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Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe speaks to Congress.

(Source: Xinhua)

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In a Fortnight

CHINA TAKES STOCK OF U.S.-JAPAN ALLIANCE AS ABE SPEAKS TO CONGRESS

By Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga

As Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visits the United States on April 26-May 3, all eyes in China are watching how Abe speaks about ongoing historical memory issues and how he is strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance. By revising the defense guidelines on April 27 and speaking in front of a joint session of Congress on April 29—the first time for a Japanese leader—Abe made arguably the most high-profile visit ever by a Japanese prime minister to the United States.

Providing the official Chinese reaction to Abe’s speech, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Spokesman Hong Lei said “The Chinese side repeatedly urges the Japanese government and leadership to take a responsible attitude towards history, and act in accordance with the Murayama Statement and other statements and commitment made by previous governments on facing squarely and reflecting upon the history of aggression. This is the only way for Japan to genuinely win the trust of the

world and develop friendly relationship for the future with its Asian neighbors” ([MFA](#), April 30).

Abe’s decision to not explicitly apologize or repeat the Kono and Murayama statements, which he was evidently unwilling to do for personal or domestic political considerations, did not satisfy China or South Korea. His decision allows China to continue playing the history card throughout 2015, the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII and Japan’s defeat. Beijing will also very likely use this as further leverage to justify criticism of Japan’s security policy as well as complicate Japan’s relations with South Korea and to a lesser extent the rest of Asia.

The most important Chinese media response came from the *People’s Daily*, which published an article entitled, “International Community Urges Abe Government to Walk the Road of Peaceful Development” ([People’s Daily](#), April 30). *People’s Daily* said Abe’s attitude was “ambiguous” and he never apologized for Japan’s use of comfort women during WWII, and that his answer to a reporter’s question on the issue the day before had “concerned people.” As expected, the article focused first and foremost on the issue of Abe’s historical memory but, notably, there was little direct editorial commentary on his speech. Instead, the article cited a wide range of U.S., South Korean and Japanese critics of his speech, as the paper chose to tailor its interviews to more naturally follow the Party line on the issue. The paper quoted many organizations often ignored by the U.S. mainstream press, including Act Now to Stop War and End Racism (ANSWER), the American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor Memorial Society, the Flying Tiger Historical Organization (with projects apparently funded and tied to the Chinese government) and the Washington Coalition for Comfort Women Issues. The article also discussed protests in Washington, DC and Tokyo against the speech, and the recent letter by 25 congressmen to Abe as well as a letter from former Congressman David Wu ([Yonhap](#), April 24; [Xinhua](#), April 29).

The Chinese media also carried reaction in Japan and the two Koreas. Xinhua wrote that “Japan’s main opposition party on April 30 thoroughly criticized and censured” Abe’s speech ([Xinhua](#), April 30). *Global Times* said that North and South Korea “demonstrated rare political unity and both condemned Abe’s refusal to apologize” ([Global Times](#), April 30; [Channel News Agency](#), April 30). Xinhua

also cited critical remarks by two U.S. congressmen, Mike Honda and Judy Chu ([Xinhua](#), April 30).

The revised U.S.-Japan defense guidelines were also a key focus. *People’s Daily* said the guidelines will allow Japan to “play a more offensive role” around the world, and the U.S.-Japan alliance has now expanded from Japan’s periphery to the world. MFA Spokesman Hong Lei said, “The US-Japan alliance is a bilateral arrangement forged during the Cold War. The US and Japan shoulder the responsibility of ensuring that a third party’s interests will not be damaged and peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific not be undermined by their alliance” ([MFA](#), April 30). *People’s Daily* said the revisions “expand the scope of Japan’s military activities abroad and follow in the footsteps of the United States,” which ignores a chorus of protests ([People’s Daily](#), April 30). *Guangming Daily* listed four new features of the guidelines: first, they expand military cooperation to the entire world and make cooperation from peacetime to conflict “seamless”; second, they included joint island defense, extending from the East to South China Seas; third, cooperation was expanded to space and cyber; and fourth, in the event of conflict, Japan can now not only provide support to the U.S. military, but also assistance ([Guangming Daily](#), March 29).

Former People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Navy officer turned commentator Song Shaojun said that the most important change was the emphasis on “seamless” and “global coverage,” as the alliance was transitioning from “people and platforms” to “people and people” cooperation ([People’s Daily Online](#), April 29). Du Wenlong, a senior researcher at the PLA Academy of Military Science, said that the revisions now allow an “even deeper level of joint operations” between the United State and Japan ([People’s Daily Online](#), April 29). China Institute of International Studies analyst Su Xiaohui noted that the revisions for the first time included space and cyber ([People’s Daily Overseas Edition](#), March 29). She continued with an implicit critique of the U.S.-Japan alliance, writing “in traditional international relations, this type of old model is already not suitable for the new historical conditions. In today’s world, we must build a new model of international relations.”

Yet Chinese commentators do see some weaknesses in the alliance. PLA Naval Research Institute researcher

Cao Weidong said the guidelines show “Japan’s dream of forcing the United States to help it seize the Diaoyu Islands is likely to be unfulfilled,” adding that the United States is “extremely clear” on the Islands’ history and there is a “large gap” between Japan’s thoughts and U.S. actions ([People’s Daily Online](#), April 26). The lack of progress on the Trans-Pacific Partnership also remains a weakness from China’s perspective ([Xinhua](#), April 30). While the Chinese media did not expect the United States and Japan to conclude TPP negotiations during Abe’s visit, the decision by many U.S. European allies to join China’s Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) earlier this year left Chinese commentators to conclude there was added pressure on a successful TPP deal, yet expressed doubt and were “not optimistic for the future” of negotiations ([Shenzhen TV](#), April 22).

While the first wave of Chinese commentary mainly focused on Abe’s lack of “apology,” another central focus was on how Abe’s visit was directed toward China. Xinhua cited several analysts to say that “at the same time Abe was downplaying the history of invasion, in his speech he played the ‘sentiment’ and ‘interest’ cards, and strengthened and developed the U.S.-Japan alliance. Although China was never clearly pointed out in the speech, reading between the lines it was targeted at China” ([Xinhua](#), May 1). Deeper security cooperation and an eventual TPP agreement will strengthen the overall U.S.-Japan alliance and allow it to better adjust to a rising China, but a key question will be how the partnership can find ways to work with Beijing on enough issues to avoid a resurgent “Cold War” environment in East Asia in which the U.S.-Japan relationship would be aligned against China.

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China’s Global Maritime Presence: Hard and Soft Dimensions of PLAN Antipiracy Operations

By Austin M. Strange and Andrew S. Erickson

Nearing the Twilight of Somali Antipiracy?

The global antipiracy mission off Somalia, a hallmark for collective 21st-century international security, is gradually moving toward a close. There have been no successful Somali pirate attacks since 2012 and, barring a sudden spike in violence, navies may start exiting the Gulf of Aden within the next few years. [1]

Like many states, China has been an important victim and respondent concerning Somali piracy. Over the past six-plus years, its antipiracy operations have helped stabilize waters off Somalia, while helping secure some of China’s purported 1.2 million workers and \$500 billion in investments overseas. [2] Meanwhile, China’s navy has accrued important operational skills supporting “hard” naval strength while engaging in far-reaching “soft” military diplomacy.

Gulf of Aden operations are not over yet. This May, a Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) rear admiral will assume multi-month command of Combined Task Force (CTF)-151, U.S.-led multinational naval taskforce and one of the “big three” multinational antipiracy efforts in the Gulf of Aden. Tokyo’s temporary leadership may discourage Beijing from withdrawing antipiracy forces in the near term to avoid being perceived as a less responsible Asia-Pacific power, though China’s calculus is probably based much more heavily on other considerations. [3]

Since Gulf of Aden deployments will not persist indefinitely, however, it is time to reflect on the implications of China’s experience therein. What has China achieved over the past six years through antipiracy operations? Has the global fight against maritime piracy enlarged China’s global naval presence? Finally, what will China’s global naval presence resemble in the post-Gulf of Aden era?

China's Hard and Soft Antipiracy Achievements to Date

Beijing's antipiracy mission has matured. Between December 2008 and early 2015, on the People's Liberation Army Navy's (PLAN) first long-range multi-year deployment, over 16,000 PLAN sailors as well as 1,300 marines and special operations forces personnel served in the Gulf of Aden (*China Daily*, February 12). While PLAN antipiracy taskforces interface and often cooperate with other naval forces in the region, their primary task is escorting commercial ships, roughly half Chinese-flagged. To date, approximately 6,000 commercial vessels have enjoyed PLAN escort. 20 PLAN taskforces have completed a total of over 800 convoys.

Deterring and occasionally fighting piracy off Somalia, the PLAN has accumulated unprecedented operational experience. Over 30 warships—half the PLAN's destroyers, frigates and helicopters; and nearly all its replenishment ships—have thus gained Far Seas experience (*China Daily*, February 12). PLAN maritime logistics systems have been tested, sometimes strenuously, by antipiracy deployments in unfamiliar waters that can last up to six months. Beyond the operations themselves, Gulf of Aden experience is a valuable resume booster for PLAN high-level officers and sailors seeking career promotion upon their return home.

Below the surface, where no pirates lurk and no publics can see, China is gaining particularly vital experience. India has expressed concern over China's deployment of conventional- and nuclear-powered submarines in conjunction with its surface antipiracy escort taskforces. Deputy Chief of Naval Operations Vice Admiral Jo Mulloy testified recently that Chinese submarines had, to date, "three deployments in the Indian Ocean." [4] Apparently accompanying PLAN task forces at least part of the way, from December 13, 2013, to February 12, 2014, a *Shang*-class (Type 093) nuclear-powered attack submarine navigated near Sri Lanka and into the Persian Gulf, transiting the Strait of Malacca on the way to and from its home port on Hainan Island (*China Military Online*, September 24, 2014). A *Song*-class (Type 039) conventional submarine visited Colombo, Sri Lanka on September 7–14, 2014. [5] Finally, in an effort to combine submarine logistics with naval diplomacy, a submarine tender *Changxingdao* generated fresh water to alleviate a

shortage in the Maldives capital of Male in December 2014, an expensive but politically visible way to provide such aid (*Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, December 8, 2014).

Submarines aside, the marginal "hard" benefits to the PLAN, particularly insights gained from China's first institutionalized distant seas naval operations, may be diminishing slightly as operations enter their seventh year. But China has intensified in both sophistication and geography the diplomatic, or "soft," side of its antipiracy activities.

Somali piracy has provided navies, including the PLAN, with strong justification for establishing semi-regular access points for logistical antipiracy support. Even if these arrangements have only been informally institutionalized, they have nonetheless established routine interactions among the PLAN and dozens of foreign navies and governments. In the name of antipiracy, the PLAN has docked in foreign countries over 120 times in the past seventy-five months. Half of all Chinese antipiracy port calls have officially been for ship and personnel replenishment. Stops in Djibouti, Oman, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Yemen for replenishment and overhaul, for instance, have accounted for roughly half of all PLAN antipiracy port calls. China's navy has also made return stops to countries including South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and the United Arab Emirates. The other half have primarily been friendly visits, though often the PLAN engages in both replenishment and diplomacy during a single stop.

Interestingly, there is a strong correlation between where Chinese antipiracy warships have docked ashore and Chinese-funded port development projects in South Asia, the Middle East and Africa. Some examples of Chinese foreign port construction according to Chinese and international media reports include Kenya's Lamu, Myanmar's Kyaukphyu, Pakistan's Karachi, Sri Lanka's Hambantota, Sri Lanka's Colombo and Namibia's Walvis Bay. Chinese firms are reportedly engaged in maritime port construction in many countries the PLAN has called on during antipiracy operations. Such developments could intensify as part of Chinese President Xi Jinping's New Silk Road, or "One Belt, One Road" initiative, an ambitious, two-pronged framework for economic engagement between China and other states along the continental Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century

Maritime Silk Road (see [China Brief](#), March 19).

As has been documented extensively, China is adamant that its overseas access points, whether used for antipiracy or other security initiatives, are not tantamount to overseas military bases in the traditional Western sense. At a minimum, while commercial interests may explain much of the spike in China's overseas port construction projects, increasingly fixed access points serve as useful platforms for military diplomacy. If China chooses to follow previous great navies in robust blue water development, their enhancement into more capable facilities will be essential.

In addition, China has repeatedly leveraged the flexibility of having sustained distant sea antipiracy operations to contribute to other security initiatives. In March 2011, a frigate from the 7th escort taskforce helped with the evacuation of Chinese citizens from Libya. A ship serving in the PLAN's 16th taskforce was temporarily excused from antipiracy operations to help escort Danish and Norwegian ships transporting chemical weapons out of Syria. Last year, the 17th escort taskforce departed China ten days early to assist the search party in the aftermath of Malaysian Airlines Flight 370's disappearance off Malaysia. Most recently, all three vessels from the 19th taskforce ceased escort operations entirely for 109 hours to evacuate Chinese citizens, and at least ten foreign countries, from Yemen (see [China Brief](#), April 3). In short, well into year seven, Beijing's multiyear presence off Somalia affords it a multitude of chances to contribute to widely recognized international maritime security initiatives. The international community should welcome such positive contributions.

Antipiracy and China's Global Naval Presence

These experiences make the eventual end of international antipiracy efforts off Somalia all the more intriguing for China. Multinational antipiracy efforts led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union, for instance, are scheduled to run at least through December 2016. While there is no public consensus on when various navies will withdraw from the region, the cross-national mission is arguably becoming less valuable. Multilateral naval patrols and escorts, as opposed to other approaches such as land-based strikes against pirate bases, has been and remains an expensive approach with little

execution or long-term impact. Oceans Beyond Piracy estimates that in 2013 the international community spent over \$3 billion on antipiracy, over \$130 million for every attack thwarted. Naval operations presumably represent a large subcomponent of this aggregate estimate. Much debate exists on whether the naval missions CTF 151 (China's affiliation), NATO's Ocean Shield and EUNAVFOR ("the big three") will terminate or scale back operations after 2016, given the decline in successful attacks by pirates.

Logistical requirements for antipiracy off Somalia likewise confront Chinese decision-makers. The Gulf of Aden is over 4,000 nautical miles from China's eastern coast and takes between 10 and 14 days for escort taskforces to sail there, meaning a round-trip voyage requires nearly a month. Beijing's most pressing, challenging naval requirements remain centered on the East and South China Seas.

Yet with interests and capabilities expanding overall, China will almost certainly play new roles in future maritime antipiracy. While Somali buccaneers have inspired the majority of antipiracy dialogues over the past decade, piracy has been rising steadily in other regions, including Africa's opposite coast. Following the international community's protracted fight in the Gulf of Aden, the Gulf of Guinea has emerged as the world's most pirate-infested region. There pirates increasingly target drilling platforms, oil tankers and other high-value assets that often lack adequate protection. The Gulf of Guinea is further away from China than Aden. Nonetheless, Chinese commercial flows around West Africa, with local and international partners, are steadily increasing. Moreover, Chinese citizens have been attacked several times in the past five years in the Gulf of Guinea (see [China Brief](#), January 9).

Given China and Gulf of Guinea coastal states' sovereignty sensitivities, and the latter's "limited capacity and coordination problems," Chinese assistance toward fighting piracy in the Gulf of Guinea will likely involve "behind the scenes" support. The extent of Chinese involvement is contingent on whether the intensity of piracy persists, support from international law—or at least China's interpretation thereof—and regional states' explicit requests. A specific limitation: straightjacketed by Beijing's cautious policies, PLAN task forces currently

lack the authority to prosecute pirates, and would need to transfer them rapidly to “a proper receiving country.” [6] Initially, Beijing will likely focus on providing aid, equipment and training rather than focusing on deploying Chinese antipiracy taskforces the way it did in Aden. A possible bellwether: in May–June 2014, Chinese warships completing Aden duties sailed to Cameroon, Nigeria and Namibia for bilateral exercises. Beijing has already provided Gulf of Guinea nations with substantial military assistance, training, bilateral/joint exercise, and ships. China has already held bilateral discussions with Russia concerning Gulf of Guinea security. Sr. Col. Zhou Bo, SHADE liaison for task forces 3–17 and now managing the PLA’s non-traditional security portfolio, sees ample room for Sino-American cooperation in this regard. [7]

China may be willing to increase its support to regional actors such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), although its direct role in terms of joint operations and local training remains lesser than many Western states. For instance, in early 2015 Nigeria received a former U.S. Coast Guard ship to address regional security challenges. Whatever its limitations in providing antipiracy ships and services, Beijing could presumably help lead the charge in offering crucial auxiliary support such as antipiracy training and, more broadly, overall investment and aid to the region.

Conclusion

In terms of “hard” naval benefits, PLAN antipiracy operations have sharpened sailors’ skills in operating their most advanced vessels and the equipment, systems and command structures needed for comprehensive naval modernization. Operational lessons learned further missions at home and abroad. On the “soft” side, antipiracy diplomacy is an important component of China’s overall military diplomatic rise, which also has included extensive Far Seas naval engagement to various Western countries and participation in U.S.-hosted RIMPAC exercises off Hawaii in recent years. Beyond supporting frequent diplomatic capital building activities, it has helped Beijing secure various access points for its navy on three continents.

As a rising naval power with high ambitions and external expectations, China will presumably look for additional

ways to maintain a regular or semi-regular naval security presence in the Far Seas even after the conclusion of Somali antipiracy. The Gulf of Guinea and other insecure maritime areas offer potential platforms for doing so. While not on the same scale as Gulf of Aden antipiracy, these new frontiers are likely to offer fresh challenges and opportunities for China to safeguard its interests. How it addresses them will offer new windows into its growing hard and soft power.

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Notes

1. For detailed analysis, see Andrew S. Erickson and Austin M. Strange, *China in the Gulf of Aden: A Review*, Jamestown Occasional Paper (Washington, DC: Jamestown Foundation, forthcoming 30 April 2015).
2. Sr. Col. Zhou Bo, “Security of SLOCs and International Cooperation,” presentation at

“ASEAN Regional Forum Seminar on SLOC Security,” Beijing, December 8, 2014.

3. China’s antipiracy mission is not affiliated with any of the aforementioned “big three” multilateral efforts, but does coordinate with them as necessary.
4. House Armed Services Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee Hearing on President Obama’s Fiscal 2016 Budget Request for Navy Seapower, February 25, 2015.
5. Cdr. Gurpreet Khurana, Cdr. Kapil Narula and Asha Devi, “[PLA Navy Submarine Visits Sri Lanka](#),” *Making Waves*, Vol. 19, No. 9.2 (New Delhi: National Maritime Foundation, September 30, 2014), 37.
6. CDR Liu Xiaobo, legal advisor for Gulf of Aden antipiracy mission, “PLAN Escort Mission,” presentation at “ASEAN Regional Forum Seminar on SLOC Security,” Beijing, December 8, 2014.
7. Sr. Col. Zhou Bo.

PLA Special Operations Forces: Organizations, Missions and Training

By Dennis J. Blasko

People’s Liberation Army (PLA) special operations forces (SOF) are considered among the “new type” units receiving priority for development ([Information Office of the State Council](#), April 16, 2013). With their roots in pre-existing reconnaissance units, the first PLA SOF units were formed after the 1991 Persian Gulf War ([Guangming Online](#), February 24, 2012). By the end of the 1990s, each of the seven military regions was assessed to command an Army SOF or special reconnaissance group (*dadui*) with about 1,000 personnel. [1] Over the following 15 years, these units were expanded, additional Army SOF units formed (including a few small units composed of women), and new SOF units established in

the Navy, the Air Force and the Second Artillery ([PLA Daily](#), January 30).

No national-level special operations headquarters has been created to oversee all SOF activities, and no dedicated fleet of strategic, special-mission SOF delivery and support aircraft or ships is known to exist. Instead of being considered national-level strategic assets, most, if not all PLA SOF units, are commanded by operational or tactical headquarters. Though small numbers of the most capable SOF units may be tasked with a limited number of strategic-level missions deep behind enemy lines, the majority of PLA SOF operations would likely be conducted relatively close to and in support of larger conventional units in what most often resemble commando or reconnaissance missions.

At present, the total number of SOF personnel is estimated to range from 20,000 to 30,000 personnel, or about one percent of the entire PLA. Chinese SOF units are composed of experienced officers and noncommissioned officers, but also are assigned new conscripts/recruits (i.e., privates) out of basic training and newly commissioned lieutenants just graduated from academies, including a Special Operations Academy in Guangzhou.

Organizations

The Army is assessed to control nine SOF brigades (estimated with 2,000–3,000 personnel each) and two SOF regiments (up to 2,000 personnel each) assigned to army-level headquarters in nine group armies and two military districts. [2] Over roughly the last three years, all but one of the original seven Army SOF groups have been expanded to brigade size and assigned to group army headquarters: in the 38th, 21st, 26th, 31st, 42nd and 13th Group Armies. The one exception is the 39th Group Army’s SOF Regiment, which continues to be reported in the Chinese media as a regiment ([PLA Daily](#), October 23, 2013). The Xinjiang Military District commands an SOF brigade, which recently was expanded from a group ([PLA Daily](#), September 19, 2014). The Tibet Military District has a subordinate SOF regiment ([PLA Daily](#), June 19, 2014). Recently, at least one former infantry division (in the 16th Group Army) and one infantry brigade (in the 12th Group Army) have been transformed into two new SOF brigades and remained subordinate to their group

army headquarters (*PLA Daily*, January 6, 2014; *CCTV-7*, July 3, 2014). An unknown number of smaller SOF units (*fendui*, likely companies or platoons) have been formed in some infantry and armored divisions and brigades (*PLA Daily*, January 11; *China News*, August 26, 2014).

In total, half of the PLA's 18 group armies and the two most sensitive military districts have organic SOF units (not including smaller SOF units found in some divisions and brigades). This percentage may rise as new SOF units are created or transformed from existing units or if existing group armies are disbanded in upcoming force reductions. At the same time, it seems likely that additional SOF companies or platoons will be formed in more divisions and brigades.

The Navy has an SOF regiment, located in Sanya, assigned to the South Sea Fleet (SSF) and smaller SOF units in each of its two Marine brigades, also in the SSF (*PLA Daily*, January 23, 2013; *PLA Daily*, June 26, 2014). Navy SOF personnel have deployed with every task force sent to the Gulf of Aden to conduct escort missions since 2008. The Air Force's 15th Airborne Army has a subordinate SOF regiment, which includes the "Thor" Commando unit (*PLA Daily*, January 27). The Second Artillery has an SOF unit (likely a group or regiment) that in peacetime serves primarily as a Blue Force unit in exercises (*PLA Daily*, February 12, 2014).

Army SOF units are supported mainly by Army Aviation (helicopter) units, amounting to about 710 airframes for the entire Army. [3] Amphibious ship and helicopter units in the Navy support Navy and Marine SOF units. Air Force SOF units have greater access to the limited number of long-range transport aircraft in the PLA for parachute operations than the other services. All parachute-qualified personnel appear to receive their initial training on Y-5 biplanes, which also may be used for SOF insertion missions.

SOF units are equipped with the most modern weapons and equipment in the PLA for experimentation and operations, including advanced electronics and communications, unmanned aerial vehicles, night vision and target designators as well as an array of light vehicles, including ultra-light aircraft. Many SOF units are described as "triphibious," capable of being inserted by air, land and sea (surface and subsurface).

Missions

According to PLA doctrine, special operations are considered one link in system of systems operations to be integrated with the other important campaign activities of information warfare, firepower assault, maneuver and psychological warfare. Special operations seek to create favorable conditions for main force units by raiding vital enemy areas, paralyzing enemy operational systems, reducing enemy operational capabilities, as well as interfering, delaying and disrupting enemy operational activities. SOF units are tasked mainly to conduct special reconnaissance, raids, sabotage, harassment, hostage rescue and decapitation missions. [4] Of note, despite its early history as a guerilla organization, the PLA does not include the execution or support of protracted, unconventional warfare behind enemy lines among the types of campaigns the PLA may be assigned.

Though elements within PLA SOF units are capable of executing anti-terrorist missions (hostage rescue, in particular), they likely would be employed in such tasks outside of China. Inside China, the Chinese civilian police or People's Armed Police take the lead in domestic anti-terrorist operations (*PLA Daily*, January 16). For domestic security missions, such as seen during the 2008 Olympics games, the PLA mainly provides capabilities not found in the Ministry of Public Security police forces and People's Armed Police, such as air defense and anti-chemical protection.

In operations against foreign enemies, most PLA SOF operations likely would be conducted to support tactical (division or brigade level) or operational (army or military region) commanders. Over the past decade, Army SOF units that previously were assessed to work for military region headquarters have been assigned to group armies, and most of the new SOF units that have been created are subordinate to army-level, division, or brigade headquarters, indicating that most PLA SOF missions are focused primarily at the operational and tactical levels of war. However, it is possible that small teams of the most experienced SOF personnel could be assigned to undertake a limited number of strategic level operations.

There are multiple reasons for this battlefield-level of focus. First, though PLA SOF units have numerous senior non-commissioned officers in their ranks, many SOF

personnel are two-year conscripts and lieutenants on their first assignments. With so many relatively inexperienced personnel assigned, most units are organized and trained to operate in squads, platoons and companies. Second, PLA SOF units are limited in the depths they can be inserted on a land battlefield by a lack of long-range fixed and rotary wing transport aircraft, a shortfall shared by all of the PLA. On the other hand, many SOF units have underwater capabilities and could be delivered near a distant shore by military surface vessels or submarines or civilian craft. But the farther beyond PLA front lines they go, the less operational, logistics and real-time intelligence support is available. As such, they would be limited in their operations to what they could carry during insertion (unless pre-positioned caches were available).

Training

The major focus of much Chinese media coverage about SOF training is on the physical toughness of SOF personnel, insertion methods, weapons qualification and close combat skills (*PLA Daily*, April 30, 2014). Individuals and small units frequently demonstrate their skills in internal PLA and international special operations competitions, where they display their technical competence (*Photo China*, July 24, 2014). PLA SOF personnel and units have participated in numerous training exercises with foreign countries, including militaries from Russia, Pakistan, Thailand, Indonesia and Jordan. [5] They have also sent personnel for training in Israel, Turkey, Estonia and Venezuela (*PLA Daily*, March 19, 2014).

SOF units frequently are integrated into combined arms and joint training exercises in conjunction with conventional force maneuver and assault, often conducting reconnaissance, raids or sabotage behind enemy lines after helicopter insertion. The Queshan Combined Arms Training Base has been designated specifically for special operations training (*PLA Daily*, October 10, 2014). However, employment of SOF units is still considered in the exploratory phase, and some infantry or armored commanders have been judged not to have used them properly in training (*Liaowang Dongfang Zhoukan*, June 6, 2013).

Conclusions

PLA SOF units have grown substantially since their beginnings some 20 years ago and are likely to continue to receive priority for development. Though now they are mainly focused on battlefield operations in support of conventional units, they have capabilities that can be used for strategic missions, provided they can be inserted and supported at longer ranges.

Most foreign analysts assume Chinese SOF would be used in Taiwan or other contingency operations outside of China. Small teams of highly skilled and experienced personnel (the elite of the Chinese SOF) could use commercial transportation to infiltrate targets outside of China prior to hostilities provided that weapons and equipment were pre-positioned beforehand. Other select teams, with equipment, could be inserted covertly using selected military air or naval vessels. Such operations have a greater chance of success in Southeast Asia and East Asia where overseas Chinese populations are present. However, there is little publicly available evidence that PLA SOF units currently are organized or trained to conduct unconventional warfare activities outside of China behind enemy lines for extended periods of time.

PLA SOF units would be greatly aided if dedicated long-range transport and combat aircraft were developed to support their operations. If not available already, PLA SOF units must have access to detailed, real-time intelligence tailored to fit the needs of each individual mission. Though Chinese SOF personnel purport they do “not know rest, difficulty, suffering, hunger and fatigue,” most of these troops probably would prefer *not* to be sent on a one-way mission (*People’s Daily*, September 8, 2009).

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Notes

1. Dennis J. Blasko, “PLA Ground Forces: Moving Toward a Smaller, More Rapidly Deployable, Modern Combined Arms Force,” in *The People’s Liberation Army as Organization*, eds. James C. Mulvenon and Andrew N. D. Yang, Conference Proceedings published by RAND, 2002, p. 325.

2. James Hackett (ed.), *The Military Balance 2015*, London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2015, pp. 238 and 244, holds a tenth SOF brigade subordinate to the 54th Group Army.
3. James Hackett (ed.), *The Military Balance 2015*, p. 239.
4. Zhang Yuliang (ed.), 战役学 [The Science of Military Campaigns] Beijing: National Defense University Press, 2006, pp. 151 and 187–192; [China News](#), March 10, 2014. *The Science of Military Campaigns* also includes special technical warfare, such as attacks on computer systems and other forms of electronic and psychological warfare, as a basic type of campaign special operations; however, other specialized units in the PLA, not SOF units, appear to have been assigned these actions as their primary mission.
5. Dennis J. Blasko, “People’s Liberation Army and People’s Armed Police Ground Exercises With Foreign Forces, 2002–2009,” in *The PLA at Home and Abroad*, eds. Roy Kamphausen, David Lai, and Andrew Scobell, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, June 2010, pp. 427–28.

The Top Trends in China’s Military Diplomacy

By Kenneth Allen

Global outreach is the inevitable course for China’s forces to deal with various threats and to fulfill multiple tasks in the process of realizing the “Chinese Dream” and a strong military. China’s armed forces accelerated their global interactions in 2013. Chinese forces have appeared in many corners of the world, including North America and Oceania, the Pacific and the Atlantic. China has deployed more than 10,000 personnel—an unprecedented number—to participate in combined drills, international peacekeeping, naval escorts, humanitarian aid and other non-war operations.

Media from home and abroad have commented that 2013 was the Chinese military’s most active year ever in the world arena. China’s forces went further and more frequently into the world and engaged in international affairs more thoroughly, demonstrating their increasing maturity and confidence. China wants to show the world its tremendous achievements in national defense modernization, its sincere wish to develop friendship and deepen cooperation with forces around the world, and its determination to maintain its national interests and world peace.

—China Armed Forces [1]

Introduction

This article identifies the top trends and events concerning China’s People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA) military diplomacy. [2]

The PLA has clearly expanded its involvement in international humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) and military operations other than war (MOOTW) activities, such as the search for the missing Malaysian airliner (MH370) and deployment of the *Peace Ark* hospital ship, which are linked to Chinese President Xi Jinping’s “China Dream” concept that includes making China the “world’s dominant power” and “a stronger nation with a strong military.” As such, the PLA Navy (PLAN) is spending longer and more complex deployments at sea, including port calls by the antipiracy escort task forces and other task forces around the world, while the Army, Navy and Air Force are definitely learning more about every aspect of engaging in warfare from their interaction with foreign militaries. This includes more realistic bilateral and multilateral combined exercises and competitions with less scripted scenarios. One of the most significant PLAN events involved deploying a type-039 (Song-class) conventional submarine to the Gulf of Aden in September 2014 to support the 18th escort task force and to visit Sri Lanka, which represented the first port call abroad by a submarine.

In addition to combined exercises and training events, the PLA Army (PLAA) (ground forces) and PLA Air Force (PLAAF) participated in separate multilateral tank and aircraft competitions in Russia in 2014.

The PLA is also continuing its involvement in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKOs), including leading training in China and attending training in other countries. During 2014, these activities involved sending medical personnel to countries affected by Ebola and deploying the first infantry unit abroad (South Sudan).

In addition, the PLA has definitely increased its transparency, even though there are still several opaque areas, especially concerning weapon systems and equipment research, development and acquisition (RD&A). One of the common PLA themes in 2014 concerning transparency was that the PLA was becoming more open and confident as a result of engaging in more combined-arms, joint and combined exercises, which has not helped enhance China's deterrence capabilities.

In October 2014, the General Staff Department (GSD) issued a document detailing 40 problems with current exercises, based on an assessment of performance in routine exercises and combined drills with foreign militaries ([Xinhua](#), October 12, 2014). The challenges include personnel problems, as well as current training methods and standards. The report states that, if the problems are not rectified, the PLA's ability to fight and win will surely be hindered.

Looking forward, the PLA will likely continue to expand the scope of its global involvement under President Xi, thereby slowly becoming more confident and preparing for future conflict at or beyond its borders.

Trends in Senior PLA Leader Visits Abroad and Hosted Visits in China

The following bullets identify the key themes concerning travel abroad by senior PLA leaders and their hosted visits in Beijing; however, there are always exceptions.

- Other than the defense minister and the Chief of the General Staff (COGS), all other senior PLA leaders are limited by regulation to one trip abroad per year; however, not every leader takes advantage of the opportunity
- Senior PLA leaders rarely, if ever, visit the same country twice, except to attend conferences
- Senior PLA leaders rarely, if ever, host the

same foreign military leader twice

- The defense minister does not necessarily host or meet with all of his counterparts, who are often hosted by one of the Central Military Commission (CMC) vice chairmen
- There are clear time patterns for PLA leader visits abroad and hosted visits.

Strategic Relations

In the early 1990s, China began establishing a three-tiered structure for strategic relations—strategic partnerships, strategic dialogues and strategic consultations—with certain countries or regions to discuss key issues such as non-proliferation, counter-terrorism and bilateral military and security cooperation (*PRC 2010 Defense White Paper*, 2010). Today, China has strategic relations with 50 countries. Several of the current strategic relationships have evolved over a period of years from lower-level relationships to strategic relationships. As a general rule, the President normally attends the opening meeting, but the Premier, one of the vice premiers or a senior military leader represents China at the remaining meetings.

Military Operations other than War

Since the 18th Party Congress, the PLA has been involved in three specific types of Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) abroad, including PLAN anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden, helping escort chemical weapons out of Syria and searching for the missing Malaysian Airlines Flight MH370.

PLA Navy Anti-Piracy Escort Operations in the Gulf of Aden

One of the most visible MOOTW activities began in December 2008, when the PLAN deployed its first of 19 three-vessel escort task forces (ETF) to date to the Gulf of Aden. [3] Altogether, 30 different vessels from all three fleets (North Sea, East Sea and South Sea) have been involved, including destroyers, frigates and comprehensive supply ships, along with helicopters, medical personnel and a growing number of PLAN special forces ([China News](#), February 5, 2010; [Sina News](#), January 31, 2010; [China Daily](#), April 3, 2009). [4]

Non-ETF Naval Port Calls

As of May 2014, guided missile destroyers had paid more than 50 port calls to over 30 countries (*PLA Daily*, June 7, 2014). Furthermore, from 2005 through October 2013, PLAN vessels visited more than 50 countries (*PLA Daily*, October 25, 2013). Over the past few years, in addition to port calls by 18 ETFs, the PLAN has conducted several task force port calls, which can be organized into the following three categories: task force port calls; *Zhenghe* training vessel port calls; and *Peace Ark* hospital ship port calls.

Foreign Naval Task Force Visits to China

Since China began to open up to foreign naval vessel visits in 2002, about 25 different countries, led by the United States, have conducted about 100 port calls in either Shanghai, Qingdao or Zhanjiang. The most visits in any single year was 2009, when the PLAN celebrated its 60th anniversary in April. At that time, 21 vessels from 14 countries visited Qingdao to celebrate the anniversary and participate in the fleet review (*Xinhua*, April 23, 2009). [5]

Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) 2014

During 2014, the PLAN hosted the WPNS-2014, which was organized into two parts (*China Military Online*, January 17, 2014; *China Military Online*, April 23, 2014; *China Military Online*, April 15, 2014; *China Military Online*, April 15, 2014). The first was a workshop at the Naval Command College in Nanjing, which included 60 representatives from 20 member countries. The second part was the two-day 14th biennial symposium held in Qingdao. Naval leaders and representatives from 25 countries attended the closing ceremony. The symposium was held in conjunction with a multinational maritime exercise (MMEx) to commemorate the PLAN's 65th anniversary. [6]

Bilateral and Multilateral Combined Exercises

In 2002, the PLA began conducting bilateral and multilateral combined (joint) exercises with other countries. From 2002 through the end of 2012, it held 28 combined exercises and 34 combined training events with 31 countries (PRC 2012 *Defense White Paper*,

2010). Since the 18th Party Congress, the PLA has significantly increased the number of combined events each year. For example, during 2014, it conducted 31 bilateral or multilateral combined exercises or training events, including RIMPAC-2014 (*China Military Online*, December 17, 2014).

Besides multi-service combined exercises within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the PLAA, PLAN and PLAAF have been expanding to individual service training events and exercises outside the SCO. The most significant multilateral events included the PLAAF's and PLAA's participation in Russia's Aviadarts-2014 and Tank Biathlon-2014 competitions, respectively. Note that the PLA's Second Artillery Force has never been involved in any combined exercises.

Education and Academic Exchanges

The PLA's education and academic exchanges basically fall into the following categories: academic institution leader visits; cadet and professional military education student delegation visits; hosting foreign military personnel for courses individually, in groups from a single country or from multiple countries; and individual PLA officers studying abroad. Although the PLA has published some data in its biennial *Defense White Paper*, finding specifics on the exchanges is difficult.

The PLA's National Defense University (NDU) has a robust exchange program with multiple countries (*PLA Daily*, May 12, 2014). To date, NDU has a program of continuing formal international relations with seven countries, including the United States, Australia and South Korea. Each year, NDU hosts about 100 foreign groups and organizes visits abroad to attend international conferences. In September 2014, NDU's College of Defense Studies awarded the first Master's in Military Science degrees to 61 foreign military students (*China Military Online*, September 9, 2014). The two-year program was initiated in 2012.

In addition, various PLA academic institutions have begun holding "cadet week" events involving cadets from multiple countries.

Xiangshan Forum

In 2006, the China Association of Military Science (CAMS), which is subordinate to the PLA Academy of Military Science (AMS), held the first biennial Xiangshan Forum in Beijing ([China Military Online](#), November 21, 2014). [7] The fifth forum, which was held in November 2014 and was raised from a Track 2.0 to Track 1.5 event, included representatives from 57 countries, including more than 20 government officials at or above deputy defense minister level. Several of the foreign leaders held separate meetings with Defense Minister Chang Wanquan and other PLA leaders in conjunction with the forum. The upgrade was apparently intended to compete with the annual Shangri-la Dialogue in Singapore and will also be held annually.

Exchanges with the Foreign Military Attaché Corps and Observers

Since 1988, the Beijing Military Attaché Corps (BMAC) has grown from 44 to 108 countries. [8] As the PLA becomes more transparent, it has gradually increased BMAC access to units and exercises. For example, in November 2013, MND hosted a total of 65 military attachés from 52 countries together with the military observers from six countries to observe the “Queshan Vanguard-2013” exercise ([China Military Online](#), November 6, 2013). In addition, about 270 foreign officer students/cadets from three military academic institutions attended as observers.

Comparison to U.S. Military

There is no doubt that the PLA has expanded its foreign relations program across the board and is clearly learning how to improve its capabilities; however, the PLA's program pales in comparison to the U.S. military's foreign relations program and should be kept in perspective. For example, each year U.S. Pacific Command participates in more than 1,500 exercises and other engagement activities with foreign military forces ([Global Security](#)). The U.S. Navy component is involved in 700 training events and 170 exercises each year in the Asia-Pacific region ([U.S. Navy](#), May 19, 2014).

Policy Implications for China

As China expands its military diplomacy around the world, it is learning how to deploy and support its forces for longer periods and to conduct multiple tasks at the same time. It is definitely becoming more adept at HA/DR activities, but still has several shortfalls. For example, the PLA does not yet have enough strategic airlift to move large amounts of its forces around or to help Libya evacuate Chinese from areas of conflict. As the PLA grows in its strength, confidence and capabilities, the Chinese public will also expect more from it, especially in areas such as Africa and the Middle East. Should there be civil unrest in countries where an increasingly large number of Chinese are living and working, the PLA will most likely become more actively involved in helping to evacuate them to safety.

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Notes

1. Luo Zheng, “Highlights of China's Military Diplomacy,” *China Armed Forces*, No. 25, Vol. 1, 28 February 2014, p. 16.
2. For more details, see Ken Allen and Philip Saunders, *PLA Foreign Relations under Xi Jinping: Continuity and/or Change?* (National Defense University, upcoming spring 2015).
3. Whereas Western English-language articles use “escort task force,” China's English-language articles from sources such as *Xinhua*, *China Armed Forces* and *China Military Online* use “escort

taskforce.” An official brochure published by the PRC’s International Communication Bureau of the Ministry of National Defense (国防部国际传播局) entitled *Escort Operations of the Chinese PLA Navy* use “convoy task force” and the acronym CTF. For purposes of this paper, “escort task force” and ETF will be used.

4. These special forces are organized into regiment-level *dadui* (大队) and are separate from the PLAN’s Marine Corps.
5. The 14 countries included Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, France, India, Mexico, New Zealand, Pakistan, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, and the United States.
6. Wang Jingguo, “Maritime Cooperation 2014” (海上合作-2014), *China Armed Forces*, No. 27, Vol.3, 2014, p. 60-65.
7. As noted on the screen in the photo, the English name during the 5th Xiangshan Forum was identified as the China Association for Military Science and the acronym was identified as CAMS; however, various official Chinese English-language articles from Xinhua and *China Military Online* identified it as the China Military Sciences Society and China Military Science Society (CMSS) and the China Society of Military Science (CSMS). No official website was found for the organization.
8. Information about the number of attaché offices in 1988 comes from the files of Ken Allen, who was assigned to the U.S. Defense Attaché office in Beijing at the time. The current number is based on correspondence with the Beijing Military Attaché Corps (BMAC).

Game Change in the Western Pacific Region and R.O.C.’s Self-Defense Effort

By Andrew Nien-dzu Yang

One of the key factors for the Obama administration to pursue in its “Rebalance to Asia” policy is to deal with current and potential security challenges posed by North Korean nuclear and missile threats. Another factor is Chinese expansion of air and naval activities, both in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, which could add tension and escalation in areas of existing territorial disputes among claimants. U.S. efforts to work with major allies in Northeast Asia are intended to shore up deterrence capabilities in the wake of emerging anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) threats. Taiwan inevitably is facing challenges and threats in the course of the military and security game change in Northeast Asia. In addition, Taiwan’s challenges and threats are more imminent than those of U.S. allies in the region.

First, although peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait have been enhanced as a result of peaceful engagement between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, the military threat from mainland China has remained a daily reality, as Beijing still holds the option to employ the use of force to achieve political unification.

Second, a cross-strait military imbalance has been created as a result of increasingly rapid military modernization by mainland China. Taiwan’s current defense posture, compounded by financial constraints, will soon become obsolete in terms of facing the People’s Republic of China’s (PRC) imminent military threats.

Taiwan’s Efforts in Coping with Security Challenges

The PRC’s announcement of an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea in November 2013 poses an immediate security challenge to Taiwan’s current self-defense posture, as it overlaps the Taiwanese ADIZ (TADIZ) by 23,000 square kilometers and extends very close to Taiwanese territorial waters (12 nautical miles) off the northern portion of the island. The Taiwanese government has put forward a modest protest to the mainland and has urged all parties involved

to pursue peaceful resolution of the issue.

Economically, Taiwan's survival is closely linked to the sea. Its international trade, as well as import of energy and agricultural products, is dependent on sea lanes of communication (SLOC). Consequently, the ability to control the air and waters surrounding Taiwan is necessarily an integral part of Taiwan's defense planning. According to the Republic of China's (ROC) *2013 Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR), the ROC's military strategy is to pursue "resolute and credible" self-defense in order to deter and defeat military threats. This military strategy is comprised of five elements:

- 1. Defend territory.** Bearing in mind that the PRC's initial attack would be intended to create considerable damage, the ROC's military strategy is to maximize a resilient defense in holding off the strike force until international support arrives. The goal is to buy time for external support in the course of demonstrating both military and political resolve.
- 2. Dissuade the enemy from invading.** The armed forces will demonstrate capability to inflict sufficient casualties on an opponent so as to deter them from any attempt to launch an amphibious attack operation. Such a capacity will require enhancing joint operational capability and fielding well-trained and well-equipped forces.
- 3. Maintain air and sea lines of communications.** Given that Taiwan's survival depends on trade and imports, preservation of air lines of communication and sea lines of communication is considered indispensable. Therefore, the armed forces must be able to counter any attempt at isolating the island.
- 4. Delay any enemy approach to Taiwan Island.** Should deterrence fail, the armed forces must strive to defeat the enemy in transit across the strait through multilayered interdiction with air and naval forces. The goal is to trade space to buy time by creating attrition in the invading force.
- 5. Deny the enemy lodgments ashore.** Should

interdiction fail to defeat an enemy invasion, the ground forces are to engage in defense-in-depth while also attacking any beachhead.

The ideal self-defense objectives, however, impose certain requirements on the ROC armed forces.

First, it requires considerably improved force planning. In order to fend off a surprise attack, it is essential to create "innovative and asymmetric" capabilities that exploit the enemy's weaknesses while minimizing Taiwan's own. Second, it requires improved joint operation among services. Third, it requires improved integration of weapon systems to reduce the decision cycle. Fourth, it requires improved force protection by means of hardening key facilities and infrastructure to support sustained defensive operations. These force modernization requirements and other self-defense enhancement measures are key priorities for ROC defense planners. Nevertheless, the ideas and requirements highlighted by the 2013 QDR should be jointly discussed by both the U.S. and Taiwan militaries, based on the *Taiwan Relations Act*, in order to identify the most feasible and adequate defensive measures and services not only for Taiwan's self-defense but also providing Taiwan its rightful means to share the responsibility of protecting peace and security in the Western Pacific region.

Reset U.S.-Taiwan Defense Dialogue to Reinforce U.S. Rebalance to Asia

As discussed above, Taiwan and the United States have a shared common concern regarding the strategic and security game change in the Western Pacific region, particularly placing emphasis on the PRC's increasing naval and air power projection in East China Sea. Provocation and tension escalation is on the rise following the Chinese announcement of its ADIZ over the disputed islands, causing a strong reaction from Japan and South Korea.

Both the United States and Taiwan should seek a window of opportunity to reset U.S.-Taiwan defense communication to evaluate Taiwan's military transformation, based on the 2013 QDR, and at the same time identify areas of military and security cooperation to strengthen Taiwan's traditional share of the regional security responsibility, namely TADIZ, to fill the gap in the U.S. efforts to rebalance toward Asia. Therefore, the United States and

Taiwan should conduct military-to-military dialogue at three levels:

- 1. Policy-level dialogue.** It is important to bring about policy-level discussion to allow both the U.S. and Taiwanese top decision makers to develop common security and threat pictures and identify policy guidelines to cope with the changing security environment and deal with potential threats. This kind of discussion will assist both sides to improve understanding of each other's military postures in the region and identify areas of mutual cooperation to enhance peace and security.
- 2. Planning-level dialogue.** The United States and Taiwan should conduct constructive discussion based on the 2013 QDR to attain a more realistic approach in the course of conducting military transformation. The discussion also will provide an opportunity for the U.S. Department of Defense to evaluate Taiwan's defense needs and start early planning on U.S. assistance if required. This will help Taiwan improve its resource allocation and budgeting and will convince the Taiwanese government to allocate more funding.
- 3. Service-level dialogue.** Based on the intention to improve joint operation among services and better integration of weapon systems to reduce the decision cycle, it is necessary to reset the current service discussion to focus on jointness among services, with particular emphasis on enhancing the Taiwanese role in the course of participating regional humanitarian rescue and disaster relief (HA/DR) operations to support Taiwan's contribution in enhancing regional stability and security.

The proposed three-level U.S.-Taiwan defense dialogue is a strictly legitimate activity in accordance with the *U.S. Taiwan Relations Act*. The U.S. Congress should encourage the executive branch of the U.S. government to approach Taiwan to start with agenda setting to cultivate Taiwan's role in enhancing regional peace and security and sharing responsibility in the course of assisting the U.S. Rebalance to Asia to cope with emerging challenges and

contingencies.

Efficiency and effectiveness of the U.S.-Taiwan three-level defense dialogue other key issues that need to be addressed. The substance and quality of the defense dialogue are not only the foundation to draw the road map of Taiwan's badly needed asymmetric/innovative self-defense capabilities, they are also a critical reference to support the Taiwanese Ministry of National Defense's position in the course of convincing the cabinet to allocate sufficient defense budget and receiving approval from the legislative Yuan in supporting resource funding for defense. Time is the most important strategic asset for Taiwan, as indicated by Hard ROC 2.0, a research report published by Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, in December 2014. Both the United States and Taiwan should expend more effort to take proactive measures to speed up more effective defense dialogues.

Both the United States and Taiwan should also pay attention to the need of enhancing the experience and professionalism of Taiwanese military officers and personnel. Innovative and asymmetrical defense capabilities are difficult to be realized unless there are qualified and capable officers and personnel available to fully implement new strategies. Measures and efforts should be adopted in the course of conducting defense dialogues to provide schemes and opportunities for young Taiwanese officers and personnel to receive training and education in learning advanced asymmetrical joint operation concepts, skills and even technologies. Such efforts should be considered critically important in the course of conducting dialogue especially at the policy level.

While there are many ways to enhance U.S.-Taiwan defense dialogue and cooperation, however, it really depends on whether both sides are on the same page and share common views of the security challenges in the Western Pacific region and both grasp opportunities to enhance defense cooperation to protect peace and stability in the region.

The views expressed by the author are entirely his own personal views, which do not representing the position of the R.O.C. government or affiliated institutions.

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