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In This Issue:

China has announced that it has finished expanding land features in the South China Sea. (Source:Xinhua)

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In a Fortnight

Dual-Use Ships and Facilities Send Mixed Message in South China Sea

By Peter Wood

In mid-June, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Lu Kang announced that Chinese land reclamation efforts would soon end, hopefully marking the end of tensions caused by China's rapid expansion of a number of land features in the South China Sea (MOFA, June 16). Although China's basic position has not changed–China claims it has undisputed sovereignty over the Nansha islands and other territory in the South China Sea–at the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs Zheng Zeguang noted that construction on the island, beyond defensive military functions, was primarily for civilian facilities (民事设施) (MOFA, June 25; *People's Daily*, May 27).

This framing of the islands and the facilities on them as being for civilian use, rather than purely military oriented, marks China's move to legitimize its territorial claims. Although, according to Foreign Minister Wang Yi, China is "offering [these facilities] as public goods," the dual-use nature of the facilities means China's

neighbours are unlikely to be mollified (China News Net, June 27). Much of this infrastructure, such as the 3-kilometer (km) long airstrip and harbor constructed at Fiery Cross Reef, is uncomfortably close to the shorelines, cities and military facilities of China's neighbors.

Further clarification is required about Chinese intentions in the South China and what constitutes civilian use in Chinese terminology. In recent months Beijing has undertaken a series of actions in the region, including the introduction of a draft law that will require civilian ships to adhere to military standards and be available for military use and the labeling of facilities built on reclaimed land in the South China Sea as civilian facilities.

Implicit Military Roles

The reframing of what are in essence military outposts fits into Chinese military tradition and strategic thought that includes the dual military-civilian use of ships, aircraft and facilities (军民融合) (*China Brief*, June 19). The boundary between civilian and military facilities is far from clear-cut. China's civilian maritime agency largely acts as part of the Chinese military, and in fact, regularly coordinates with them, as evidenced by a large 2012 joint exercise (International Online, October 19, 2012). The U.S. Department of Defense's (DoD) latest report to Congress on China's military power confirms China's preference for using civilian ships in a primary role, though backed by the Chinese Navy, and notes that China prefers to use its government-controlled, civilian maritime law-enforcement agencies in these disputes (DoD, April 7, pg. 44). This force includes over 200 ocean-going ships, and, as modern aircraft are added, will significant boost China's ability to monitor the South China Sea (*China Brief*, May 15). Civilian ships not directly part of a government agency have also been drafted before.

Civilian flagged fishing vessels have long served as surveillance and escalation control mechanisms for the People's Liberation Army (PLA), and in the future could be used as ISR (Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance) assets or in an anti-submarine role (*Defense News*, April 17, 2014). China even used an oil rig to help establish its territorial claims by moving *Haiyang Shiyou 981* into disputed waters between Chinese and Vietnamese claims last year, and again this year (see *China Brief*, June 19, 2014; *Huanqiu*, June 27). Recent policy, however, represents an expansion of this dual role.

According to the Chinese Ministry of Defense, the forthcoming *Technical Standards for New Civilian Ships to Implement National Defense Requirements* "makes it possible for China to turn the great potential of its civilian ships quickly into military strength for national defense and will considerably enhance the PLA's strategic projection capability and maritime support capability" (MOD, June 12). What makes this noteworthy is the way that such use of civilian ships has already been integrated into Chinese strategy.

Explicit Military Roles

In June, China held a series of exercises in the South China Sea that, though "unrelated to the present situation" involved responding to "enemy" aircraft and searching for submarines, one of the roles assigned to civilian ships and aircraft during times of crisis (Huanqiu, June 20). The opportunities for these types of missions will only increase due to the ongoing shift towards the maritime domain. As mentioned in the previous edition of *China Brief*, China's newest Defense White Paper includes expanded missions for China's Navy, including open seas protection missions (远海护卫) that would necessitate further coordination between civilian and military vessels (see *China Brief*, May 29; PLA Daily, May 27). Another authoritative text, *The Science of Campaigns*, even more explicitly outlines the role of civilian air and maritime assets in aiding amphibious assaults in a chapter entitled "Landing Campaigns." Reflecting this role, the PLA actively practices using civilian ferries and other ships for invasion scenarios involving Taiwan (*Janes*, June 16).

As China completes its reclamation work in the South China Seas, the dual-use of facilities, ships and aircraft will create problems for controlling the escalation of conflicts by putting other nation's navies in the position of confronting "civilian" vessels or conducting flights over "civilian" facilities. As the *National Military Strategy of the United States* notes, "Overlapping state and non-state violence, there exists an area of conflict where actors blend techniques, capabilities and resources to achieve their objectives" (*JCS*, July 1, pg. 4) The South China Sea is becoming just such an area.

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China's New Military Strategy: "Winning Informationized Local Wars"

By M. Taylor Fravel

In November 2013, the report of the Third Plenum of the 18th Party Congress hinted that China might adjust its national military strategy. The Plenum's *Decision* outlined the need to "strengthen military strategic guidance, and enrich and improve the military strategic guideline for the new period." **[1]** In May 2015, the new Defense White Paper, *China's Military Strategy* (中国的军事战略), reveals that China has now officially adjusted its military strategy. **[2]** This follows previous practice, such as when the 2004 strategic guideline was publicly confirmed in China's defense white paper published in December 2004.

In China's approach to military affairs, the military strategic guideline represents China's national military strategy. It provides authoritative guidance from the Central Military Commission (CMC) of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for all aspects of the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) combat-related activities. Since the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949, China has issued eight strategic guidelines (军事战略方针). The 2015 Defense White Paper reveals that a ninth change has occurred (Xinhua, May 26). The new guidelines shift the goal of China's military strategy from "winning local wars under the conditions of informationization" to "winning informationized local wars." The change in the strategic guidelines reflects an evolution of the existing strategy, not a dramatic departure.

Two key assessments serve as the basis for the change in strategy. First, what the Chinese military calls the "form of war" or conduct of warfare in a given period of time, has changed. The application of information technology in all aspects of military operations is even more prominent. Second, China faces increased threats and challenges in the maritime domain, including over disputed islands and maritime jurisdiction in waters close to China as well as through the growth of interests overseas in waters far from China.

This article reviews how the language of the white paper indicates that China has officially changed its military strategy. The first section introduces briefly China's concept of the strategic guideline. The second section reviews the language in the 2015 white paper to demonstrate that a change in the strategic guideline has occurred. The third section considers the timing of the adoption of the new strategy. It speculates that the change occurred sometime during the summer of 2014, as the Plenum's *Decision* was being implemented.

A Brief Primer on the Military Strategic Guidelines

In China, the military strategic guidelines serve as the basis for China's national military strategy. As Marshall Peng Dehuai stated in 1957, "the strategic guidelines affect army building, troop training and war preparations." **[3]** The PLA's glossary of military terms defines the military strategic guideline as the "core and collected embodiment of military strategy." **[4]** In particular, it contains "the program and principles for planning and guiding the overall situation of war in a given period." The scope of the guidelines includes both general principles about the whole process of military operations and specific principles for certain types of operations. **[5]** In short, the guidelines outline how China plans to wage its next war. **[6]**

Generally speaking, a strategic guideline has several components. The first is the identification of the strategic opponent (战略对手), based on an assessment of China's international environment and the perceived threats to China's national interests. The specific military threat posed by the strategic opponent determines the operational target (作战对象). The second component is the identification of the main strategic direction (主要战略方向), which refers to the geographic focal point for a potential conflict and provides the basis for prioritizing the allocation of resources and effort. The third component is the basis of preparations for military struggle (军事斗争准备的基点), which describes the characteristics of wars that China will need to fight in the future. This usually is based on an assessment of the form of war (战争形态) or the conduct of warfare at any point in time and the "pattern of operations" (作战样式) that should be conducted. The fourth component is the basic guiding thought (基本指导思想) for campaigns and operations, which refers to general operational principles for the PLA to use in future wars it might fight. **[7]**

The CMC changes the strategic guideline when it

concludes that one or more of these components have changed. When a strategic guideline changes, the change can be major, representing a dramatic departure from China's past strategy, or minor, representing an adjustment (调整) to an existing strategy. Since 1949, China has had eight unique military strategies or strategic guidelines. Those adopted in 1956, 1980 and 1993 represent major changes in China's military strategy, while the others have constituted minor changes. **[8]**

The two most likely sources of change are whether the CMC identifies new threats to China's national security or when it concludes that the form of war, and thus the basis of preparations for military struggle, has undergone an important shift. The 1993 guideline, the last major change in China's military strategy, was adopted based on the assessment that the Gulf War had demonstrated a fundamental change in the conduct of warfare. As former leader Jiang Zemin stated when introducing the guideline in January 1993, the PLA "must place the basis of preparations for military struggle on winning local wars that might occur under modern especially high-technology conditions." **[9]** The premise of this change was the conclusion that "as soon as a war breaks out, it is likely to be a high-technology confrontation." **[10]** In June 2004, China's military strategic guideline was "enriched and improved" (充实完善) based on a similar assessment of change in the basis of preparations for military struggle. As Jiang stated once again, "We must clearly place the basis of preparations for military struggle on winning local wars under the conditions of informationization." The key change was replacing "under modern especially high technology conditions" in the 1993 guideline with "under the conditions of informationization." **[11]** This change reflected the assessment that "the basic characteristic of high-technology warfare is informationized warfare. Informationized warfare will become the basic form of warfare in the 21st century." **[12]**

"Winning Informationized Local Wars"

A close analysis of the language in the 2015 Defense White Paper indicates that China's strategic guideline has been changed. The adjustment was based on two assessments summarized in the white paper: that the form of war has shifted to give even greater prominence to the application of information technology in all aspects of military operations and that China's national security environment presents new challenges, especially in the maritime domain. As the white paper states, the guideline is adjusted "according to the evolution of the form of war and the national security situation."

The first assessment is that the evolution in the form of war requires a change in the basis of preparations for military struggle. As the white paper notes, "the basis of preparations for military struggle will be placed on winning informationized local wars." This adjustment consisted of dropping only four characters from the 2004 guideline, changing from "winning local wars under the conditions of informatization" (打赢信息化条件下的局部战争) to "winning informationized local wars" (打赢信息化局部战争). As described by one researcher from the Academy of Military Science (AMS), the removal of the four characters indicates that "a qualitative change has occurred" (*Global Times*, May 26).

The white paper's section on China's national security situation summarizes the assessment that the form of war has changed. According to the white paper, "The development of the world revolution in military affairs is deepening" while "the form of war is accelerating its transformation to informationization." These changes included "clear trends" toward the development and use of long-range, precision, smart and unmanned weapons and equipment. Space and cyber domains are described as becoming the "commanding heights of strategic competition." From China's perspective, these trends, which have been occurring over the past decade, require a shift in the basis of preparations for military struggle that forms the key part of any strategic guideline. As one researcher from AMS explained, "information is no longer an important condition [in warfare] but now plays a dominant role, presenting new changes in the mechanisms for winning wars" (Global Times, May 26).

The white paper suggests that the basic guiding thought for operations, which is based on the assessment of the form of war, has also changed. In particular, the 2015 white paper states that "to implement the strategic guideline of active defense under the new situation, China's armed forces will create new basic operational thought" (创新基本作战思想). In the 2004 guideline, the basic guiding thought was "integrated operations, precision strikes to subdue the enemy" (整体作战，精打制敌). **[13]** The 2015 white paper appears to indicate

that this has been changed to "information dominance, precision strikes on strategic points, joint operations to gain victory" (信息主导, 精打要害, 联合制胜).

The second assessment is that China faces more pressing national security threats, especially in the maritime domain. As part of winning informationized local wars, the white paper stresses the role of "maritime military struggle" and "preparations for maritime military struggle" in such conflicts. In previous strategic guidelines, no domain was highlighted for particular emphasis, though the implication usually was the primacy of China's land-based conflicts and operations. In the new guideline, the emphasis on the maritime domain stems from two factors. The first is the intensification of disputes over territorial sovereignty and maritime jurisdiction in waters near China. The white paper concludes that the "maritime rights defense struggle will exist for a long time." The second is "the continuous expansion of China's national interests," in which overseas interests from energy and sea lines of communication to personnel and assets abroad "have become prominent." Although these are not new concerns for China, they have become more prominent in Chinese assessments when compared with the 2013 white paper.

Consistent with the increasing focus on the maritime domain, the white paper stated publicly for the first time that the Chinese navy's strategic concept "will gradually shift from 'near seas defense' (近岸防御) to the combination of 'near seas defense' and 'far seas protection' (远海护卫)". **[14]** Near seas defense emphasizes defending China's immediate maritime interests, especially in territorial and jurisdictional disputes in the seas directly adjacent to the Chinese mainland. Open seas protection emphasizes safeguarding China's expanding interests overseas, such as the protection of sea lines of communication and Chinese businesses abroad. **[15]**

One component of the guidelines that the white paper does not address explicitly is the primary strategic direction that defines the geographic focus of strategy. Typically, the primary strategic direction is not stated explicitly in openly published sources. In the 1993 and 2004 guidelines, the southeast or Taiwan was the primary strategic direction. In the latest guidelines, the primary strategic direction appears to be the same, but has been expanded to include the Western Pacific or what retired Lieutenant General Wang Hongguang has described as the "Taiwan Strait-Western Pacific" direction. **[16]** Whether the South China Sea has become part of primary strategic direction remains unclear. Although Wang notes such a link, he still writes that "Taiwan Strait is the primary strategic campaign direction" and the "nose of the ox." **[17]**

The Decision to Adjust the Strategy

Although the white paper confirms that the strategic guideline has been adjusted, it does not state exactly when the decision was made. Historically, the establishment or adjustment of a strategic guideline usually occurs during an enlarged meeting of the CMC. Such meetings are attended by heads of all leading departments on the general staff and under the CMC as well as the services and military regions. The new guideline is presented in a speech, which serves as the primary reference document for the strategy. These meetings, however, are rarely publicized, which makes it difficult to determine exactly when the decision to change the strategy was made. In 2004, for example, the change in strategy was introduced during an enlarged meeting of the CMC that was held in June. **[18]** Yet the first public reference to the strategy did not occur until the publication of the 2004 Defense White Paper six months later. Likewise, the speech about a new strategic guideline is not openly published when the guideline is introduced and sometimes never openly published at all. Jiang Zemin's speech introducing the 1993 guideline, for example, was not openly published until 2006.

Despite such uncertainty, it is likely that the CMC decided to adjust the strategic guideline in the summer of 2014. The phrase "winning informationized local wars" has appeared in the pages of the PLA's newspaper, the *Liberation Army Daily*, only fifty times. But thirty eight, or 75 percent, of these references have occurred since mid-August 2014. The term first appeared on August 21, 2014 in an article announcing a new document published by the General Staff Department on improving the level of realistic training. **[19]** During the same period, the formula for the 2004 strategy was used only thirteen times and never in connection with any official announcements or decisions taken by the CMC or the General Staff Department.

It is plausible that the guideline was adjusted in September 2014 for several reasons. As noted in the introduction, the Third Plenum in November 2013 announced the need to "strengthen military guidance, and enrich and improve the military strategic guideline." Shortly thereafter, a high-level leading group was likely established by the Central Military Commission to determine how to achieve this goal. In 1992, for example, a leading group to draft the 1993 strategic guideline was created and completed its work about two months before Jiang introduced the new guideline. **[20]**

Conclusion

In the past, the adoption or adjustment of a new strategic guideline represents the start, not the end, of strategic change for the PLA. Over the next few years, elements of the new strategy will be fleshed out. These will likely include the development of new operational doctrine, new criteria for training as well as new joint command structures at both the level of the CMC and in the military regions. Following earlier reforms, a further downsizing of the force will likely be used as the vehicle for the organizational change necessary to improve the ability to conduct joint operations. As Chinese Commander-in-Chief Xi Jinping stated in December 2013, "we have already explored the command system for joint operations, but problems have not been fundamentally resolved" (People's Daily Online, August 15, 2014.)

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Notes

1. Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu quanmian shenhua gaige ruogan zhongda wenti de jueding [Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Some Major Issues Concerning Comprehensively Deepening the Reform]," November 12, 2013.

2. *Zhongguo de junshi zhanlue* [China's Military Strategy] (Beijing: Zhonghua renmin gongheguo xinwen bangongshi, 2015), http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-05/26/c_1115408217.htm. All citations in this article are from the Chinese version. For the official English translation, see http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-05/26/content_20820628.htm.

3. Peng Dehuai, *Peng Dehuai junshi wenxuan* [Peng Dehuai's Selected Work on Military Affairs] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1988), p. 587.

4. Junshi kexue yuan, ed., *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun junyu* [Military Terminology of the Chinese People's Liberation Army] (Beijing: Junshikexue chubanshe, 2011), p. 51.

5. Junshi kexue yuan, ed., *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun junyu*, p. 51.

6. On the strategic guidelines, see David M. Finkelstein, "China's National Military Strategy: An Overview of the "Military Strategic Guidelines"," in Andrew Scobell and Roy Kamphausen, eds., *Right Sizing the People's Liberation Army: Exploring the Contours of China's Military*, (Carlisle: Army War College, 2007), pp. 69-140; M. Taylor Fravel, "The Evolution of China's Military Strategy: Comparing the 1987 and 1999 Editions of *Zhanlue Xue*," in David M. Finkelstein and James Mulvenon, eds., *The Revolution in Doctrinal Affairs: Emerging Trends in the Operational Art of the Chinese People's Liberation Army*, (Alexandria, Va.: Center for Naval Analyses, 2005), pp. 79-100.

7. Wang Wenrong, ed., *Zhanlue xue* [The Science of Military Strategy]

(Beijing: Guofang daxue chubanshe, 1999), pp. 136-139. For other authoritative descriptions of the concept of the strategic guideline, see Gao Rui, ed., *Zhanlue xue* [The Study of Military Strategy] (Beijing: Junshi kexue chubanshe, 1987), pp. 81-85; Peng Guangqian and Yao Youzhi, eds., *Zhanlue xue* [The Science of Military Strategy] (Beijing: Junshi kexue chubanshe, 2001), pp. 182-186; Fan Zhenjiang and Ma Baoan, eds., *Junshi zhanlue lun* [On Military Strategy] (Beijing: Guofang daxue chubanshe, 2007), pp. 149-150.

8. M. Taylor Fravel, "China's Military Strategies: An Overview of the 1956, 1980 and 1993 Military Strategic Guidelines," paper prepared for the CAPS-RAND-NDU conference on the PLA, November 2013, Taipei, Taiwan. Updated April 2015.
9. Jiang Zemin, *Jiang Zemin wenxuan* [Jiang Zemin's Selected Works], Vol. 1, (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2006), p. 285.
10. Jiang Zemin, *Jiang Zemin wenxuan, Vol. 1*, p. 286.
11. Jiang Zemin, *Jiang Zemin wenxuan* [Jiang Zemin's Selected Works], Vol. 3, (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2006), p. 608.
12. Ibid.
13. Zhang Yuliang, *Zhanyi xue* [The Science of Campaigns] (Beijing: Guofang daxue chubanshe, 2006), p. 81.
14. The official English translation of the white paper uses "offshore waters defense" and "open seas protection," respectively.
15. Within the PLA, each service has its own strategic concept in addition to the strategic guideline for China's armed forces.
16. Wang Hongguang, "Cong lishi kan jinri Zhongguo de zhanlue fangxiang [Looking at China's Strategic Direction Today From a Historical Perspective]," *Tongzhou gongjin*, March 2015, pp. 48. General Wang is the former deputy commander of the Nanjing Military Region and current member of the Tenth National People's Congress.
17. Wang Hongguang, "Cong lishi kan jinri Zhongguo de zhanlue fangxiang," p. 50, 49.
18. Jiang Zemin, *Jiang Zemin wenxuan, Vol. 3*, p. 608.
19. *Jiefangjun bao*, August 21, 2014, p. 1.
20. Fravel, "China's Military Strategies."

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Nuclear Policy Issues in the 2013 Edition of The Science of Military Strategy: Part 2 on PLA Second Artillery Force (PLASAF) Strategy and Capabilities

By Michael S. Chase

As highlighted in Beijing's May 2015 defense white paper, China is modernizing its strategic missile force as part of its focus on strengthening the PLA's preparation for "winning informationized local wars, highlighting maritime military struggle and maritime PMS [preparation for military struggle]" (State Council Information Office, May 2015). Indeed, the People's Liberation Army Second Artillery Force (PLASAF) has emerged as a centerpiece of Chinese military modernization along with the growth of its nuclear and conventional missile capabilities. Specifically, according to the Chinese white paper:

> In line with the strategic requirement of being lean and effective and possessing both nuclear and conventional missiles, the PLA Second Artillery Force (PLASAF) will strive to transform itself in the direction of informationization, press forward with independent innovations in weaponry and equipment by reliance on science and technology, enhance the safety, reliability and effectiveness of missile systems and improve the force structure featuring a combination of both nuclear and conventional capabilities. The PLASAF will strengthen its capabilities for strategic deterrence and nuclear counterattack, and medium- and long-range precision strikes.

China's latest Defense White Paper refrains from offering further details, but the most recent edition of the Pentagon's annual report on Chinese military power paints a more complete picture of PLASAF's growing capabilities. The Department of Defense report notes that PLASAF is "developing and testing several new classes and variants of offensive missiles, including hypersonic glide vehicles; forming additional missile units; upgrading older missile systems; and developing methods to counter ballistic missile defenses" (U.S. Department of Defense [DoD], May 8, p. 8).

PLASAF has long served as the cornerstone of China's nuclear deterrent. Currently, PLASAF fields 50–60 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), including silo-based DF-5s, some of which are equipped with multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs), DF-31 and DF-31A road mobile ICBMs, and older and more limited range DF-4 ICBMs, as well as its theater-range nuclear missile capabilities. PLASAF "continues to modernize its nuclear forces by enhancing its silo-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and adding more survivable, mobile delivery systems" (DoD, May 8, p. 8). In addition, it is improving its nuclear command, control and communications (C3) capabilities and developing the DF-41, a road mobile ICBM possibly capable of carrying MIRVs (DoD, May 8, pp. 8, 31–32). As for its conventional missile force, PLASAF has at least 1,200 short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs), and it is improving its conventional strike capabilities with the deployment of 800–1,000-kilometer (km) range DF-16 ballistic missiles and conventional-armed DF-21 MRBMs, which will not only improve China's ability to strike Taiwan, but also other targets in the region. PLASAF also fields conventional land-attack cruise missiles (LACMs), and the DF-21D anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM), which "gives the PLA the capability to attack ships in the western Pacific Ocean" (DoD, May 8, p. 8). In addition, it is developing conventional IRBMs capable of striking targets on Guam (DoD, May 8, p. 46).

Against this backdrop of PLASAF's growing nuclear and conventional missile capabilities, this article reviews the discussion of PLASAF issues in the 2013 edition of the *Science of Military Strategy*, which was published by the PLA Academy of Military Sciences (AMS) publishing house. SMS 2013 goes beyond the previous edition of SMS with its inclusion of a detailed section on PLASAF strategy. This PLASAF-specific section underscores the priority Beijing attaches to further strengthening PLASAF's nuclear and conventional missile capabilities. It also envisions a growing role in space, and perhaps cyberspace, for China's strategic missile force.

Second Artillery's Role and Responsibilities

PLASAF was established in July 1966 as the arm of the Chinese military responsible for nuclear-armed ballistic missiles. In the early 1990s, PLASAF added a conventional mission, and now occupies a unique position in China's military establishment due to its responsibility for nuclear deterrence and counter-attack as well as conventional long-range strike missions. As SMS 2013 puts it, Second Artillery's nuclear and conventional missile capabilities give it a "special position" among the instruments of Chinese military power and ensure that it "plays an extremely important role in defense of [China's] national security." **[1]** Additionally, SMS 2013 states that Second Artillery is an important strategic force under the direct command of the Central Military Commission (CMC) and top-level leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) (SMS 2013, p. 228). It further states that the highest-level leaders of the CCP and the CMC must make all of the key decisions about the construction, development and employment of China's strategic missile force, because of its strategic importance. In particular, "All significant nuclear deterrence actions and any scale of nuclear counterstrikes are undoubtedly categorized as significant strategic actions." Thus these decisions must be made at the highest level (SMS 2013, pp. 234–5).

As with China's national defense white papers and other PLA publications, SMS 2013 indicates that Second

Artillery's main missions are deterring a nuclear attack or nuclear threats against China, being prepared to carry out a nuclear counter-attack and launching conventional precision strikes with its conventional missiles (SMS 2013, pp. 231–2). For PLASAF, its "many types of equipment and conventional weapons that are able to effectively strike at different distances and against many different types of targets are the 'crack troops and sharp weapons' of the PLA's conventional operations, and they have a powerful deterrence role in dealing with strong enemies" (SMS 2013, p. 231).

SMS 2013 underscores the view that Second Artillery's nuclear and conventional missile capabilities play key roles in strategic deterrence. Indeed, like a number of other Chinese military publications, SMS 2013 describes Second Artillery as "China's core force for strategic deterrence" (中国战略威慑的的核心力量) (SMS 2013, pp. 228–9). Second Artillery's main contribution to strategic deterrence is its nuclear missile force. According to SMS 2013, "nuclear deterrence undoubtedly remains the core and foundation of China's strategic deterrence and plays a primary role in the containment of large-scale warfare and effectively holding in check the primary strategic opponents. At present, Second Artillery is the main part of China's nuclear force, and it is also the core force for China's strategic deterrence" (SMS 2013, pp. 228–9).

SMS 2013 emphasizes that Second Artillery also plays a critical role in strategic deterrence and actual combat because it constitutes the main part of the PLA's long-range conventional strike capabilities. According to SMS 2013, Second Artillery's conventional ballistic and cruise missiles make an important contribution to strategic deterrence and could serve as a powerful instrument of coercive diplomacy in addition to the important role they would play in any one of a number of PLA joint campaigns.

According to SMS 2013, Second Artillery's conventional missiles make it "the principal component of the PLA's long-range conventional strike forces" (SMS 2013, p. 229). Since it began fielding its first conventional missiles in the early 1990s, PLASAF has upgraded its conventional strike capability in terms of numbers of weapons, range and accuracy. Moreover, compared with other conventional weapons, land-based conventional missiles have advantages in terms of their ability to conduct long-range attacks, high precision, rapid response and strong defense penetration capabilities. As a result, conventional missiles are currently the "primary weapons" (主战兵器) for the Chinese military's long-range conventional strike operations (SMS 2013, p. 229). Moreover, even with the expected diversification of the Chinese military's long-range strike weaponry in the future, conventional missile weaponry will continue to possess clear advantages and will remain highly relevant in "confrontations with a powerful enemy." Overall, according to SMS, "Second Artillery serves as an important force for the PLA's implementation of long-range conventional strikes, possessing special functions for which there are no substitutes (有不可替代的特殊作用)" (SMS 2013, p. 229).

More generally, PLASAF's nuclear and conventional missile capabilities bolster China's international position, strengthen its image as a major country with a powerful military and protect its national interests (SMS 2013, pp. 230–1). Additionally, PLASAF's capabilities help preserve a favorable external security environment. They deter the outbreak of major war, which helps to protect and extend China's "period of strategic opportunity" (战略机遇期) and enable it to focus on economic development (SMS 2013, p. 231).

SMS 2013 on PLASAF Missile Force Modernization

SMS 2013 appears to indicate that PLASAF's role is likely to become increasingly important in the future as it continues to improve its nuclear and conventional missile capabilities in a coordinated fashion. Of note, the discussion of PLASAF capabilities and modernization programs in SMS 2013 appears to align closely with external assessments about deployed and developmental missile systems, such as those that appear in the latest Defense Department report on Chinese military power. This suggests that SMS 2013 represents a well-informed exploration of missile force developments. Indeed, it is probably the most authoritative recently published volume that addresses nuclear and conventional missile force modernization issues.

With respect to nuclear capabilities, SMS 2013 identifies nuclear missile force modernization as a "long-term and fundamental" responsibility for Second Artillery (SMS

2013, p. 232). Specifically, it calls for quantitative and qualitative improvements in China's nuclear counter-attack capabilities. According to SMS: "Under the circumstances of maintaining a certain scale (一定规模) for China's nuclear forces, raising the efficacy of Second Artillery nuclear counterstrikes is of the utmost importance." One means of doing this is increasing the proportion of missiles with intercontinental ranges. This is because of the geographic relationship between China and its "primary strategic opponent" and the location of the relevant nuclear counterstrike targets, which determine that ICBMs should constitute the main part of Second Artillery's nuclear force. According to SMS, "increasing the number of intercontinental-range guided missile nuclear weapons is an important means to effectively strengthen Second Artillery's nuclear counterstrike function."

Second, SMS states PLASAF must "give prominence to the key points of nuclear capabilities development." It notes that, in the event of an opponent's nuclear attack, the survival of the nuclear missile force is a prerequisite for and the foundation of the implementation of a nuclear counterstrike. Additionally, SMS highlights the ability to effectively break through the opponent's missile defense system as a "necessary condition" for achieving required nuclear damage results against the opponent. Therefore, according to SMS, Second Artillery nuclear force capability development should prioritize enhancing survivability and defense penetration capabilities. Specifically, it calls for Second Artillery to develop rapid mobile launch capabilities, hypersonic glide vehicles and multiple warhead technologies, and to update and replace its missile weapons, because improving survivability and defense penetration capabilities is key to "increasing the efficacy of nuclear counterstrikes" (SMS 2013, pp. 233–4).

SMS 2013 also calls for strengthening PLASAF's conventional missile force, which it identifies as a high priority given that China still faces a complex security environment and that "there is still a highly prominent contradiction between the actual strength of Second Artillery's conventional guided missiles and the requirements of dealing with actual security threats" (SMS 2013, p. 233). Furthermore, according to SMS, Second Artillery conventional modernization should focus on expanding the range of conventional guided missile firepower, placing emphasis on the development and deployment of "conventional guided missile weaponry with effective ranges exceeding 1,500 km" (SMS 2013, p. 234). It should also focus on overcoming enemy defenses, improving rapid response capabilities and enhancing accuracy.

In addition, SMS 2013 highlights the missile force's role in enabling the PLA to expand its operations into other domains (most notably space). The volume suggests that Second Artillery will focus on "developing new types of operations methods," and will thus play an increasingly important role in the space and information domains (SMS 2013, p. 233). Specifically, according to SMS 2013, "The expansion of national security interests and development and transformation of the pattern of warfare, are making struggles and confrontations that utilize the fields of space and the Internet more and more intense, and this raises new requirements for military capability development. Having a foothold in and relying on the special points and advantages of guided missile weaponry, developing new types of operations methods, and taking Second Artillery operations capabilities into space and other new domains of development, are important directions in Second Artillery's construction and development" (SMS 2013, p. 233). With respect to space, this is in part because Second Artillery's missile capabilities could be modified to carry out spacecraft launches. It is also as a result of the development of ground-based missiles capable of carrying out attacks against satellites. In all, the Second Artillery's capabilities make it an "important support" (重要依托) for the expansion of the PLA's operational capabilities into the space domain (SMS 2013, p. 229).

Conclusion

SMS 2013 contains a detailed section on PLASAF strategy that also touches on PLASAF roles and responsibilities and force modernization requirements. Notably, the discussion of force modernization requirements in SMS 2013 appears to track very closely with the assessment of PLASAF capabilities that appears in the most recent U.S. Department of Defense report on Chinese military power. Furthermore, SMS 2013 indicates Second Artillery will play a major role in all of the main aspects of strategic deterrence—nuclear, conventional, space and information—that Chinese military strategists highlight as essential to protecting China's national security.

Indeed, looking to the future, it suggests the PLASAF will continue to serve as the core component of China's strategic deterrent, and will increase its role in this regard along with improvements in its nuclear and conventional missile capabilities. As highlighted by SMS 2013, the additional roles in other areas of strategic deterrence, particularly in the space domain, have emerged, further ensuring a strong role for the PLASAF in the future.

This is the second of a two-part series of articles analyzing the nuclear policy sections of the 2013 Science of Military Strategy. *Part 1 of this series addressed nuclear policy, strategy, and force modernization. The series is an excerpt from a larger chapter in* China's Evolving Military Strategy *(edited by Joe McReynolds), due for publication this fall by The Jamestown Foundation. You can pre-order the book through Brookings Press.*

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Notes

The Science of Military Strategy [战略学], 3rd ed., Beijing: Military Science Press [军事科学出版社], 2013, p. 228.

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China's Counter-Terrorism Vanguard: Public Security Border Control Troops' Organization, Strategy, Training and Intelligence Capability

By Zi Yang

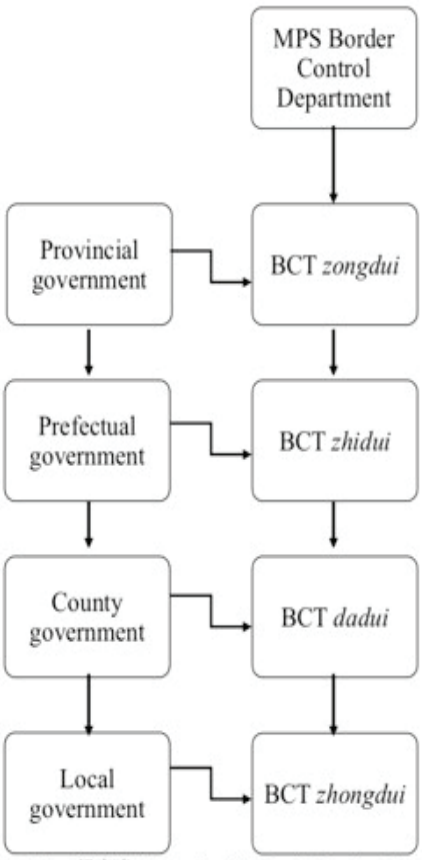
The past two years have been a period of frustration and setbacks for China's counter-terrorism agencies. In spite of the state's efforts to clamp down on terrorism, the number of terrorist attacks actually experienced an upsurge in 2013 and 2014, with one even striking near Tiananmen, at the heart of Chinese state authority. Indeed, China's fight against terrorism is an endeavor far from completed. Following the pattern from previous years, the most recent attacks were masterminded by terrorist organizations rooted in the volatile Chinese province of Xinjiang, a source of Islamist militancy. With the creation and consolidation of the so-called Islamic State–a development that boosted the morale of jihadists worldwide–China's war on terror has entered a new phase. In this war, the Public Security Border Control Troops (**公安边防部队**), or simply BCT, is a force of crucial significance due to its status as the first line of defense against terrorist activities brewing in and beyond the Xinjiang border region. This article attempts to explain the origins, organization, methods and track record of the BCT. While the BCT has created many of the structures it needs to be effective, continued efforts need to be made in reforming and improving its intelligence gathering apparatus.

Organization

First established in November 1949 as the Border Protection Department, the BCT is currently a militarized police force placed under the shared authority of the People's Armed Police and the Public Security Active Service Troops (公安现役部队), which is subordinate to the Ministry of Public Security (MPS). **[1]** Although the BCT is sometimes referred to as the Armed Police Border Control Troops (武警边防部队), it does not belong to the PAP's chain of command (Zhejiang Online, April 20, 2010).**[2]** Instead, its immediate superior is the MPS Border Control Department. As a unit under the MPS, the BCT follows a dual command system, where it responds to the leadership of both the local government and superiors in the Public Security Border Control *xitong* (system) (*Journal of Chinese People's Armed Police Force Academy*, March 25, p. 15). Reportedly 100,000 strong (Zhejiang Online, April 20, 2010), the BCT is divided into five levels. At the top of the command chain is the MPS Border Control Department located in Beijing. The provincial-level command comes next, where there is one BCT *zongdui* (equiv. to a PLA division) for each province, autonomous region and direct-controlled municipality (with the exception of Beijing, Hong Kong and Macau). **[3]** Further down the chain of command are the prefectural-level *zhidui* (equiv. to a PLA regiment), county-level *dadui* (equiv. to a PLA battalion) and local-level *zhongdui* (equiv. to a PLA company) (*Legal System and Society*, April 15, 2014, p. 137). **[4]** The BCT is responsible for managing all inspection stations

at ports of entry as well as main roads leading to border areas in addition to being the first line of border defense, except for the Chinese–North Korean border, and the Yunnan portion of the Chinese-Burmese border, where it plays an auxiliary role to PLA border control units (*Journal of Chinese People's Armed Police Force Academy*, March 25, 2015, p. 14). **[5]** The mission of the BCT, stated succinctly, is to defend China's national sovereignty by maintaining security and ensuring safety along the country's borderlands (Ministry of National Defense of the PRC, April 16, 2013). This includes striking out against the "three evils" of terrorism, separatism and religious extremism (*China Brief*, January 9, 2014). The Xinjiang BCT plays a special role in that it is the one that shoulders most of the burden in dealing with these three issues. Focusing on the Xinjiang BCT's success and failures as well as the causes behind them provides valuable insight into understanding larger issues within China's counter-terrorism efforts.

Illustration of the BCT's dual command system.



Source: Xiaoqing Liang 梁晓晴, Dui wujing bianfang budui xingshi bianjing guanliquan de sikao 对公安边防部队行使边境管理权的思考 [Thoughts on the Public Security Border Control Troop's Power to Exercise Administrative Authority in Border Areas], *Journal of Chinese People's Armed Police Force Academy* 31, no. 3 (2015): 15.

Strategy

The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region shares a 3,544-mile-long border with eight countries. There are 235 mountain passes and key travel routes to neighboring states, making the province a crossroads of great strategic value while at the same time posing a significant challenge for border security forces. Further complicating matters, members of ten ethnic groups in Xinjiang have shared ethnicity and familial ties across the national boundaries (*Journal of Xinjiang Education Institute*, June 30, 2013, p. 100). Together, these factors make China's northwest frontier the least stable part of the country. Unrest and terrorist attacks are not unusual; there have been more than 200 violent incidents since the 1990s (*Journal of Guangxi Police Academy*, February 24, 2014, p. 47).

The largest Islamist militant group, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), operates mostly outside of Xinjiang, making border security especially important in reducing the group's operational capability. The Xinjiang BCT's current "counter-terrorism and maintain stability" strategy, as elaborated by the commander of the Xinjiang *zongdui* Senior Colonel Zhang Genheng, is one that concentrates on working closely with the local population, strengthening inspections at border crossings, and building a new "border protection and control network" that enhances relations between all levels of the Xinjiang BCT (*PLA Life*, December 13, 2013, p. 8).

Due to the region's enormous size and lengthy border, it is almost impossible for BCT troopers to cover all entry and exit points with their limited manpower alone. Local help is needed, which led to the formation of the Masses' Border Protection Unit (MBPU,群众护边员). Numbering about 17,000, the MBPU recruits agents from people (mostly herdsmen) living along the border to assist the BCT by leading teams of locals to patrol areas around their community, or going on joint patrol missions with BCT troopers (*PLA Life*, December 13, 2013, p. 8). Besides having firsthand knowledge of the rough border terrain, the MBPU also makes up for the chronic personnel shortage suffered by BCT units (*Legal Daily*, October 30, 2012). **[6]**

In addition to traditional human intelligence, the BCT has adopted advanced technology at border checkpoints,

and is an essential part of the overall plan to standardize inspections. Biological agent detectors, rolling chassis inspection devices, as well as explosives and narcotics detectors are all being used at border crossings and ports of entry for the purpose of making inspections more effective (*PLA Life*, December 13, 2013, p. 8). An interview with a trooper of the Khunjerab Pass inspection station revealed that x-ray and terahertz technology have also been incorporated as part of the inspection process (CRI Online, June 19).

Building a network that brings together different elements of the Xinjiang BCT is probably the most important part of the strategy since counter-terrorism is a task that requires extensive intra- and inter-agency collaboration. Thus, the Xinjiang BCT has established a "border protection and control network that encouraged cohesion and cooperation by streamlining the process of agent selection, training, personnel management and budget formulation (*PLA Life*, December 13, 2013, p. 8). Local outreach, new technology and enhanced training are all important elements, but due to the complex border environment, international cooperation is equally vital to counter-terrorism success. Collaboration between the border control forces of China and its neighboring states is frequent, with monthly meetings between Chinese BCT troopers and their foreign counterpart to discuss issues of concern and to deepen mutual understanding. Provincial level communication occurs every quarter, while ministerial-level exchanges take place every one to two years (*People's Police*, September 10, 2014, p. 44). In recent years, joint anti-terrorism exercises have occurred annually under the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) framework, either involving all of its member states or on a one-on-one basis, such as the China-Kyrgyzstan joint border law enforcement exercise on June 15 (Xinhua Online, June 15).

Training

Quality troopers are the *sine qua non* in putting any counter-terrorism strategy into practice. The training of BCT personnel consists of physical training, psychological training, and technical training. Physical training classes for cadets include takedown techniques, marksmanship, boxing and mixed marital arts, sniper training, crisis negotiation, police combat skills, and police combat tactics (*Frontier Defence Police China*, July 1, 2014, pp. 32–33). An article written by Ma Zhiqiang, lecturer and director of the military affairs research and education office at the Public Security Border Control Troops Urumqi Command Academy, reveals that physical training of cadets still emphasizes on order, uniformity, and visual impact, a reference to the mass synchronized practice of martial arts that is even now a main method of instruction. According to Ma, there is much formalism attached to physical training, though what might be visually impressive to visiting superiors is, in reality, a hindrance to producing qualified troopers (*Frontier Defence Police China*, July 1, 2014, pp. 32-33). In an education system like this, the individual's ability to creatively come up with new ways to enhance physical fitness is suppressed, which is not always a positive development. This is changing, and the examination system of the Urumqi Command Academy has been reformed to make questions on exams more open-ended and less rigid and memorization-based, which may inspire creative thinking when it comes to problem solving (*Frontier Defence Police China*, September 1, 2009, p. 28).

The *jidongdui* or Mobile Detachment (MD) is the principal special operations force of the BCT. Its duties are comparable to the Border Control Tactical Unit of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, that is to deal with high-risk contingencies whenever the order is given. The MD's ability to rapidly react to exigency is valued by the BCT as a form of deterrence against possible terrorist attacks. Each MD has a reconnaissance team, a bomb disposal team, and a biodefense team. BCT training reflects the rugged terrain they patrol, and their physical training routine includes a five-kilometer ruck march, 400-meter obstacle course, handling various kinds of combat equipment, mountain climbing, and swimming (*Police Practical Combat Training*, February 15, 2012, pp. 84–85).

Due to the often traumatic and violent situations that BCT personnel are expected to encounter during counter-terrorism operations, psychological training for BCT personnel is equally important. However, the latest publication on this subject, while divulging few details, admits that most BCT troopers lack real combat experience and there has not been an intensive psychological training program instituted as part of the training curriculum (*Journal of Chinese People's Armed Police Force Academy*, March 25, 2010).

With regards to technical training, the PAP Urumqi Command Academy, which graduates 40 percent of the Xinjiang BCT's entry-level cadres, stress six skillsets that it expects the cadets to excel in. These include guard duty, law enforcement, military knowledge, management skills, political work and bilingual proficiency. A few general courses taught at the Academy cover the following topics: mid-level Mandarin Chinese, basic Uyghur, English for border protection work, managing border exigencies, border patrol, military topography, and theories for battles along borderlands (*Frontier Defence Police China*, September 1, 2009, pp. 27–28). These skillsets are vital for any border unit. However, the special nature of the BCT, and their evolving role in counter-terrorism operations necessitates perfecting another skill set: intelligence gathering.

Intelligence Capability

While training cadets according to high standards is quite necessary in building up a professional border control force, having strong capability to obtain and analyze intelligence is indispensible in winning the fight against terrorism. This area is the BCT's Achilles' heel and became a source of public embarrassment when it was revealed that BCT forces did not receive any intelligence prior to the Urumqi train station bomb attack that occurred on May 1, 2014, the final day of Xi Jinping's first tour of Xinjiang after he became China's President (*Journal of Intelligence*, June 18, 2014, p. 18). While inadequate education of intelligence analysts negatively influences their overall expertise (*Journal of Intelligence*, December 30, 2011, p. 243), the lack of inter-agency intelligence sharing is the primary factor undermining the effectiveness of not only the BCT, but also the entire public security system in preventing terrorist attacks (*Journal of Intelligence*, June 18, 2014, pp. 17–18). [7] Draft legislation submitted to the October 2014 plenum of the 12th National People's Congress Standing Committee proposed the concept of a national counter-terrorism intelligence center, which would facilitate inter-agency intelligence sharing, and is still undergoing review (People's Daily Online, October 28, 2014; National People's Congress Online, February 28). Second, the BCT system maintains a passive attitude in intelligence collection. Instead of taking the initiative to build a grassroots intelligence network through engaging in fieldwork, the BCT intelligence wing still depends heavily on leads from the civilian population, which restricts the amount of information that could be gained. A recent article in a professional journal has proposed a model that focuses on cultivating a terrorism suspect's relatives, friends, colleagues, and connections with the criminal underworld. The article argues that such sources of information might be able to cut across the wall of mistrust between the authorities and certain disenchanted sections of the Uyghur populace, since it is difficult for anyone to associate exclusively with people sharing the same ethnic and ideological background (*Journal of Intelligence*, June 18, 2014, pp. 17–18). Of course, the BCT almost certainly made use of its Uyghur, and other ethnic minority troopers' bonds with their own community to expand the web of human intelligence collection. Nevertheless, culturally insensitive policies implemented in Xinjiang will quite likely stymie any future efforts to construct an effective human intelligence network. Not only the collection but also the retention and protection of BCT intelligence is far from professional. Apart from being understaffed, the available personnel assigned with intelligence safekeeping tasks are unmotivated and incompetent. At some BCT locations, intelligence files are placed in a disorderly fashion without the basic security measures in place, i.e. burglarproof doors and windows, dehumidifiers, double layer curtains, etc. Some BCT units do not have the necessary storage hardware in its archival repository, while others never had a specialized storeroom for important files to begin with (*Archives & Construction*, August 15, 2013, p. 71). This is particularly dangerous because leaked or stolen intelligence could cause great harm to counter-terrorism efforts, including the work of the BCT.

Counter-intelligence is another area of concern. Though the exact nature of counter-intelligence functions in the BCT are unknown, Sun Xiao of the Chinese People's Armed Police Force Academy has indicated that insufficient attention is paid to counter-intelligence. This is due to the main objective of the BCT being not directly related to intelligence work and the long tradition of *baomi* (secret keeping 保密)—that focuses more on protecting secrets rather than preventing infiltration—impeding the construction of a well-fortified counter-intelligence system (*Legal System and Society*, July 15, 2010, p. 213).

Conclusion

To conclude, the BCT is an organization of vital importance to China's war on terror. Regardless of the complicated circumstances surrounding the roots of China's "Xinjiang problem," the struggle against terrorism is likely to continue into the future. The BCT, despite having made steady progress in bettering its counter-terrorism strategy and training, still needs to vastly improve its underdeveloped intelligence capabilities by striving for an intelligence-sharing nexus, a proactive intelligence gathering network, a proper system of intelligence safekeeping, and a professional counter-intelligence apparatus if it wants to succeed in the fight against terrorism in Xinjiang.

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Notes

1. The BCT is listed under the PAP's order (*xulie* 序列) as a type of armed police because, similar to the PAP, it uses military equipment in addition to training and operating according to military standards. The PAP still plays a minor advisory role regarding the BCT, but the PAP General Headquarters cannot issue any orders to the BCT, because forces belonging to the Public Security Active Service Troops fall under the authority of the MPS.
2. The China Coast Guard was once the maritime branch of the BCT until March 2013, when it was transferred to the State Oceanic Administration.
3. The division of tasks along the Chinese–North Korean border and the Yunnan portion of the Chinese-Burmese border is one where the PLA takes responsibility for frontline (一线) border defense and control. The BCT is responsible for second-line (二线) duties that include the maintenance of public security in border control districts (边防管理区) and the management of entry and exit points.
4. Lu Ying鲁英, and Pan Cheng潘澄, Wujing changyong zhishi shouce武警常用知识手册 [The Armed Police: A General Knowledge Handbook], (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1993), 69–70.
5. The BCT's organizational structure follows the PAP, which is, in turn, partially modeled upon the PLA. A PLA division is generally made up of roughly 10,000 men. Given there are 30 BCT *zongdui* in China, 300,000 men would be the total estimate of BCT personnel, a number that directly contradicts the figure provided by the official Zhejiang Online portal. However, there is the possibility that each *zongdui* differs drastically in size since border control needs in a hinterland province like Hunan is probably far less demanding than a frontier province like Inner Mongolia.
6. The salary paid to MBPU personnel could be inadequate for the amount of patrol work they are required to perform. A 2013 story profiling Adili Amudong, a model Xinjiang MBPU agent accidently revealed that the stipend provided to Amudong is not even enough to purchase gas for his patrol motorcycle.
See also: Wei Lü 吕威, "Xinjiang Adili Amudong: Xin-Zang gonglu shang de 'lieying' 新疆阿地力·阿木东：新藏公路上的'猎鹰' [Xinjiang's Adili Amudong: the 'falcon' of the Xinjiang-Tibet Highway]" Xinhua Online, November 29, 2013, http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2013-11/29/c_125784166_2.htm.
7. As of December 2011, BCT intelligence analysts holding a bachelor's degree are still in the minority.

The Chinese Public Debates North Korea Policy

By Shuxian Luo

In April, the killing of three Chinese citizens in April along the North Korean border–possibly at the hands of North Korean soldiers–was confirmed by China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). This has once again added fuel to the fire of Chinese debates over Beijing's policy toward its volatile neighbor (China Net, April 30). While debate in the general public tends to intensify when incidents involve civilians being killed or kidnapped by North Koreans, the parallel debate in the Chinese policy community is more responsive to Pyongyang's strategic provocations. Even the recent fatal shooting of a North Korean trespasser by Chinese border protection troops and North Korea's recent drought have garnered the DPRK limited sympathy (*China Net*, June 11; *Global Times*, June 24).

A renewed domestic debate between the "abandon" vs "support" North Korea camps has not led to a substantial change in Beijing's North Korea policy. As of today, "no war, no instability, and no nukes," China's traditional stance toward the Korean Peninsula, remains the bedrock of Chinese policy.

Murders Further Reduce Public Support for North Korea

The latest murders are the third publicized instance in the past eight months in which Chinese civilians have been killed by North Koreans illegally crossing the border. The April incident follows the killing of four Chinese by a North Korean civilian in September last year and another four by a North Korean soldier in December (Sina, April 29). Each of these deadly episodes occurred in Helong, a city in Jilin Province near the border, aggravating the Chinese public's concerns about border protection. In the latest *Global Times* investigative report on these incidents, Jin Qiangyi, the director of the Center for International Studies at Yanbian University in Yanji City, said that killings of Chinese residents in the border region by North Koreans have occurred frequently since the mid-1990s, as it is particularly difficult for China's border protection forces to prevent North Koreans from crossing the frontier in remote areas. Local residents interviewed by *Global Times* admitted that they have complied with North Koreans entering their homes demanding food and money, as long as the defectors did not hurt anyone (*Global Times*, May 15). But horrified by the recent string of killings, a large portion of the local population has been forced to flee from the region (Sina, February 4).

These incidents further erode the Chinese public's declining sympathy for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). On Weibo—a Chinese version of Twitter which serves as an important barometer for public opinion–the killing intensified an ongoing wave of outrage with Beijing's ineptitude in protecting the border and its demonstrated "softness" in handling these incidents. A post questioned, "Where are our troops who claim to protect our homes and defend the country? Being cowards AGAIN?" Another user wrote, "That is the friendship sealed by blood"—a sarcastic reference to the traditional slogan extolling China–North Korea relations. More posts expressed dissatisfaction not just with the violence, but also the disclosure of these killings first by foreign media: "It was Chinese citizens killed on China's territory. And [why] did our information first come from the South Korean media?"

Whereas the Chinese public tends to demonstrate a mixed attitude toward North Korea's nuclear weapon and missile programs, incidents directly victimizing ordinary Chinese citizens more easily evoke an empathetic feeling of vulnerability and set off a public backlash against China's North Korea policy. In May 2012, North Korea seized three Chinese fishing vessels in Chinese territorial water and detained 29 Chinese fishermen on the boats, demanding a ransom of 1.2 million RMB (193,500 USD) (CCTV Online, May 16, 2012). This incident incited a strong nationalist response in China's social media and comments on news articles. This was exacerbated by the subsequent North Korean kidnappings of a Chinese fishing vessel and its 16 crew members in May 2013 for a ransom of 600,000 RMB (97,000 USD), and another fishing vessel and nine Chinese fishermen in September 2014 for 250,000 RMB (40,000 USD) (*Global Times*, May 20, 2013; *New Capital Daily*, September 23, 2014). In an op-ed on the public concerns over potential radioactive

pollution caused by North Korean nuclear tests, Ding Gang, a staff writer for *People's Daily*, said, "The masses may not think from a strategic perspective. Nor can they control North Korea's pursuit of nukes. All they care about in their everyday life is safety and stability" (*Global Times*, April 23, 2013).

In this context of losing public support for North Korea, Beijing seems compelled to step up its posture with Pyongyang. Less than six weeks after the murders were publicized, local authorities in Helong disclosed via Weibo the fatal shooting of a North Korean trespasser by the Chinese troops in the border area, which was quickly picked up by China's state media and applauded by netizens as a legitimate border protection action. Disclosure of killings of North Korean trespassers is rare in China, if not unprecedented. While this seems to be an effort by Beijing to pacify public anger, it is highly unlikely that the general public is an emerging actor capable of exerting substantial influence over China's North Korea policy.

Static Contours of Elite's Policy Debate

Roughly in step with the general public's changing tone is the renewed debate in the Chinese policy community that centers on the strategic question of whether Beijing should continue its commitment to North Korea or abandon it. Currently, the policy debate is best divided into two camps—the traditionalists and strategists. Traditionalists argue against "abandoning" North Korea, citing shared socialist political ideologies, the human and capital investments China has made in the North, Beijing's credibility as a patron and ally, increased Sino-DPRK economic ties, Beijing's need for a geopolitical buffer and the potential risks to China if the North Korean regime collapses.

One prominent traditionalist, Chen Fengjun, a professor at Peking University, contended that the U.S. "Pivot to Asia" underscored the strategic importance of the Korean Peninsula. "Abandoning" North Korea would exacerbate the imbalance of power on the peninsula, precipitating a military confrontation or even a nuclear war. A destabilized Korean Peninsula would only impair China's interests, making the cost of "abandoning" the North outweigh that of "defending" it (*Global Times*, March 12, 2013). A *Global Times* editorial claimed, "As of today, North Korea is still China's geopolitical frontline. The United States has Japan and South Korea as its strategic footholds supporting its pivot toward Asia. North Korea is still a buffer. Whether there is a North Korea friendly to China will influence the strategic landscape in Northeast Asia. Abandoning North Korea cannot be a viable option... China supports not only North Korea's national security but its regime's rule…A friendly Sino-DPRK relationship will always be a source of security for Pyongyang" (*Global Times*, April 12, 2013).

Li Dunqiu, a visiting research fellow at Zhejiang University, contended that abandoning North Korea would lead to three possible outcomes: North Korea aligning with a third country other than China; North Korea collapsing as a result of political, economic and military pressures; or North Korea waging a suicidal war on the peninsula. None of these would be beneficial to China's interest (*Global Times*, November 27, 2014). Cao Shigong, a research fellow at the China Foundation for International Studies, argued that North Korea still has geopolitical value to Beijing and that the DPRK's nuclear weapons program should not be a reason for China to abandon it. According to Cao, denuclearization can only be achieved as a part of the settlement of Cold War legacies and the establishment of permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula (*Global Times*, December 2, 2014). But as the Chinese public views the DPRK in an increasingly negative way, traditionalists seem to be losing ground in the debate to the strategists, who call for outright abandonment of traditional commitment to North Korea. A prominent critic of North Korea, Shen Dingli, a scholar at Fudan University, wrote in *Foreign Policy* immediately after North Korea's third nuclear test that "North Korea's value as a security buffer has much diminished" and that "in an age where global public opinion matters more than ever, the benefits of association with Pyongyang's mistaken line outweigh the costs." Shen then called on Beijing to "cut its losses and cut North Korea loose" (*Foreign Policy*, February 13, 2013). The shared socialist political ideology also has lost its appeal to most of the Chinese public, even CCP officials and military personnel. Deng Yuwen, then deputy editor of *Study Times*, a journal of the Central Party School of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), wrote in the *Financial Times* that "North Korea's value as a geopolitical ally is outdated" and "a relationship based on ideology is

dangerous." Calling upon China to "consider abandoning North Korea," Deng went further by proposing to "take initiative to facilitate North Korea's unification with South Korea" and "use China's influence to cultivate a pro-Beijing government in North Korea" (*Financial Times*, February 27, 2013). Retired Lt. Gen Wang Hongguang, former deputy commander of the PLA Nanjing Military District, wrote in *Global Times* repudiating traditionalists' argument, "In our country, the Communist Part rules and other democratic parties participate, electing Party and national leadership based on mutual consultation. North Korea's three generations of leadership come through family heredity. Are the two the same?" (*Global Times*, December 1, 2014).

Strategists also point to North Korea's diminishing strategic value, the prospect that its nuclear weapons program will trigger a nuclear arms race in this region, and the risk that Beijing would be dragged into a military conflict provoked by Pyongyang. Under the condition of modern warfare, says Wang, it is an undeniable fact that the strategic value of North Korea as a buffer is diminishing. "North Korea's repeated threats to nullify the Korean War Armistice pushes the two Koreas to the brink of another war. It is not a matter of whether North Korea listens to China, but that North Korea's behavior has undermined China's fundamental interests." Therefore, China should not get involved in another war on the Korean peninsula. "If North Korea decides to fight an all-out war, there is no need for China to get involved," Wang argued. "Whoever provokes a war takes responsibility. The 'socialism bloc' ceased to exist long time ago. There is no need for China's younger generation to fight a war for another country". Zhu Feng, a professor then at Peking University and a long critic of North Korea, claimed, "A nuclear North Korea is definitely a grave threat to China.. if China cannot prevent North Korea from developing nuclear weapons, how can it stem Japan and South Korea's ambition to develop nukes?" (Lianhe Zaobao, February 16, 2013).

The strategists line of argument gains popularity after every North Korean provocation. The strong language in these articles, and especially, Gen. Wang and Deng's affiliation with the PLA and the Party respectively, and their explicit rejection of ideological aligning with Pyongyang, draw wide speculation from international observers as on whether it is a signal of a sea change in China's policy. But it is more likely a display of Beijing's frustration with Pyongyang and a valve to let off some steam by the elites. To most strategists, it is clear that "abandoning North Korea is not a realistic choice for China" (International Crisis Group, December 9, 2013, 12). Even "normalizing" China's relationship with North Korea, as some Chinese analysts believe is suggested in the novel use of "seek common ground, allow disagreement" (求同存异) by China's newly appointed Ambassador Li Jinjun, is yet to occur. Decoding Liu's diplomatic language, a recent Xinhua article claimed, "Even brothers in a family have different opinions. It is pragmatic to admit discrepancy. The bilateral relationship can only be moved forward by highlighting both countries' shared position and interest rather than zoom in on disagreement" (Xinhua, May 8). Over the past several months, nurtured by new signs of change in North Korea's economic policy, Chinese analysts increasingly lean toward a utilitarian approach that Pyongyang's reform will increase North Korea's economic viability and its economic value for China. In his latest analysis on North Korea's economic reform initiatives, Li Dunqiu claimed, "The contract system linking remuneration to output that North Korea adopted early this year apparently is a duplicate of the measure China took at the beginning of its economic reform and open up. This is extremely likely a signal of an overall reform in North Korea…In the early stage of its economic development, it is of great magnitude that North Korea opens its door to Korean Chinese investors. The DPRK has hosted a series of promotion events in Dalian and Shenyang, which shows Pyongyang is redoubling its efforts to attract investment" (*Global Times*, May 14). Cao Shigong expressed a similar optimism, "North Korea's reform has taken effect…as it accumulates more experience and gains more confidence, it is possible that North Korea will speed up its reform and enhance economic cooperation with the outside" (*Global Times*, May 22).

Some analysts even go so far as to raise the prospect that North Korea's enhancement of trade and investment ties with the international community will eventually translate into a strong incentive to bring Pyongyang back to nuclear talks, even though Kim Jong-un vowed to have both. In his June 4 interview with the Phoenix TV, Yang Xiyu said, "North Korea is in a dilemma. If it wants to

return to talks for economic interests, it must face the nuclear problem. The nuclear issue is the greatest barrier in North Korea's relations with other regional actors. We must make use of its dilemma, encouraging and pushing Pyongyang to pursue the correct direction."

Amid escalating tensions in China's relations with its other neighbors, and as North Korea refrains from another major provocative such as a fourth nuclear test, breaking the ice with Pyongyang may serve Beijing's interests better than allowing the impasse to continue. There have been signs of improvement. In his meeting with North Korea with North Korea's Minister of Foreign Trade, Ri Ryong-nam in Pyongyang, Ambassador Li Jinjun extended Beijing invitation to Pyongyang to to join the ambitious "One Belt One Road" initiative (Xinhua, May 8). To show support for North Korea's drought relief, Ambassador Li pledged to strengthen agricultural cooperation with the North, and Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesperson Lu Kang offered food aid (Chinese Embassy to the DPRK, June 5; Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 18). That being said, as denuclearization is still a fundamental constraint of the relationship, it would too rush to anticipate a rapid rapprochement or resumption of top-level exchanges.

Assessing Elite Commentaries

This ongoing debate in the Chinese policy community has led outside observers to speculate whether Beijing might recalibrate its policy towards Pyongyang. The debate may be intended as a public warning to North Korea, conveying Beijing's dissatisfaction with Pyongyang. Moreover, it may allow the Chinese government to cite domestic pressure as justification for adopting a tougher negotiation position with North Korea. In turn, Beijing can appeal to Washington and other regional stakeholders that this public discourse is a way of exerting more pressure on Pyongyang. Domestically, it creates the appearance of elite sharing and being responsive to the pains of ordinary citizens.

Chinese authorities have managed this policy debate to maintain a delicate ambiguity as to how much it reflects a possible change in Beijing's attitude toward North Korea. *Global Times*' role as the premier platform for the Chinese elite's debate over North Korea strongly points to the debate enjoying Beijing's tacit support, if not encouragement. At the same time, the *Global Times'* status as a nationalistic foreign policy-focused tabloid has the ability to popularize this debate beyond the elite level and reach the general public. Yet, participation has so far been primarily limited to Chinese academics, retired military officers, journalists and commentators. These people do not hold government positions and thus cannot be seen as articulating China's official position, leaving the Chinese government plausible deniability. The lack of government officials in the open debate may reflect an unspoken rule—a red line that cannot be crossed when debating sensitive foreign policy issues like North Korea. Those who fail to understand this may risk their political careers. One month after publishing his article in the *Financial Times*, Deng Yuwen was suspended from his position. A likely explanation is that he used his official title when articulating his opinion about North Korea.

Public Opinion Meets Elite Policy Debate

Despite the growing influence public opinion exerts on Chinese foreign policy, particularly on hot-button issues such as the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, the continued downward slide of public opinion of North Korea will continue to have a very limited impact on Beijing's policy. This is in part due to the fact that there is little chance for anti–North Korean street protests along the lines of the frequent protests directed against Japan. Not only is Beijing unlikely to allow such protests, but there is also a lack of the type of collective memory, experience, grievances and outrage that could mobilize the masses in the same way that popular hatred of Japan can. Still, Beijing cannot simply turn a blind eye to the rising public anger, as criticism of North Korea increasingly goes hand in hand with dissatisfaction over Beijing's ineptitude strengthening border protection and its weakness in managing North Korean provocations.

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