elfstrom and Sarosh Kuruvilla, “The Changing Nature of Labor Unrest in China,” International Labor and Employment Relations Conference, Philadelphia, July 2–5, 2012, available online <<http://ilera2012.wharton.upenn.edu/NonRefereedPapers/Kuruvilla,%20Sarosh%20and%20Elfstrom,%20Manfred.pdf>>.
4. United Nations Peacekeeping Website, “Troop and Police Contributors” (Updated Monthly), available online <<https://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors.shtml>>.

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## China’s Defense White Paper: A New Conceptual Framework for Security

By Timothy R. Heath

China organized this year’s defense white paper around the historic missions concept as the principal framework for understanding the mission and activities of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). The concept of “core interests,” a key driver of the historic missions, featured prominently in the white paper as well [1]. The high profile accorded these concepts reflects their enhanced authoritativeness as well as China’s increased power and influence. For these reasons, Beijing can be expected to step up efforts to both consolidate control of its sovereignty claims and shape a favorable international order.

The title of this year’s defense white paper, “The Diversified Employment of China’s Armed Forces,” refers to the “diversified tasks” (*duoyanghua renwu*) the heart of the “historic missions of the armed forces in the

new period of the new century,” often referred to simply as the “historic missions.” The missions concept refers to strategic guidance that then-Central Military Commission (CMC) Chair Hu Jintao provided to the military in late 2004 and which has been mentioned in defense white papers since 2006. The historic missions consist of four requirements: (1) provide an important security guarantee for the party to consolidate its ruling position; (2) provide a strong security guarantee for safeguarding the period of important strategic opportunity for national development; (3) provide a powerful strategic support for safeguarding national interests; and (4) play an important role in safeguarding world peace and promoting common development” (Constitution of the Chinese Communist Party [CCP]). As the PLA essentially provides the ultimate backstop for the first requirement, it is not really addressed in the paper. The other elements, however, frame the main content of the white paper.

### Core Interests Elevated in Importance

This year’s white paper similarly elevated the importance of the core interest (*hexin liyi*) concept. This concept has appeared in some form in defense white papers since 2002. The term is a party concept which refers to the most important national interests, which Chinese analysts define as the collective “material and spiritual demands of a state and people.”

Chinese media has explained consistently how the evolving definition of national interests has driven the military to update its mission. The most recent development has been the addition of “developmental interests” to the older groups of security and sovereignty interests, as well as a refinement of the meaning of all three groups in light of China’s growing power and integration into the global economy. A typical *PLA Daily* article explained that China’s economic growth now required the PLA to protect national “developmental interests” (*fazhan liyi*) as well as “survival interests” (*shengcun liyi*). It contrasted the missions and functions of the military in the “agricultural and industrial age,” which focused on “manning the frontiers and defending the territories,” with new mission requirements to “protect China’s peaceful development and great power status” in the “information age” (*PLA Daily*, December 8, 2005).

Like the historic missions, the core interest concept offers a clearer way to organize thinking about security than the political language of the Mao and Deng eras. Discussing security threats in wildly hyperbolic, rigidly ideological terms are a luxury that economically enfeebled, autarkic communist countries might indulge in, but something that a rising great power can ill afford, especially when surrounded by wary, heavily armed, modern nations. The modernizing PLA of the Deng and early Jiang eras avoided this pitfall, but the lingering influence of communist orthodoxy contributed to a low level of rigor and clarity of thought. By contrast, delineating categories of core interests that tie directly to China's higher strategic priorities facilitates more precise analysis and allows the PLA to prioritize responsibilities, evaluate threats, and develop plans and capabilities in a rational manner more appropriate for the needs of a great power with global interests.

### Why the Concepts Have Risen in Importance

Both the core interests and the historic missions derive from assessments formalized around the year 2000—the start of what the CCP refers to as the “new period in the new century.” Two important developments led to the current elevation in importance of the concepts in the current paper: an increase in political authoritativeness; the relative growth in Chinese power, which has raised the feasibility and urgency of implementing the new guidance.

The ability of the party's strategic concepts to drive policy is determined in part by the level of authority of those concepts. The higher a strategic concept climbs in authority, the more likely related policies are to enjoy support. The ultimate status for a strategic concept is for it to be adopted as part of the “guiding ideology” (*zhidao sixiang*). Once a strategic concept attains this status, it enjoys supreme authority and associated policies rise in priority and importance.

Both the historic missions and the core interest concept are associated with the Scientific Development Concept articulated by Hu Jintao soon after taking power in 2002. Thus, when the 17th Party Congress incorporated the Scientific Development Concept into the CCP Constitution, it boosted the legitimacy of the historic missions and core interests. At the 18th Party Congress,

the Scientific Development Concept gained the “guiding ideology” status, reflecting strong leadership consensus (“The 18th Party Congress Work Report: Policy Blueprint for the Xi Administration,” *China Brief*, November 30, 2012). This ensured that the related historic missions and core interest concepts would play a definitive role in China's security thinking. The revised format of the defense white paper is a symptom of this development.

In addition, China has seen its relative national power continue to increase in recent years. As its surging economy overtook Japan to be the second largest in the world in 2010, China has witnessed the European Union's economy continue to struggle and the United States remain mired in political gridlock. Meanwhile, China's military continues to expand at a healthy clip. Symptomatic of its growth in power, efforts by the Philippines and Japan to shore up their eroding position on disputed maritime claims vis a vis China have foundered against Beijing's assertive reactions in the Scarborough Reef and the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands situations.

Not only has China's growing power bolstered its leverage, it also has increased its sense of urgency regarding security. In particular, the increasing anxiety of the region and attention from the United States in the form of the Rebalance has raised the importance for Beijing of adjusting its security strategy to reduce vulnerabilities, protect core interests, and shape a favorable, stable security environment to enable the nation to maintain its focus on rapid, balanced development.

### The New Security Framework in the White Paper

Just as the implications of China's growing power in an era of globalization lies at the heart of the core interests concept, the challenge of balancing a peaceful, stable security environment with the need to reduce strategic vulnerabilities and protect a growing array of core interests lies at the heart of the historic missions concept. The white paper focuses on both by providing a more thorough description of the core interests viewed from the point of view of the military, and by describing how the military implements the historic missions guidance.

*Core Interests.* The third chapter of the white paper focuses on the “sovereignty” and “security” core interests. The white paper recognizes that these are the most basic and

most important of the core interests. In addition to naming the “core security needs” as “national defense, resisting foreign aggression and defending the motherland,” the chapter discusses air, land, and maritime territorial integrity. While not new, additional leverage granted by its growing power has spurred Beijing to reinterpret its sovereignty and security interests. As but one example, the white paper mentions that the PLA Navy now carries out “blue water training,” which includes “remote early warning” and “open sea interception.” This illustrates that what China regards as necessary for the security of its wealthy seaboard has expanded in depth. Similarly, the white paper mentions that China now has “space and cyber security interests,” concepts that did not appear in official documents ten years ago.

The fourth chapter focuses on the interests related to national development. Two large groups are highlighted: maritime rights and interests, and overseas interests. The former are understood to refer to the economic and legal rights—such as minerals, fishing and other resources—to which China feels entitled. China’s growing appetite for resources has increased the value of the maritime regions. Further, many of the areas that involve direct Chinese maritime interests overlaps with its security interests and sovereignty claims, increasing the strategic value of those waters.

The overseas interests mentioned highlight sea lines of communication and Chinese nationals abroad. This is a growing area of military responsibility, as noted by the paper’s discussion of the continued Gulf of Aden and Libya evacuation missions. These similarly reflect the expansion of Chinese strategic interests as part of its growing power and integration into the global economy.

*Historic Missions.* The paper is largely organized around the military challenge of balancing the imperative to provide security for the growing array of core interests with the imperative to help shape a favorable security environment. This requires the PLA to respond to non-traditional threats such as disasters and terrorism which could threaten Chinese interests at home and abroad. The white paper employs the Western term “military operations other than war” (MOOTW) to describe these duties. The white paper, however, makes clear that the term “diversified tasks” refers to the PLA’s ability to

execute both war and MOOTW in support of the nation’s development. The paper’s second chapter outlines how the PLA’s modernization is enabling it to carry out these responsibilities.

The third and fourth chapters highlight the military’s role in coordinating closely with civilian authorities to protect China’s sovereignty, security, and developmental interests. The picture painted is one in which the military provides direct support to the whole of government’s efforts to incrementally increase the administrative, legal, and economic de-facto control of disputed maritime claims and other interests. As an example, the paper describes how the PLA Navy provides “security support” to maritime law enforcement, fisheries, and oil and gas exploitation. It also discusses cooperation with international bodies to protect China’s overseas interests.

The fifth chapter on “safeguarding world peace and regional stability” speaks to the PLA’s role in shaping a favorable security environment. This means first of all that the PLA play a role in promoting the global and regional stability critical to enabling the country’s development. Participation in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) also allows provides useful political cover to enhance security of its overseas interests, as the PLA has done through participation in UN anti-piracy operations to protect its sea lines of communication near the Horn of Africa.

## Implications

Of the PLA’s mission set, the most challenging may be the task to promote regional stability. China seeks to avoid what it deems unacceptable compromises on its interests while simultaneously avoiding instability from conflict over those interests. Key to easing this dilemma is close PLA cooperation with civil authorities, who carry out the sensitive work of enforcing China’s maritime claims. Underlining this point, the white paper sets up the political argument to justify any potential military response to protect its claims and other interests. The paper repurposes Mao’s dictum, “We will not attack unless we are attacked; but we will surely counter attack if attacked” from one of defense against invasion and nuclear attack to one which warns neighboring powers that China will “resolutely take all measures necessary

to safeguard its national sovereignty and territorial integrity.” This approach shrewdly allows China to quietly consolidate its claims in a manner that minimizes alarm, while throwing the onus on its neighboring powers to risk dramatic action to halt Chinese encroachments, knowing full well that China will exploit any misstep to consolidate its gains even further.

Feasibility will likely remain the key to how fast or hard China pushes on its core interests. If the Chinese feel their leverage has grown to an extent that they can make gains with minimal cost, they are likely to do so. To the extent its actions prove too destabilizing due to insufficient leverage, Beijing may well slow the consolidation of its interests. Moreover, the tensions between the imperatives to enhance control of core interests and maintain a stable security environment are beyond the abilities of China to manage alone. Efforts to tighten control of disputed claims, after all, invariably generate instability, while China lacks leverage to compel powerful neighbors like Japan to concede on maritime disputes. China will continue to reach out to the United States and other great powers to promote international stability and to help China consolidate control of its interests.

The 2012 Defense White Paper presents a clearer picture than its predecessors of how China views security through the lens of its growing power and globalizing interests. The political consensus behind this approach, confirmed at the 18th Party Congress, ensures that this will be the de facto security strategy for the foreseeable future. Understanding the centrality of the core interests and the historic missions concepts for China’s strategic thought can help policy makers more effectively anticipate and respond to future Chinese security-related developments.

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Notes:

1. The 2013 white paper *The Diversified Employment of China’s Armed Forces* is available at the Ministry

of National Defense website <[http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Video/2013-04/19/content\\_4443469.htm](http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Video/2013-04/19/content_4443469.htm)>. Previous Chinese defense white papers are available at the Chinese Central Government’s Official website <[http://english.gov.cn/official/2005-08/17/content\\_24165.htm](http://english.gov.cn/official/2005-08/17/content_24165.htm)>.

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## China’s Strategic Recalibration in Burma

By Prashanth Parameswaran

When Chinese President Xi Jinping met with his Burmese counterpart U. Thein Sein in Sanya on April 5, the usual sunny platitudes about enhancing “all-round cooperation” were dampened by veiled references to the threat of Western encroachment in the Southeast Asian country and the rocky road Chinese companies are now facing there (South China Morning Post, April 7; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, April 6).

China’s unease at the state of one of its most important bilateral relationships should come as no surprise. Since Burma began embracing reform and openness in 2011, Beijing has seen its traditional dominance steadily erode. Concurrently China feels that its interests are threatened as Western countries enter the fray while the increasingly vocal population turns against it (“Burma and China: The Beginning of the End of Business as Usual?” *China Brief*, November 30, 2011). Some Chinese officials now openly admit they initially massively underestimated the democratic turn in the country and overestimated their own influence there (*The Irrawaddy*, April 9).

In response, over the past few months, China has embarked on a strategic recalibration campaign in Burma. By revising its diplomatic approach, increasing its leverage in the ethnic conflicts the government in Naypyidaw is facing and adjusting to the changing business landscape, Beijing is seeking to use its resources and influence to adapt to a fast reforming Burma in order to preserve its critical interests there in the coming years.

China and Burma often refer to their ties as a *pankphaw* (sibling) relationship, which conveys both its deep and asymmetric nature. Burma was the first non-socialist country to establish ties with the People's Republic of China in 1949, and then Chinese premier minister Zhou Enlai and his Burma counterpart U Nu enjoyed a close relationship (*The Irrawaddy*, April 10). Relations soured in the 1960s when Beijing supported communist rebels in Burma, but they improved quickly after the military junta seized power in 1988. Faced with Western sanctions, an impoverished Burma increasingly turned to China for support, and Beijing obliged as border trade officially opened in 1988 and military assistance began in 1989. Over the past few decades, China has emerged as Burma's largest foreign investor and trading partner, and both sides inked a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2011 during then-President Hu Jintao's first meeting with President Thein Sein (Xinhua, May 27, 2011).

China's currently has several important interests in Burma. First and foremost, China desires stability in its 2,200km border with Burma which is both frequently plagued by ethnic conflict, drug trafficking and HIV/AIDS and also hosts the multi-billion dollar border trade critical to its southwestern Yunnan province as well as the over two million estimated Chinese nationals in Burma. Second, Beijing wants to protect its lucrative investments in Burma. China alone accounts for nearly half of Burma's foreign direct investment and more than a quarter of its trade, with Chinese companies involved primarily in the country's extractive and hydropower sectors critical to Beijing's development (*China Daily*, January 16). Third, China views Burma as significant geopolitically, because it is a gateway to the Indian Ocean, thereby mitigating Beijing's overreliance on the Straits of Malacca. The ultimate prize in this regard is a \$2.5 billion, 800-kilometer Sino-Burma oil and gas pipeline project from the west coast of Burma into China, which is expected to start pumping gas on May 31. This pipeline should reduce China's dependence on the Straits of Malacca by one third and cut 1,200 kilometers off the normal route through the Straits, across the South China Sea and up the coast to Chinese ports (*China Daily*, January 22). Lastly, Burma is also a vital partner within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and Beijing has looked to it for support on regional issues like the South China Sea and joint patrols along the Mekong River ("China Pushes on

South China Sea, ASEAN Unity Collapses," *China Brief*, August 3, 2012; "Mekong Murders Spur Beijing to Push New Security Cooperation," *China Brief*, November 11, 2011).

Each of these four key interests has been directly threatened since Burma's reformist turn in 2011. Billion-dollar infrastructure projects backed by Beijing, like the Myitsone dam and the Letpadaung copper mine, have been suspended due to rising anti-Chinese sentiment among opposition parties and the public at large, spooking some firms and causing Chinese foreign direct investment into Burma to plummet by nearly 90 percent last year. Stronger U.S.-Burma ties—as evidenced by the gradual lifting of sanctions and Naypyidaw's participation in the Cobra Gold military exercises this year—have reinforced Chinese fears about Washington's desire to contain it (*The Irrawaddy*, April 9). Meanwhile, the Kachin conflict flaring in northern Burma has been a growing border stability concern for Beijing with artillery shells landing inside China earlier this year leading to strong rebukes from the government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, January 18).

In light of these setbacks and their impact on its strategic interests, China has been recalibrating its strategy in Burma over the past few months. First, Beijing has made some important personnel shuffles in the last few weeks, which indicate a shift in its diplomatic approach. On March 11, Beijing appointed retired 71-year-old Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yingfan as its first ever special envoy for Asian affairs, with a specific mandate to prioritize Burma because "there have been too many issues recently" (*China Daily*, March 12). Wang has since been meeting opposition politicians and civil society groups as well as speaking with unprecedented candor about the need for Beijing to reform its image in Burma as part of a broader effort to diversify China's relationships there (*The Irrawaddy*, March 18). Beijing also replaced its ambassador to Burma, Li Junhua with Yang Houlan, an experienced Asia hand who presented his credentials to President Thein Sein on March 29 in Naypyidaw (Xinhua, March 29). Some say Yang's appointment is designed to signal a new Chinese strategy to engage with the reforms happening in Burma after years of failure under his predecessor Li (*The Irrawaddy*, March 22).

Second, China has adopted a more aggressive approach to dealing with the ethnic groups waging rebellions against Naypyidaw to increase its leverage in Burma relative to other players. On the one hand, after shying away from such a role for years, Beijing played an unprecedented role in facilitating peace talks between Naypyidaw and the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) in February, partly to preempt potential efforts by the United States to otherwise do so (*Asia-Pacific Bulletin*, February 20). China has since hosted two rounds of talks since then, and Beijing has sent senior officials and played a major role in both. Some reports suggest the third round of negotiations were postponed earlier this month because China leaned on the Kachin rebels to decline the meeting, fearing potential involvement from the United Nations, Britain and the United States and desiring a stronger tripartite role for itself which would constitute interference in Burma's internal affairs (*The China Post*, April 17; *Eleven Burma*, April 10).

As a stick to accompany the economic carrots it has used to entice the Burmese government, Beijing also has supported certain ethnic-based rebel groups to further its security interests. In a clear example, despite vociferous Chinese denials, observers have noted that Beijing has scaled up its secret military assistance to the United Wa State Army (UWSA)—the largest rebel group in Burma. While analysts have long suspected that China unofficially has been supplying weapons to the UWSA, Jane's Intelligence Review suggested in a December report that new, larger transfers—which include surface-to-air missiles and, for the first time, 12 armored vehicles known as “tank destroyers”—were designed to prevent Naypyidaw from launching a full-blown military offensive there against Burma's most powerful ethnic militia, which could spill over into Chinese territory as the Kachin case clearly illustrated (*Voice of America*, January 25).

Third, despite recent setbacks, Chinese companies are demonstrating their capacity to adapt to Burma's changing political climate. Big Chinese firms—e.g. China National Petroleum Corporation, which is in charge of Beijing's prized oil and gas pipelines—are now trying to invest more in helping local communities build hospitals, schools and other facilities (*Financial Times*, April 16). Companies also are launching public relations campaigns to improve their image. Since controversy erupted over

the Letpadaung copper mine near Monywa in central Myanmar, the usually low-profile Wanbao Mining Ltd. has initiated an intense lobbying initiative. These steps have even included taking risks such as allowing interviews with Western media outlets featuring its president Chen Defang (*Wall Street Journal*, March 25). Bidding strategies are also shifting as demonstrated by China Mobile uncharacteristically teaming up with Vodafone to bid jointly for Burma's lucrative telecom licenses (*South China Morning Post*, April 5).

Chinese firms clearly are receiving encouragement from Beijing in their efforts. China's newly-installed special envoy for Asian affairs Wang Yingfan has attempted to help stem local discontent in Burma by repeatedly admitting that Chinese firms need to improve their weak public relations record and that some of the concerns Naypyidaw has about specific infrastructure projects are well-founded (*The Irrawaddy*, March 18; *Eleven Burma*, March 17). Meanwhile, on March 1, the Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Environmental Protection jointly released new guidelines to help Chinese firms engage in corporate social responsibility in overseas markets like Burma amid growing criticism they had received on that score (*China Daily*, March 1).

China hopes that its strategic recalibration in Burma will grant it greater leverage to protect its vital interests and prepares it for a much more competitive landscape there. The effort, however, also has its limits. More engaging diplomats and marginal improvements in corporate social responsibility may not be sufficient to reverse the fierce anti-Chinese sentiment already stoked by specific infrastructure projects and Beijing's chosen role in Burma. The same Chinese fears over increased Western involvement in Burma, which partly prompted its policy review could also lead to serious tensions in the bilateral relationship, further alienating Naypyidaw and pushing it even closer to other actors including the United States. Beijing's more aggressive role with respect to sensitive issues like ethnic rebel groups in Burma will likely buy it less, not more influence in Naypyidaw as China is seen as an increasingly untrustworthy partner interfering in internal affairs.

While it is too early to assess the prospects for China's strategic recalibration in Burma, one thing is clear. After

some initial missteps, Beijing has regained its footing in Burma and is adapting shrewdly to the new environment. Those prematurely writing China off should take note. With so much at stake in Burma, Beijing is not going down without a fight no matter the odds.

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