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Chinese Premier Li Keqiang meets with Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić during his December 2014 visit to Serbia (Credit: Xinhua)

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## In a Fortnight

### CHINESE PUBLIC OPINION AND NORTH KOREA: WILL ANGER LEAD TO POLICY CHANGE?

By Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga

North Korea's suspected role in the November 2014 cyber attack on Sony Pictures, a Japanese-owned film studio in Hollywood, has once again dragged China into a discussion of its role in and responsibility for preventing or limiting North Korea's provocations. Recent revelations of desperate North Korean border guards entering China and killing Chinese civilians over food and money reveal the growing challenges domestically to China's traditional support for North Korea and suggest one potential opening for U.S. policy makers who seek to change China's policy—harnessing Chinese public opinion ([Xinhua](#), January 7).

#### Border Troubles

Despite their espoused alliance, China and North Korea have a long history of issues along their border, including military clashes in 1968 and 1969. Most recently,

on January 7, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) spokesman Hong Lei confirmed that in late December 2014 a North Korean soldier had fled his post, crossed the border and killed four Chinese citizens while searching for food before he was shot and killed by Chinese police ([Xinhua](#), January 7). This follows a June 2010 incident, in the midst of China's support for the North after it sunk and killed 46 South Korean soldiers on the *Cheonan* naval frigate, which the MFA said involved a North Korean border guard killing three Chinese citizens "suspected of engaging in cross-border trading" ([China News](#), June 8, 2010). Both the 2010 and 2015 MFA public statements were in response to South Korean media reports, highlighting the Chinese government's reluctance to proactively discuss the negative aspects of its relationship with Pyongyang.

This latest incident touched off a wave of investigative reporting that has so far unearthed at least two largely unknown but similar killings. In December 2013, a "North Korean male" killed a Chinese family and stole 20,000 Renminbi before being arrested by Chinese police ([Sohu](#), January 8). In September 2014, a North Korean civilian killed a family of three and the local Chinese government promptly covered it up ([Beijing News](#), January 6). *Sohu* reported that killings have been happening since at least 2005—when five North Korean border guards robbed a hotel at gunpoint and killed a Chinese police officer—and that one village right along the border, Nanping, has had over 20 people killed by North Koreans in recent years ([Sohu](#), January 8). *Beijing News* quoted someone from another village as saying, "they (North Koreans) often come over, wanting money and something to eat... they're holding a weapon and we don't dare to not give them something" ([Beijing News](#), January 6).

Reflecting a seemingly growing frustration, *Sohu* commented, "For two countries who say they have a friendship and 'blood alliance,' but time and again have mishaps, and do not have basic crisis control mechanisms and the common corresponding emergency plans, this is not only very strange, but hard to understand" ([Sohu](#), January 8). The Chinese media has also previously covered Chinese public concerns over the environmental damage caused by North Korea's nuclear tests and also publicized the three hijackings of Chinese fishing vessels by North Koreans, likely the military, in 2012, 2013 and 2014 ([Global Times](#), February 16, 2013; [Beijing News](#),

September 24, 2014).

### Growing Public Consciousness

While Chinese foreign policy is still largely isolated from Chinese public opinion, the Chinese government is becoming more sensitive to public criticism on hot button issues like territorial disputes with Japan. For North Korea, however, the Chinese government has remained unswayed by growing domestic criticism of Pyongyang and Kim Jong-un. Beijing knows the Chinese public's distaste for Kim is unlikely to translate into strong criticism of the government that would push it to action, in part because North Korean transgressions against China rarely receive prominent coverage in state-run media and because the government would never allow street protests, compared to its active coordination of some public protests against Japan.

Yet the Chinese government is not deaf to the media and the Chinese public's changing tone. While the Chinese public is largely unconcerned with the North's aggression against South Korea, Japan or the United States—indeed, some look fondly on the land of communism—North Korean killings of Chinese citizens will not curry favor for Pyongyang. Chinese netizens often refer to Kim Jong-un as "Fatty Kim the Third" and have been very critical of North Korea, and Beijing's response, for the hijackings since 2012. Indeed, polling shows that the percentage of Chinese who view North Korea as a military threat rose from 0.4 percent in 2005 to 10 percent in 2014, with many more holding an unfavorable opinion ([Mansfield Foundation](#), April 26, 2005; [The Genro NPO](#), September 9, 2014).

### Harnessing Chinese Public Opinion for North Korea Policy

The United States has historically had difficulty changing Chinese government attitudes toward North Korea, but Washington may want to start focusing more on Chinese public opinion by disclosing more information about the direct impact of North Korea's actions on Chinese civilians when appropriate. The South Korean government appears to have done just this in March 2014, when Seoul revealed that a recent North Korean rocket launch had nearly hit a Chinese passenger plane, leading to a strong Chinese public reaction and subsequent

government response ([China Daily](#), March 7, 2014).

While the Chinese government certainly retains some red lines for media censorship about North Korea, its decision to relax restrictions and allow increased criticism may turn into a double-edged sword if North Korean attacks on Chinese civilians continue. The increasingly open public debate about North Korea policy is intended to be a signal to Pyongyang of Beijing's displeasure, but the Chinese public may in turn begin to pressure the Xi Jinping administration for more action as it learns how costly the relationship really is for China.

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## Xi Jinping Consolidates Power by Promoting Alumni of the Nanjing Military Region

By Willy Lam

President Xi Jinping has marked his two years in office by masterminding a thorough loyalty drive among the People's Liberation Army (PLA), which is deemed the princeling's primary power base. On the ideological front, Xi and his lieutenants have played up the imperative of the generals' "absolute obedience" to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its leadership. A series of year-end reshuffles of the top brass was geared toward not only promoting rejuvenation and professional standards but also enhancing the political fortunes of officers close to Xi, who is Chairman of the policy-setting Central Military Commission (CMC). Xi has also increased anti-corruption operations within the PLA in the wake of the scandal surrounding former CMC vice-chairman and Politburo member General Xu Caihou, who is believed to have pocketed billions of yuan in ill-gotten gains ([Liberation Army Daily](#), July 4, 2014; [People's Daily](#), July 2, 2014).

Compared to predecessors Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, President Xi has been significantly more assiduous in inspecting different military regions as well as units from the Air Force, Navy and Second Artillery ([China News Service](#), December 23, 2014). Particularly after the detention of General Xu, the highest-ranked officer to have been incriminated since the Cultural Revolution,

Xi has redoubled the fealty campaign to ensure that, in the words of the *Liberation Army Daily*, officers must "in their thoughts and actions maintain a high degree of unison with the Party leadership and with comrade Xi Jinping as General Secretary" ([Liberation Army Daily](#), July 23, 2014; [Liberation Army Daily](#), July 2, 2014). Xi's loyalty drive reached an apogee when he gave a lecture to a few hundred members of the top brass in the town of Gutian, Fujian Province last October. It was during the famous Gutian Conference 85 years ago that Mao Zedong established his unrivalled authority among the Red Army, the forerunner of the PLA. "Upholding the principle of the Party's absolute leadership over the army is the soul of a strong army," Xi said at Gutian. The commander-in-chief instructed that Party committees in all branches and units of the PLA "take as their foremost task the implementation of the principle of the Party's absolute leadership." "We must ensure that the principle of the Party's command over the gun will take root," he added ([People's Daily](#), November 2, 2014; [Xinhua](#), November 1, 2014).

Two fast-rising stars have stood out in the latest round of musical chairs at the army's top echelons. Lieutenant-General Gao Jin (born 1959) was promoted last December to Commandant of the Chinese Military Academy (MR leader grade), making him the youngest officer to have attained the rank of head of a military region or equivalent. Gao, a much-decorated officer from the Second Artillery Force (or missile forces) who has authored numerous papers in military journals, was named Assistant Chief of the General Staff (MR deputy leader grade) just six months earlier. Another notable officer who was reshuffled twice within half a year—Lieutenant-General Miao Hua (born 1955)—served in the Fujian-based 31st Group Army (which is within the Nanjing Military Region) when Xi was a senior cadre in the province. Miao was named Political Commissar (PC) of the Lanzhou Military Region (MR) (MR leader grade) last July, and Navy PC at year-end (MR leader grade) ([People's Daily](#), December 25, 2014; [Caixin](#), December 24, 2014; [Southern Metropolitan News](#), July 8, 2014).

Several recent personnel changes have favored officers who have distinguished themselves in the Nanjing MR, which covers Shanghai as well as the provinces of Fujian, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui and Jiangxi. Owing to the fact that President Xi has served in Fujian, Zhejiang and

Shanghai, he is on friendly terms with personnel from this MR, which is often thrust into the media limelight due to its responsibilities for the reabsorption of Taiwan into the motherland. By contrast, Xi views with suspicion senior officers associated with the Shenyang MR, which was the power base of General Xu, and those with links to the Lanzhou MR, which is deemed a bastion of the influence of another former CMC vice-chairman and Politburo member, General Guo Boxiong. The rise of the so-called “Nanjing MR Faction” in the PLA reflects Xi’s eagerness to consolidate his power in the defense establishment ([Want China Times \[Taipei\]](#), December 18, 2014; [Ming Pao \[Hong Kong\]](#), December 16, 2014).

When President Xi first came to power at the 18th Party Congress in November 2012, there were relatively few senior military staff with a Nanjing MR connection. They included Director of the General Logistics Department General Zhao Keshi (born 1947) and Shenyang MR Commander Wang Jiaocheng (born 1952) (MR leader grade). Apart from General Miao, four alumni from the Nanjing MR have recently won eye-catching appointments. Lieutenant-General Yi Xiaoguang (born 1958), a former Deputy Commander from Nanjing (MR deputy leader grade), was promoted Deputy Chief of the General Staff (MR leader grade) after being Assistant Chief of General Staff (MR deputy leader grade) for just two years. Deputy Chief of General Staff Lieutenant-General Wang Ning (born 1955) (MR leader grade), who led the 31st Group Army (corps leader grade) from 2007 to 2010, was appointed Commander of the quasi-military People’s Armed Police (PAP) (MR leader grade). Commandant of the National Defense University Lieutenant-General Song Puxuan (born 1954) (MR leader grade), became Commander of the strategic Beijing MR (MR leader grade). Last July, the PC of the 31st Group Army Major-General Gao Teng (born 1956) (corps leader grade) was promoted Head of the Political Department of the Jinan MR (MR deputy leader grade). Early this year, Gao was named PC of the Beijing Garrison Command (MR deputy leader grade) ([Ming Pao \[Hong Kong\]](#), January 4; [Ta Kung Pao \[Hong Kong\]](#), December 31, 2014; [The Diplomat](#), December 30, 2014; [Legal Evening News \[Beijing\]](#), December 26, 2014).

Moreover, at least two among the top echelon of the Nanjing MR are seen as potential members of the CMC. They are Commander General Cai Yingting (born 1954)

(MR leader grade), who also earned his spurs at the 31st Group Army. A secretary of former CMC vice-chairman General Zhang Wannian, Cai is a former deputy director of the CMC General Office, the nerve center of the entire army. In 2012, Cai made a well-publicized visit to the United States, where he was treated as a future PLA leader. Deemed a ranking expert on the military configurations of the Taiwan Strait, Cai is considered a potential successor of Chief of the General Staff General Fang Fenghui ([Jinan Times \[Jinan\]](#), July 31, 2013; [South China Morning Post](#), August 23, 2012). Also looking good is the career of the Chief of Staff of the Nanjing MR, Lieutenant-General Yang Hui (born 1963) (MR deputy leader grade), who also served in the 31st Group Army. A former head of military intelligence in the General Staff Department, Yang was attached to Chinese embassies in Yugoslavia, Russia and Kazakhstan. The multi-lingual Yang is an acknowledged expert on foreign military strategies as well as anti-terrorism ([China News Service](#), August 6, 2013; [Asia Times](#), January 23, 2013).

Owing to perceived corruption and other problems among the top brass, President Xi has reshuffled the PCs—who are responsible for ideological and disciplinary matters—of several major units. For the first time in recent memory, the newly appointed military commissars (MR leader grade) of the Navy, Air Force, Second Artillery and the PAP have all come from the ground forces. They are, respectively, Lieutenant-General Miao Hua; General Tian Xiusi (born 1950, a former PC of the Chengdu MR); Lieutenant-General Wang Jiasheng (born 1955, a former Deputy PC of the General Armaments Department); and General Sun Sijing (born 1951, a former PC of the Chinese Academy of Military Science). Generals Miao and Wang are members of the Central Commission for Disciplinary Commission (CCDI)—the Party’s top-level graft-buster—selected by the 18th Party Congress, while Sun was a CCDI member appointed at the 17th Party Congress of 2007 ([Want China Times \[Taipei\]](#), December 30, 2014; [South China Morning Post](#), October 23, 2012).

### Despite High-Profile Cases, PLA Largely Escapes Anti-Corruption Drive

Compared to the dozens of ministerial-level cadres that the Party’s CCDI nabbed in 2013 and 2014, only three senior PLA officers have been put under investigation: General Xu Caihou, Lieutenant General Gu Junshan

and Lieutenant General Yang Jinshan. That relatively few “tigers” have been disciplined in the army probably reflects Commander-in-Chief Xi’s anxiety to preserve unity among the top brass. That Xi is eager to improve anti-graft mechanisms among the defense forces was evident from the speech he gave while visiting the Nanjing MR last December. “We must draw the painful lesson from the [corruption] case of Xu Caihou,” Xi told the officers. “We must thoroughly defuse the evil influence of the Xu case from the point of view of our thoughts, politics, organization and work style” ([Xinhua](#), December 15, 2014; [CCTV](#), December 15, 2014).

Changes have been made in the area of anti-graft institutions and mechanisms. The leadership of the PLA Disciplinary Inspection Commission (PDIC) has been reshuffled. For example, newly promoted Deputy Chief of the General Staff Lieutenant-General Yi Xiaoguang was given the concurrent appointment of Deputy Secretary of the PDIC. Another newly appointed PDIC Deputy Secretary is Lieutenant-General Chai Shaoliang (born 1954), who was transferred from the post of Deputy PC of the Chengdu MR (MR deputy leader grade) to that of Deputy PC of the General Armaments Department (MR deputy leader grade). Major-General Liu Shengjie (born 1956), who was promoted from Director of the General Logistics Department’s (GLD) Political Department (MR corps leader grade) to Deputy PC of the GLD (MR deputy leader grade) in July 2013, also concurrently became a PDIC deputy secretary ([Ta Kung Pao](#), December 25, 2014; [Caixin](#), July 14, 2013).

In light of the fact that the GLD—which handles infrastructure and housing projects in the military—is a disaster zone in terms of corruption in the military, General Liu, who is also a member of the CCDI, has been given extra responsibility in cleaning up procurement and other commercial procedures involved in military logistics. The PLA Auditing Office has been transferred from the GLD to the CMC, thus ensuring that the phenomenon of “the GLD investigating itself” will be a thing of the past. While announcing this change last November, CMC Vice-Chairman General Fan Changlong urged army auditors to “deeply appreciate the strategic intentions of Chairman Xi and the CMC ... and to boost their sense of mission and responsibility in handling auditing work” ([Xinhua](#), December 6, 2014; [China News Service](#), November 6, 2014).

## The PLA’s Empty Professions of Support to Xi

Partly as a result of Xi’s no-holds-barred efforts to woo the top brass, senior PLA personnel have since early 2013 frequently made ritualistic protestations of unqualified support for their commander-in-chief. The latest manifestation of what the Chinese call *biaotai* (“airing of support”) consisted of articles written by 37 generals in the journal *Chinese Military Law*. The top PLA officers unanimously avowed their backing for Xi’s ideas about “deepening the implementation of running the army according to law and running the army with severity” ([People’s Daily](#), December 13, 2014). Questions, however, are being asked about whether Xi has secured fealty for himself through old-fashioned factionalism: grooming and propagating officers from congenial backgrounds such as generals who are fellow princelings or those who hail from the Nanjing MR. It is ironic that a year-end meeting of the full Politburo issued a warning to senior cadres that “the Party will not tolerate the formation of [special interest] groups, and activities relating to faction building” ([Xinhua](#), December 30, 2014; [Global Times](#), December 29, 2014). Until Xi has proven that he is capable of substantiating former patriarch Deng Xiaoping’s famous personnel principle of the “five lakes and four seas”—meaning that top-level officers in both civilian and military units must come from disparate backgrounds—serious doubts will still be cast on the sincerity and efficacy of Xi’s vaunted reforms of the PLA.

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## *Jinglue Haiyang*: The Naval Implications of Xi Jinping's New Strategic Concept

By Ryan D. Martinson

In studies of Chinese expansion in the near seas of East Asia, one topic that has been almost entirely ignored is the concept of *jinglue haiyang*, recently endorsed by the Party-state as a facet of China's maritime power strategy. The word *jinglue* is not in common usage; indeed, most dictionaries do not define it. It is a verb combining *jing*, the character for manage or administer, with *lue*, the character for strategy or stratagem. According to the 1979 edition of the *Cihai* Dictionary, it means "handling an issue on the basis of prior planning." A useable translation might be "strategically manage," with the full phrase rendered as "strategic management of the sea."

Chinese official and quasi-official sources, the naval press in particular, now regularly cite this new concept, often identifying it as a cornerstone of Chinese President and Commander-in-Chief Xi Jinping's strategic thought. Given the exoticism of the term and its obvious importance for understanding Chinese maritime strategy, it is worth examining in greater detail. A close reading of Chinese texts suggests that the concept favors an expansive view on the use of sea power in peacetime, perhaps shedding light on the current leadership's apparent preference for a more active and systematic pursuit of maritime dominance, especially in the waters of the South China Sea.

### The Path to Endorsement

The notion of strategic management of the sea is in fact not novel. In a paper published in the *Pacific Journal* (*Taipingyang Xuebao*) in 1996, Luo Ruyu, a retired People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy Senior Captain and Director of the State Oceanic Administration (SOA), advocated for the concept to sit at the core of China's maritime strategy. Luo's understanding of the term, now nearly 20 years old, remains valid:

*Jinglue haiyang* falls within the scope of national strategy. It primarily means using political, military, technological and diplomatic means

to engage in high level and comprehensive management of national interests and security in the maritime domain, and to adopt forceful measures to accelerate marine development and exploitation, to strengthen comprehensive management of the sea, and to defend the motherland's maritime rights and interests in every respect. [1]

Since the mid-1990s, Chinese commentators have periodically called for the country to implement a policy of strategic management of the sea. Prescriptions may vary, but understanding of the term has remained constant. The concept connotes a comprehensive national strategy formulated and overseen by the highest levels of government. It knits together the efforts of multiple departments, agencies and services. It implies active pursuit of well-defined goals. While economic development is consistently seen as the core objective, maritime security and "rights protection" have always been key concerns. Thus, instruments of sea power—the PLA Navy in particular—are expected to play important roles in strategic management of the sea.

Despite occasionally appearing in authoritative publications, the concept was not official policy. As late as April 2013, the text of the 12th Five Year Plan for Marine Development makes no mention of the term. Nor does strategic management appear in the April 2013 White Paper on "The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces" ([Xinhua](#), April 16, 2013).

This changed abruptly just three months later. On July 30, members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Politburo met for a collective study session on the topic of transforming China into a maritime power. At this meeting, President Xi delivered a set of remarks that were subsequently summarized in the Chinese press. The first paragraph of the official summary contains the following sentence, which also serves as the title of Xi's speech: "We need to do more to take interest in the sea, understand the sea, and strategically manage the sea, and continually do more to promote China's efforts to become a maritime power" ([People's Daily](#), August 1, 2013). [2]

Despite the brevity of the official summary of Xi's remarks, we can draw some conclusions, the most important being that "strategic management of the sea"

is now an integral component of China’s maritime power strategy. It represents an all-encompassing term for the action that follows taking interest in and understanding the sea. The primary elements of China’s maritime power strategy outlined at the 18th Party Congress—safeguarding maritime rights/interests, protecting the environment, improving the capacity to exploit marine resources and developing the marine economy—are entirely congruent with the earliest conceptions of *jinglue haiyang*. In four characters, this term captures the essence of Chinese objectives.

**Strategic Management as Policy**

Obviously, strategic management of the sea is a concept with implications for all departments, agencies and services with responsibilities in the maritime domain. To better understand what it means for the PLA Navy, it is helpful to examine how the service interprets and operationalizes the term. A close reading of the navy’s official newspaper, *People’s Navy*, provides useful data. The table below depicts the frequency of the use of the term “jinglue” since 2010.

**Use of the Term “Strategic Management” in the *People’s Navy* Since 2010**

Year	No. of Articles
2010	0
2011	0
2012	5
2013	13
2014	21*

\* Excludes Nov. and Dec.

Analysis of the content of these articles allows for the following observations:

1. The term “strategic management” first appeared in October 2012.
2. Since that time, the term has been used in 39 articles, appearing with increasing frequency over time.
3. The term mostly, but not exclusively, refers to the strategic function of the PLA Navy in the near seas of East Asia.
4. The South China Sea is the only body of water specifically mentioned in conjunction with strategic management.
5. The term frequently appears in parallel with the phrase “safeguard maritime rights and interests.”

That the concept began to appear regularly in the second half of 2012 suggests that it achieved internal currency well before President Xi enshrined it as policy. In his remarks delivered during a discussion group at the 18th Party Congress, published in the November 13, 2012, issue of *People’s Navy*, Vice Admiral Jiang Weilie highlights four areas of future development for the navy. In his third point, Jiang states, “We need to do more with respect to implementing the strategy of strategic management of the South China Sea. The fleet is an important strategic force in the South China Sea. It ensures the security of important sea lines of communication and it effectively safeguards national sovereignty and maritime rights and interests. We need to do more to strengthen our theoretical research on strategic management of the South China Sea; proactively combine [actions that] safeguard rights and [actions that] safeguard stability; thoroughly augment the strength of our strategic control over the South China Sea; and thoroughly guard, build and strategically manage the South China Sea.” [3]

Use of the term became more frequent in the first quarter of 2014 in conjunction with a campaign to indoctrinate the service with Xi Jinping thought. On March 19, sixteen senior naval officers published articles paying homage to President Xi’s strategic wisdom. These 800-character pieces provide a fascinating window into the essence

of Xi's thinking on Chinese sea power. The concept of strategic management of the sea appears repeatedly.

The contribution of Vice Admiral Zhang Zhaoyin is particularly noteworthy, given his position as deputy commander of the South Sea Fleet. In his article, Zhang writes, "During both of his visits to the South Sea Fleet, Xi Jinping emphasized the South China Sea rights protection issue. He pointed out that the navy needs to view the matter from the perspective of national security and development strategy, that it needs to come through on the important matter of strategic management of the South China Sea." [4]

To do this, Zhang writes, the PLA Navy must improve cooperation with the country's maritime law enforcement forces as they pursue "administrative control" (*guanrong*)—a concept that has gained increasing prominence in recent years—over the South China Sea (*The National Interest*, October 1, 2014). Specifically, this means increasing the frequency and quality of joint exercises, setting up a joint command structure and sharing intelligence. Zhang then writes, "We must... comprehensively implement policy, thus ensuring that we win the initiative in achieving administrative control and rights protection law enforcement in the South China Sea." In this vision, the PLA Navy provides operational support for maritime law enforcement forces, which serve as the primary instruments of China's rights protection strategy.

Several articles highlight the importance of islands and other land features in efforts to achieve strategic management of the South China Sea. For example, during an inspection tour of Woody Island in October 2012, then Deputy Political Commissar of the navy, Vice Admiral Wang Zhaohai, pointed out, "The Xisha, Nansha, and Zhongsha islands are bases of strategic resources for China's long-term development. They are important strategic strongpoints for China to safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests. Their status is extremely important for strategic management of the South China Sea..." [5]

The concept of strategic management now frequently garnishes the public speeches of senior officers. In August 2014, the navy held a conference to commemorate the 120th anniversary of the First Sino-Japanese War. Admiral

Wu Shengli gave a talk in which he stated the following: "In the face of a profoundly changing international strategic situation and increasingly complex and severe maritime threats, we must thoroughly implement the important ideas of Xi Jinping regarding strategic management of the sea, safeguarding maritime rights and building the navy."

[6] That this language is included in a speech given by the head of the Chinese navy and a member of the Central Military Commission indicates that strategic management of the sea is now central to conceptions of peacetime naval strategy.

## Conclusions

Chinese leaders have embraced the notion of strategic management of the sea. However, publicly available Chinese government documents do not provide a satisfactory definition of the concept, or how it will be pursued. What can be discerned is that it comprises a comprehensive peacetime strategy for exploiting the sea for economic purposes, protecting the marine environment, defending maritime borders and protecting the homeland from threats from the seaward direction. In short, it represents the operational components of China's "maritime power strategy."

Close reading of the PLA Navy's service newspaper suggest that the concept, in the context of national defense strategic management, implies coordinated peacetime pursuit of maritime dominance, meaning, a high level of maritime domain awareness, the capacity to deter foreign infringements, and the ability to forcibly respond to all challenges and provocations should they occur. It means proactively imposing order or "administrative control" on claimed jurisdictional and sovereign waters. This order is upheld by Chinese maritime law enforcement forces, with the support of the PLA Navy, which provides operational assistance and deters the intervention of foreign militaries.

Many new maritime initiatives have been launched since President Xi's study session remarks; many of these actions plainly suggest a state acting on the basis of a new strategic concept. Without much more empirical evidence, however, it would be premature to posit a causal relationship. What can be safely asserted is that recent island reclamation programs—assuming they lead to increased PLA Navy presence on disputed islands—



and the PLA Navy's operational support for the China Coast Guard's defense of HYSY 981 clearly fall within the scope of strategic management of the sea, as outlined above. At the very least, appearance of this term in government documents and other authoritative texts will be worth tracking during the remaining years of the Xi administration.

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## Notes

1. Luo Ruyu, "Jinglue Haiyang Ying Zuowei Guojia De Yi Xiang Jiben Guoce," *Tai ping Yang Xuebao*, 1996/02, p 18.
2. Since 1949, China has adopted a series of "naval strategies." These include "near coast defense," "near seas active defense" and "far seas operations." These constitute approaches to defeating adversaries in wartime, unlike *jinglue haiyang*, which appears to be a peacetime maritime strategic concept (involving all of the sea services). See Nan Li, "The Evolution of China's Naval Strategy and Capabilities: From 'Near Coast' and 'Near Seas' to 'Far Seas,'" *Asian Security*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2009.
3. Jiang Weilie, "Xianqi Xuexi Guanche De Rechao, Tigao Lvxing Shiming Nengli, Quanmian Tuijin Budui Jianshe Kexue Fazhan Anquan Fazhan," *Renmin Haijun*, November 13, 2012, p. 2.
4. Zhang Zhaoyin, "Qieshi Youxiao Weihu Nanhai Haiyang Quanyi," *Renmin Haijun*, March 19, 2014, p 3.
5. Zhao Zhiwei, "Zhongguo Gongchengyuan Yuanshi Fu Xisha Jinxing Diaoyan," *Renmin Haijun*, October 23, 2012, p 1.
6. Cai Nianchi, Yuan Zhenjun, and Deng Ranzi, "Jiawu Zhanzheng 120 Zhounian Yantaohui He Jidian Yishi Longzhong Juxing," *Renmin*

*Haijun*, August 28, 2014, p 1.

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## China's New Silk Road Takes Shape in Central and Eastern Europe

By Dragan Pavličević

First revealed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013, the vision of the New Silk Road has since become a cornerstone of China's public diplomacy. The idea of establishing two logistics corridors—the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road—has also gained a firm foothold in the foreign policy domain through numerous specific initiatives that not only aim to lay down infrastructure for a new transportation network but also to facilitate deeper cooperation, economic and otherwise, between China and the countries along the Silk Road routes.

Long neglected by policy makers in Beijing, Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) has grown in importance to China's foreign policy in recent years, especially since it was "rediscovered" as an important part of the New Silk Road puzzle ([CASS](#), November 13, 2014; [Xinhua](#), December 17, 2014). [1] On the eve of the last Meeting of Heads of the Government of China and CEE (known as the Belgrade Meeting), the now annual meeting of leaders from China and the 16 CEE countries (CEEC), Chinese Premier Li Keqiang emphasized the importance of the CEE region for China's "one belt, one road" initiative. Li stated that:

The Northern route, thanks to regular trains between China and Europe, could become a new transport and logistics artery extending to Western Europe through Central and Eastern Europe. Based on the Greek Port of Piraeus and the Railway connecting Belgrade and Budapest, the Southern route could be a China-Europe land-sea express line. It will significantly enhance regional connectivity, boost the economic development of countries along the route, and provide new and convenient access for Chinese exports

to Europe and for European goods to enter China, as it goes through an area that involves 32 million people (sic) and 340,000 square kilometers of land...The China-Europe land-sea express line, together with regular trains between China and Europe and existing transport and logistics routes, will become an integral, convenient and efficient connectivity network linking Asia with Europe ([Tanjug](#), December 14, 2014).

### China-CEE Cooperation Gains Momentum

An important step forward in realizing this vision was made by the signing of two agreements related to the construction of the Belgrade-Budapest High-Speed Railway (HSR) during the recent Belgrade Meeting, a project first brought up by the Chinese side in early 2013 ([Dnevnik](#), February 22, 2013). Although the signing of the ready-to-go contract was delayed, as the parties are still searching for the most suitable financing arrangements for the estimated 2 billion euro (\$2.4 billion) project, this was the first occasion on which the vision of the trans-Balkan high-speed railway connecting the China-controlled Greek port of Piraeus and European markets was officially articulated (see [China Brief](#), October 23, 2014). Of note, in addition to the Serbian, Hungarian and Chinese representatives, the agreements were signed by the Macedonian premier, signaling the immediate extension of the HSR southwards to Macedonia, where it will link up with the upgraded Greek section of railway between Piraeus and the Macedonian border, which is also reported to follow soon ([China Daily](#), December 19, 2014).

The Meeting also resulted in the jointly released “Belgrade Guidelines,” setting the medium-term strategy for China and CEE countries “to strengthen all-round cooperation,” including an announcement of an additional fund of \$3 billion for Chinese investment in the CEE region through public-private partnerships and Beijing’s contribution of another \$1 billion to the China-CEE Investment Fund. The participants also set a goal to double the current trade volume of \$60 billion within the next 5 years. Premier Li also announced a steep increase in a number of scholarships available to students from CEE countries to study in China, the establishment of a “China-CEE center of scholars and think tanks” at an

early date, as well as increased cooperation in culture and tourism ([Tanjug](#), December 14, 2014; [Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), December 17, 2014).

All this comes on top of an already eventful 2014. Premier Li noted that nearly \$8.5 billion has been already allocated from China’s \$10 billion credit line for the CEE region, and the China-CEE Investment Fund, initially backed by \$500 million from China’s Export-Import (Exim) Bank, invested approximately \$200 million by the end of 2014 ([Tanjug](#), December 14, 2014). Also, 2014 witnessed China entering the European nuclear energy market by agreeing to an estimated 6.5 billion euro (\$7.9 billion) deal to finance and build two nuclear reactors in Romania ([Balkan Insight](#), October 20, 2014). Another eye-catching agreement concerns a 687 million euro (\$836 million) loan-and-construction deal between China and Montenegro to build a highway from the Adriatic Port of Bar to the Serbian border ([B92](#), December 9, 2014). Lastly, the establishment of the China-CEE Permanent Secretariat for Investment Promotion, based in Warsaw, hints that many more Chinese investment projects are likely in the immediate future ([CIRN](#), November 27, 2014). [2]

### China Drops Anchor in Serbia

The Belgrade Meeting was embedded within Premier Li’s four-day visit to Serbia, China’s key partner in the region. The two countries signed a strategic partnership agreement in 2009, and followed it up with several joint projects in infrastructure and the energy sector (see [China Brief](#), October 23, 2014; [China Policy Institute](#), April 2011). The first, a \$260 million bridge financed and built by China’s state-owned heavyweight China Road and Bridge Corporation and largely financed with a loan from China’s Exim Bank, was jointly opened by the premiers of China and Serbia during Li’s visit in a high-profile, live-televised event that featured an assembled crowd of several thousand Serbian citizens cheering the Chinese premier. Of note, the bridge is the first infrastructure project financed and delivered by China in Europe, again demonstrating China’s use of CEE to test and showcase Chinese infrastructure to Western Europe ([China Daily](#), December 19, 2014).

During Premier Li’s visit, Serbia and China signed another 13 new agreements and memorandums



*A map of the two routes of China's New Silk Road—the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.*  
(Credit: Xinhua)

regarding infrastructure, transportation, finance, agriculture, telecommunications and cultural exchange. [3] The most eye-catching is a \$608 million loan, with an interest rate as low as 2.5 percent from China's Exim Bank, for the construction of a new unit at the coal-fired Kostolac power plant, the first new power station to be built in Serbia after approximately three decades ([B92](#), December 17, 2014). In a deal supported by the China-CEE Investment Fund, the state-run Chinese company Goldwind agreed to supply wind turbines to Serbia's first-ever wind farm ([SEE News](#), December 22, 2014). Among other agreements, China's state-owned giant Sinohydro is now set to complete the construction of the ring road around Belgrade, and a feasibility study to prepare establishing an industrial zone for Chinese enterprises will shortly be underway. China also donated approximately 4.5 million euros (\$5.5 million) in cash to Serbia's budget, and Huawei announced a donation of an information and communication technologies lab to the University of Belgrade. To round things off, Premier Li was also made an honorary citizen of Belgrade before departing ([Tanjug](#), December 18, 2014). [4]

The Serbian Minister of Economy Zeljko Sertic reported that Chinese enterprises, of which over 300 took part in the Business Forum attached to the Belgrade Meeting, expressed interest in buying a dozen Serbian state-owned enterprises in industries as diverse as agriculture, machinery as well as health and spa ([Večernje Novosti](#), December 20, 2014). According to Serbian officials and media, China is also discussing building a port and duty-free export zone on the Danube river, establishing additional industrial zones for Chinese enterprises and participating in several projects related to the expansion of Serbia's highway and railway network, including a connection to the China-funded highway from the Montenegrin Port of Bar to the Serbian border ([Večernje Novosti](#), December 17, 2014). Unsurprisingly, a coordination centre for infrastructure and logistics projects under the China-CEE framework is expected to shortly be inaugurated in Belgrade.

### Reaching Out to the EU

At the same time as Premier Li's visit aimed to deepen China's cooperation with CEE and Serbia, there were also the first hints that these relationships may not remain

problem-free. On the economic front, Montenegro suffered the lowering of its credit rating by credit-rating agencies Moody's and Standard and Poor's as well as the withdrawal of the World Bank's \$50 million budget support fund, due to fears that the Chinese loan may overload the already debt-ridden country ([Reuters](#), October 20, 2014; [B92](#), December 9, 2014). Serbia appears to be struggling to avoid the same fate by looking into alternative ways of funding the upgrade to its section of the Belgrade-Budapest HSR—such as through its own budgetary means, a concession agreement with the Chinese partner or by utilizing a previously agreed loan from Russia—as the country attempts to keep its external debt and budgetary deficit under control in the coming years ([Politika](#), December 20, 2014). Serbia's fiscal predicament has already delayed the finalization of the contract for construction of the HSR, and may put into jeopardy other projects under discussion with China.

On the political front, 11 Falungong activists from several European countries were detained by Serbian police upon their arrival in Serbia and duly deported, as they reportedly planned to stage a protest against China's human rights record during the Belgrade Meeting ([Danas](#), December 18, 2014). Although both Serbian and international governmental and non-governmental organizations remained largely silent on the issue, such handling of activists is likely to have raised a few eyebrows in other capitals of the CEE region, as well as in Brussels, especially as it is not the first time that Serbia has bowed to Chinese demands over human and political rights issues ([China Policy Institute](#), April 2011). It remains to be seen whether these and similar economic and political problems may recur and evolve to impede the progress of China's influence in Serbia and other CEE countries.

The more important challenge to the deepening of Sino-Serbian and China-CEE relations is posed by the ambiguous attitude of the EU toward China's growing involvement in its backyard. Discussion in the EU over the last year has centered on whether China-CEE cooperation may be utilized by Beijing to split the EU for China's benefit ([European Institute for Asian Studies](#), January 23, 2014; [Deutsche Welle](#), December 15, 2014). In his article for the Serbian National News Agency on December 14, Premier Li addressed this issue (see [China Brief](#), September 25, 2014). Li said:

China supports the European integration process, as well as a united, stable and prosperous Europe that plays a greater role in the international community... China's cooperation with the 16 CEECs will not result in fragmenting the European Union. Much to the contrary, it will help deepen cooperation between China and the European Union and narrow the development gap between the eastern and western parts of the European Union... China-CEEC cooperation is undoubtedly part and parcel of China-Europe cooperation, and the two could naturally go in parallel and be mutually reinforcing ([Tanjug](#), December 14, 2014).

Li expressed hope that “17 countries align our respective mid- and long-term development goals and the China-EU 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation.” This message was reinforced by Premier Li at least several times during his stay in Serbia. Li also stated that China is committed to ensuring that future infrastructure projects would be in line with EU laws and standards ([Tanjug](#), December 14, 2014; [Tanjug](#), December 18, 2014). As Brussels has political leverage over the CEE region, what policy response the EU decides to eventually take toward China's involvement in the region may greatly affect the future trajectory of China's relations with CEE.

### **China's Breakthrough in the CEE and the New Silk Road Strategy**

Premier Li's visit to Serbia for bilateral and multilateral meetings was sandwiched between his visits to Kazakhstan and Thailand, two other key parts of the Silk Road Economic Belt and Maritime Silk Road vision. These visits also combined elements of both bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, as Li attended the meetings of two other multilateral forums, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Economic Cooperation, in Astana and Bangkok, respectively. Among various agreements of great breadth and depth, these visits resulted in a \$10.6 billion deal to provide Thailand with nearly 560 miles of high-speed railway, a pledge of \$3 billion to GMS countries with \$1 billion specifically intended for infrastructure, as well as \$14 billion worth of agreements between China and

Kazakhstan that cover yet-unspecified cooperation in areas of nuclear energy, electricity, water resources and infrastructure construction ([China Daily](#), December 12–21, 2014).

As in the case of Premier Li's visit to Serbia, activities in Astana and Bangkok were framed both by Chinese officials and media as "another step forward in efforts to revive the ancient transcontinental Silk Road." For example, in a special section devoted to these visits, *China Daily* went to great lengths to relay Beijing's vision of "openness, reciprocity and mutual benefit" that will be ensured by greater inter-connectivity and cooperation along the New Silk Road routes ([China Daily](#), December 12–21, 2014).

This message hit the target with audiences in Serbia and the other CEE countries. During the Belgrade Meeting, CEE leaders vociferously hailed the prospects of deeper cooperation with China and emphasized the advantages that China will enjoy by investing in the region and their respective countries. In Serbia, this was accompanied by a media frenzy that included over ten hours of live television coverage and top headlines and double pages in print media devoted to the Meeting and Premier Li's visit, as well as numerous expert panels that unanimously agreed that China's involvement in the country and the CEE may be a game-changer for struggling regional economies. Furthermore, the Serbian government not only presented cooperation with China as a great developmental opportunity, but also used Premier Li's visit to showcase itself as a reformed, stable and business-minded regional force where "East Creatively Meets West" to both foreign and domestic audiences, in an attempt to boost both its international standing and the electorate's support ([Politika](#), December 14, 2014).

In conclusion, the New Silk Road narrative now provides both a strategic orientation for China's foreign policy, as well as a conceptual umbrella under which multiple and so-far disparate Chinese multilateral and bilateral diplomatic initiatives are unified and promoted around the globe. As the outcomes of Premier Li's December tour and Beijing's initial success in incorporating CEE countries into the "one belt, one road" initiative testify, the New Silk Road appears to be an effective platform for China to increase its global clout, even in those parts of the world where it has never had much presence.

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## Notes

1. CEE was not part of the ancient Silk Road, but both routes of the New Silk Road transit through CEE. While CEE was previously largely outside the scope of China's foreign policy, China has ramped up relations with the region since the onset of the Global Financial Crisis, and especially since 2012 when it established the so-called "16+1" multilateral framework for China-CEE cooperation.
2. The secretariats for different areas appear to be strategically "awarded" to different CEE countries (for example, Bulgaria will host agriculture, Poland will host investment, Serbia will host infrastructure, among others). They are placed within governmental institutions in host countries (such as the Polish agency for foreign investment, or Bulgarian ministry of agriculture). They will likely be staffed only with local personnel, but at the same time, part of the multilateral institutional structure will likely be coordinated by the general China-CEE Cooperation Secretariat in Beijing.
3. Among these deals, only the building of a new unit at the Kostolac power plant represents the continuation of a pre-existing, multi-phase agreement regarding the upgrade and revitalization of the Kostolac power plant, while others are brand new agreements ([Balkan Magazine](#), December 15, 2014).
4. Premier Li is the 27th person and the third senior Chinese official to receive honorary citizenship of Belgrade, along with former leader Hua Guofeng and former President and Politburo Standing Committee member Li Xiannian ([B92](#), December 18, 2014).

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## Maritime Insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea: A Greater Role for China?

By Zhou Hang and Katharina Seibel

While concerted anti-piracy measures, undertaken since 2008, have steadily decreased the number of piracy attacks in the Gulf of Aden, those in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) attract growing attention. Geographically, the GoG designates the vast Atlantic coast stretching from Angola to Senegal. The growing energy and trade relations between the region—both coastal and hinterland countries—and countries outside it hinge on the maritime security of this strategic sea-based route. For instance, the GoG region currently accounts for 10 percent of oil and 4 percent of natural gas imports to the European Union (EU); and on average, about 30 EU flagged or owned vessels are operating in the region at any given moment ([Council of the EU](#), March 17, 2014).

In 2012, attacks on ships off the GoG for the first time exceeded the number of those carried out by Somali pirates in the Gulf of Aden ([China News](#), June 19, 2013). Although the number of reported attacks by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) decreased to 54 in 2013, from 64 in 2012 and 61 in 2011, many attacks are believed to go unreported ([IMO](#), March 1, 2013). The attacks in the GoG, carried out by organized networks and frequently targeting oil drillings and tankers for oil and cargo theft, have incurred significant financial costs to both coastal states and foreign investors—amounting to an estimated annual loss of \$2 billion ([United Nations Institute for Training and Research](#), 2014). Transport lines are increasingly susceptible to disruption, leading to rising insurance premiums and, therefore, have a broad impact on economic interactions between the region and external partners.

According to Article 101 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS), piracy takes place only on the high seas, more than 12 nautical miles (nm) away from shore, while attacks taking place within territorial seas are defined as armed robbery and lie within the responsibility of the respective state. The attacks in the GoG consist of both piracy at sea and armed robbery, with the latter accounting for the majority. [1] This varies significantly from the attacks in the Gulf

of Aden, which mostly take place on the high seas and are by law acts of piracy. The key distinction between piracy and armed robbery partly explains why the current approach to maritime crime in the GoG primarily relies on national efforts and regional cooperation, which culminated in the June 2013 Yaoundé Summit, gathering 25 GoG countries to formulate an integrated response to the growing maritime insecurity. [2] Against the larger backdrop of China's increased security presence in Africa—particularly in peacekeeping and anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden—its current position and potential roles in confronting maritime insecurity in the GoG receive far less attention.

### Unpacking China's Stake in Gulf of Guinea

International attention on the GoG continues to grow primarily due to increased interest in natural resources—particularly oil and gas—in the region ([International Crisis Group](#), December 12, 2012). The region hosts a number of leading oil-producing countries in sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria, Angola, Equatorial Guinea and Congo-Brazzaville. The recent discovery of offshore hydrocarbon fields underlines the region's geostrategic significance. Bilateral economic ties between China and the region reflect this landscape, with growing importance attached to energy cooperation. The region also dovetails with China's strategy to diversify its energy imports.

In terms of oil imports, Angola stands out as China's second largest oil supplier and represents approximately 14 percent of China's imported oil in 2013 ([China Energy News](#), February 2, 2014). However, GoG piracy so far only poses a limited threat to China's access to Angolan oil, as the shipping route from Angola to China usually goes southward to pass by the Cape of Good Hope instead of heading north to the epicenter of GoG piracy. Putting aside Angola, China's oil imports from other regional countries have so far been limited, as they accounted for only 4.5 percent of China's oil imports in 2013. [3] The limited flow of oil from the region indicates that piracy and armed robbery is unlikely to severely compromise China's energy security, as long as the pirates do not significantly expand their activities further south to the Angolan coast. [4]

While oil imports are still limited, there is a continued upward trend in Chinese investment in the oil and gas

### Known Attacks Involving Chinese Citizens in the Gulf of Guinea Since 2010

Date and Location	Attacks and Casualties
March 12, 2010, Cameroon	Seven Chinese nationals onboard two fishing boats of the Chinese Dalian Beihai Fishing Company were kidnapped, but released six days later ( <a href="#">Xinhua</a> , March 18, 2010).
September 22, 2010, Nigeria	A Chinese cargo ship was attacked, with one Chinese citizen seriously wounded and some of the goods on the ship stolen ( <a href="#">Xinhua</a> , September 25, 2010).
February 14, 2012, Nigeria	A Panamanian boat with 22 Chinese crew was attacked and the Chinese boat captain was killed ( <a href="#">China Daily</a> , February 23, 2012).
April 28, 2012, Togo	A Panamanian cargo ship with five Chinese on board was attacked ( <a href="#">Global Times</a> , May 4, 2012).
February 4, 2013, Côte d'Ivoire	A French diesel tanker with one Chinese citizen onboard was attacked ( <a href="#">Xinhua</a> , February 5, 2013).
July 26, 2014, Ghana	A Korean oil tanker with 12 Chinese nationals onboard was hijacked and was released on August 3, 2014 ( <a href="#">IHS Maritime 360</a> , August 4, 2014).

industry as well as bilateral trade with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) countries, which stood at \$33 billion in 2013 ([ECOWAS](#), June 10, 2014). Although relative latecomers, the three major Chinese state-owned oil companies China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC), China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and China Petroleum & Chemical Corporation (Sinopec) have invested considerably in oil production in countries such as Nigeria, Gabon and others. The GoG region is also home to some of China's most important African trading partners, such as Nigeria, Ghana and Congo Brazzaville, with trade volumes of \$13, \$5.1 and \$6.5 billion, respectively, in 2013 ([UN Comtrade Database](#), 2014). Acts of piracy and armed robbery—particularly those targeted at drilling platforms, oil tankers or cargo ships—continue to threaten both Chinese investments and more broadly its commercial interests reliant on maritime transport links.

#### Tepid Chinese Engagement with Multilateral Initiatives

China's response to piracy in the GoG at the multilateral level has primarily been limited to its role as a permanent member of United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

The UNSC has so far passed two resolutions on piracy and armed robbery at sea in the GoG, for which Beijing both times voted in favor. In response to the UN resolutions, a regional summit was finally held in June 2013 in Yaoundé, Cameroon, which agreed to create an Inter-regional Coordination Centre (ICC) to implement regional strategies for maritime security, along with a memorandum on maritime safety and security in the region as well as a code of conduct ([UNSC](#), August 14, 2013).

Beijing recognizes that piracy in the GoG has “negatively affected regional peace and security” and prefers a regional solution, with the states concerned bearing the primary responsibility and necessary international assistance ([UNSC](#), February 27, 2012; [China News](#), February 28, 2012). This is in line with the current international response, namely, regional countries leading efforts to combat piracy with support from the international community.

Yet, Beijing's support to regional initiatives so far appears to be extremely limited compared to the EU and the United States. The EU set up the Critical Maritime Routes Gulf of Guinea (CRIMGO) initiative to complement regional anti-piracy initiatives, and the United States

started the AFRICOM at-sea maritime exercises “Obangame Express” and its Africa Partnership Station (APS) program, which supports capacity building for anti-piracy missions in the region. By contrast, China has only donated \$100,000 in 2013 to the West and Central African Maritime Security Trust Fund of the IMO, which oversees the implementation of the Code of Conduct agreed in Yaoundé ([IMO](#), March 17, 2014). [5] China is also not yet a member of the G8++ Friends of Gulf of Guinea Maritime Capacity Building Platform, which aims to enhance coordination between international partners on capacity building activities in the region.

### More Engagement on the Bilateral Front

China’s efforts, relatively speaking, have been more visible on the bilateral front, primarily in terms of anti-piracy exercises and broadly defined military assistance, with the goal of enhancing the capacities of regional countries. Between May and June 2014, the Chinese navy for the first time made port calls at four countries in the GoG region—Cote d’Ivoire, Nigeria, Cameroon and Angola—during the sixteenth escort task force’s visit to eight African countries ([Nanfang Ribao](#), December 29, 2014). The Chinese task force launched the first joint anti-piracy drills with the Nigerian and Cameroonian navies to “improve capabilities to maintain maritime security and coordination in anti-piracy operation” ([China Navy Online](#), June 4, 2014; [People’s Daily Online](#), May 29, 2014). These were also the first joint military exercises that China held in the GoG, which indicates increased awareness of security threats in the region and (hopefully), in the long term, paves the way for China’s greater operational role in countering them.

Beijing has also directed its ever-growing foreign aid program at the GoG piracy issue, in particular with its military assistance and human resource development cooperation. For instance, Beijing donated a patrol boat to Sierra Leone, enabling the country to patrol its exclusive economic zone (EEZ). [6] Prior to this donation, China provided four vessels to the Sierra Leone navy since establishing diplomatic relations in 1987 ([Defence Web](#), November 17, 2011). Benin also received a Chinese grant of four million euros (\$4.8 million) for the purchase of a patrol boat in 2011 ([Defence Web](#), November 17, 2011). Despite their small size, these donations have often been valuable contributions to local capacity building for

countries such as Benin, whose navy only has five small patrol boats ([IISS Military Balance Blog](#), February 28, 2014).

China’s extensive human resource training cooperation for government officials and technical personnel from developing countries—1,951 sessions between 2010 and 2012—could potentially serve as an important platform to share its experience in anti-piracy and maritime administration with African counterparts ([Xinhua](#), July 10, 2014). Sponsored by the Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Public Security, a targeted training session on maritime law enforcement has been hosted at the China Maritime Policy Academy in Ningbo annually since 2008 ([Xinhua](#), June 4, 2008; [Xinhua](#), May 21, 2010). African officials from the GoG region have benefited from this program, which usually includes lectures on criminal investigations, countering piracy and armed robbery operations, emergency rescues, as well as visits to China’s maritime law enforcement agencies ([Bianfang Jingchabao](#), May 11, 2011; [China Police Daily](#), July 8, 2011).

Additionally, the GoG region is becoming an increasingly important destination for China’s commercial transfer of naval vessels. In recent years, Africa has grown as a potential market for Chinese exports given Africa’s security demands as well as the comparative advantage of China’s shipbuilding industry in cost vis-à-vis Western counterparts. This trend is more likely to be primarily business-driven, rather than related to any of Beijing’s planned regional security approaches toward the GoG; however, it could have a significant impact on recipient countries’ equipment capabilities.

Data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) shows that 5 of the 20 countries receiving Chinese vessels between 2000 and 2013 are from the GoG region—Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana and Sierra Leone. In 2012, the Chinese defense attaché to Nigeria expressed Beijing’s interest in expanding defense cooperation given the security challenges in the GoG ([The Punch](#), August 2, 2012). In the same year, Nigeria approved the purchase of two 1,800-ton Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs) from China, and the first one was officially delivered in November 2014 ([Website of the Nigerian Navy](#); [Xinhua](#), November 27, 2014). With these two ships, the largest and most advanced vessels in the Nigerian navy, Nigeria becomes the first nation in



West Africa to operate Chinese warships; and they will carry out a wide range of missions, such as protection of offshore oil fields and recovery from oil spills. ([Dragon TV](#), November 27, 2014; [People's Daily Online](#), November 28, 2014). In 2012, Ghana commissioned four patrol ships built by the Chinese defense manufacturing company Poly Technologies to combat piracy, enhance fisheries governance and increase maritime security in its territorial waters ([Business and Maritime West Africa](#), February 28, 2012; [Ghana Web](#), October 13, 2011). Thanks to the buyer's credit extended by China's Exim Bank, the Cameroonian Ministry of Defense also signed a contract in 2013 with Poly Technologies to build two patrol craft ([Journal de Cameroun](#), April 24, 2014).

### Path Forward for Increased Chinese Role

Maritime insecurity in the GOG is another case that illustrates how the continued globalization of China's interests—in terms of the growing number of Chinese nationals, economic assets and activities outside China's borders—could factor into Beijing's foreign policy calculus ([SIPRI](#), June 2014). Until now, the international community has preferred a common regional cooperation approach over a Somali-style UN-sanctioned international intervention, and this attitude is unlikely to change anytime soon unless the GoG undergoes a surge of attacks that neither the regional approach nor national capacities are able to handle. Against this background, China's growing yet limited overseas interest in the region helps explain Beijing's relatively low prolife in anti-piracy initiatives in the GoG.

So far, China's claim to support a regional approach to maritime insecurity in the GoG has not been substantiated with much action. However, cooperation amongst the GoG states is indispensable for a sustained solution. China vows to boost its support to the leading role by the African Union and other regional economic communities in safeguarding peace and security in Africa, and therefore should build on the momentum generated at the Yaoundé Summit to reinforce its cooperation with ECOWAS and ECCAS. In June 2014, China and ECOWAS agreed on establishing a strategic consultative mechanism to better implement their cooperation and identify five priorities, including capacity building, peace and security, the fight against terrorism and transnational crime ([ECOWAS](#),

June 18, 2014). This mechanism should be harnessed to discuss more institutionalized cooperation on the GoG.

Compared to external actors like the United States and the EU, China has not yet established any targeted programs with regional organizations or individual states in joint-exercise or capacity building, and its efforts have been mostly ad-hoc based. However, effective regional cooperation in the GoG entails well-coordinated international support that does not result in competition for security sources from individual countries. Hence, at least a minimum level of interaction or even engagement should be encouraged between China and other external actors. Exchanges of views, such as those on anti-piracy situations in the GoG between the commanders of Chinese and European task forces in their first joint anti-piracy exercise in the Gulf of Aden in March 2014, should be welcomed and further expanded ([China Military Online](#), March 21, 2014).

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### Notes

1. For the numbers of instances of piracy and armed robbery, see [Chatam House](#), March 2013.
2. The 25 gulf countries are Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.
3. Authors' calculation using data from China Customs, including the GoG countries Congo Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, Gabon, Congo Kinshasa, Ghana and Chad.
4. The case marking "the southernmost

expansion of Nigeria's pirate gangs" occurred on January 18, 2014, when the Greek-owned *MT Keral* disappeared off the coast of Angola and was released off the coast of Nigeria more than a week later with 12,270 tons of its diesel cargo offloaded ([Maritime Executive](#), March 15, 2014).

5. In 2013, Japan made the largest donation of \$1 million and 100,000 pounds sterling (\$152,000) ([IMO](#), March 17, 2014).
6. Mehler, A., Melber, H. and van Walraven, K. (eds.), "Africa Yearbook: Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara in 2006," (Brill: Leiden, 2006), p. 174.

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