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In This Issue:

Statements by top Russian military industry officials have confirmed progress in China's long-standing attempt to purchase the advanced Sukhoi-35 fighter jet.

In a Fortnight

Su-35 Purchase: Evidence of Sino-Russian Relations' Weakness or Strength?

In a reversal of previous statements about Russia's long-delayed sale of Sukhoi-35 fighter jets to China, Russian military-industrial conglomerate Rostec's President Sergey Chemezov confirmed that the negotiation has been completed and "we have signed a contract" (Takungbao Online, November 19). Media discussions of the purchase were largely met with silence from official Chinese sources. But, a visit by Deputy Chairman of the Central Military Commission of China, Colonel-General Xu Qiliang, and Minister of Industry and Information Technology Miao Wei to a related engine manufacturer can be taken as evidence that negotiations are coming to a close (*People's Daily*, November 19; UEC [Russian], November 18).

The deal will be accompanied by Chinese purchases of advanced

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communications systems to connect the long-range fighter to other aircraft and bases. The United Instrument Manufacturing Corporation (UIMC) has announced that the Su-35s will include the S-108 aerial communications system and NKVS-27 ground-based communications system (Rostec, November 23). This system has a range of 1,500 kilometers, allowing the Su-35 to remain in contact over the long distances with bases and patrol zones, such as the line between Taiwan and the PRC, and China's far-flung claims in the South China Sea. **[1]**

PLA Senior Colonel Du Wenlong noted in an interview that the Su-35 purchase could herald a further deepening of Russo-Chinese technological cooperation (People's Daily Online, November 23). With the delivery of other advanced systems, including the S-400 surface-to-air missile system (SAM) to Syria, the resolution of issues surrounding a similar sale to Iran, and interest in the Su-35 from Indonesia, the pressure is on for Russia to finalize the sales to China. Additionally, as China is importing significantly fewer resources from Russia as its own economic growth slows, Russia could be more amenable to sales of advanced technology to China, despite the risk of intellectual property theft.

Both sides need each other to accomplish their military modernization plans. Sanctions have hurt Russia's arms business, as has the cut-off of access to important airframes and engines from Ukrainian companies like Antonov and Motor Sich. Though Russian export authority Rosboronexport head Anatoliy Isaykin emphasized that Russian units have first priority for the systems being produced, this pressure, and the Chinese agreement to a smaller initial tranche of the fighters (previous announcements of the sale had included as many as 48 fighters, rather than the recently reported 24) may have been the key to an agreement (Interfax, October 27).

The Su-35 will take over from the Su-30MKK as the most sophisticated of China's fighters. In addition to advanced avionics and vectored-thrust capability, the Su-35 features an increased range. This latter capacity will allow it to take on long-range patrols similar to those currently performed by the Su-30, including the "line" between China and Taiwan patrolled by Su-30s flying from Feidong Air Base in Anhui (*China Brief*, October 10, 2013).

Given Chinese success at procuring technical details through espionage, a demonstrated ability to improve of a number of copies of complex Russian systems (including the HQ-9 SAM system Turkey had until recently planned to buy) it seems unlikely that this reliance will last for long.

Though many of the systems are refinements of Soviet platforms, the sales of the S-400 SAM and Sukhoi-35 jets are significant because they are represent a shift to post-Soviet innovations and modernization. Moscow understandably would be reluctant to pass on to Beijing long-range strategic weapons systems that could in turn threaten the Russian soil.

Much discussion of China-Russia military exports revolves around China's purchases of engines. The primary source of those engines, the United Engine Company (UEC, formerly Saturn) produces the AL-31F jet engine used in several Sukhoi aircraft (including the J-11) China operates as well as China's indigenous J-10. Other engines produced by the UEC include the D-30, which are key to improved versions of China's long range H-6K bomber, the KJ-2000 early warning aircraft, and the prototype Y-20 heavy transport (United Engine Company [Russian], November 18; Salut.ru, Accessed November 30). Additionally, in a country working to expand its helicopter fleet to improve tactical mobility, Russian engines are also needed for the workhorse Mi-8 series transport and specialized anti-submarine-warfare Kamov

helicopters. China is, therefore, reliant on Russian engines for key components of its developing long-range strike capability, as well as its strategic transport.

Previous sales of Russian technology occurred when Russian economic fortunes were down. The 1990s saw bartering of Chinese goods for Russian tech. Similar dependence on Western food imports during the late 90s bred resentment—not better relations. It may be too soon to herald the sale as a sign of strong Sino-Russian trust. **[2]**

Note:

1. Note that Russia's state military export company Rosoboronexport is a subsidiary of Rostec.
2. Phillip Saunders and Joshua Wiseman, "Buy, Build, or Steal: China's Quest for Advanced Military Aviation Technologies," China Strategic Perspectives, No. 4, National Defense University, Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs, December 2011. p.35.

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China's Anti-Graft Campaign in Review

By Willy Lam

China's anti-graft campaign reached a milestone last month with the early November detention of Shanghai and Beijing Vice Mayors, Ai Baojun and Lu Xiwen, respectively, on corruption charges. At least one official with the rank of vice minister or above from each of China's 31 provinces and directly administered cities has been arrested (Xinhua, November 16; People's Daily, November 11). Over the course of three years, China has seen perhaps the most thorough clean-government exercise since the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966–76). Since the beginning of 2015, the focus of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) Central Commission for Disciplinary Inspection (CCDI)—China's highest-level graft-buster—seems to have moved to the corporate world. So far, senior managers from giant state-owned enterprise conglomerates, including CNPC, Sinopec, Chinalco, China FAW Group, Dongfeng Moters, Wuhan Steel, China Southern Airlines and China Resources, have been hauled in for investigations (People's Daily, July 7; CEweekly.cn, June 1). While investigations of economic criminals in both state-controlled and private firms is expected to continue unabated, this is a good juncture to take stock of President Xi Jinping's crusade to promote probity in the party-state apparatus since he took power in late 2012.

Firstly, has a moratorium been declared on hunting "big tigers," top-level cadres with the rank of Politburo member or "state leaders"? Since Xi started anti-graft operations one month after he took over at the 18th Party Congress in November 2012, five big tigers have been incriminated. They are former Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC) member in charge of security, Zhou Yongkang; former Politburo members and vice chairmen of the Central Military Commission, Generals Xu Caihou and Guo Boxiong; and vice chairmen of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) Su Rong and Ling Jihua. Ling, a former director of the CCP General Office and head of the United Front Department, was detained in July (Wuhan Evening Post, October 30; China.cn, July 21). There are signs that enthusiasm for the campaign is decreasing. The CCDI admitted in a mid-year commentary that the anti-graft campaign could hurt the morale and image of the party. "The consequences of punishing every cadre who violates discipline and law hurt the party far worse than the individuals," it said (South China Morning Post, June 3). This is particularly suggestive in light of the fact that elaborate preparations for the 19th Party Congress, set for late 2017, will begin in early 2016. The focus for this delicate period seems

to be fostering unity, instead of exacerbating contradictions within the leadership.

Among the "potential big tigers" who have so far eluded the dragnet is former PBSC member and state vice president Zeng Qinghong (曾庆红), who was also the right-hand-man of former President Jiang Zemin. Speculation that Zeng, 76, might be the next party titan to fall was fed by an article posted on the CCDI website last February entitled "The problematic style of Prince Qing of the Qing Dynasty" (CCDI website, February 25, 2015). This extraordinary piece explained how Prince Qing, one of the most powerful ministers in the last days of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), accumulated vast wealth through ways including building up a labyrinthine network of corruption (Southern Metropolitan News, March 8; Xinhua, February 28). The article was likely a reference to Zeng because the same character "qing" (庆) is part of Zeng's given name.

Like Prince Qing, Zeng is famous for his wheeling and dealing. Previously, as a vice party secretary of Shanghai, he helped Jiang Zemin nurture the Shanghai Faction into one of the biggest cliques in CCP politics. Also notable is the fact that Zeng's son, Zeng Wei, a millionaire businessman, is widely assumed to be under 24-hour surveillance by the police (South China Morning Post, February 28; VOA Chinese, November 22, 2014). Now that nine months have elapsed since the intriguing CCDI article, the chances of Zeng—or other former PBSC members deemed to be prime CCDI targets—being nabbed seem to have significantly decreased.

Equally intriguing is the question of whether, as in the case of similar campaigns initiated by former Presidents Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, Xi's fight against corruption is inextricably linked to factional infighting. Hints of this can be seen in the geographical distribution of the 59 senior cadres who have been investigated over the past three years. At least one official minister or vice minister has been arrested in 16 provinces and directly administered cities, while two each have been apprehended in five administrative units (China Economics Weekly, November 17; People's Daily, November 15). With seven senior officials having been jailed, Shanxi is often considered China's most corrupt province. It seems no coincidence that the central province is the power base of Ling, who is a key member of the Communist Youth League Faction headed by ex-president Hu. The bulk of the corrupt cadres in Sichuan (three), Hebei (three) and Hainan (two) are affiliates of a rent-seeking syndicate allegedly led by former PBSC member Zhou. Both Zhou and Ling, as well as the factions with which they are affiliated, are deemed thorns in the side of the president. That Xi and the CCDI are targeting rival factions within the CCP is illustrated by the "Code on Disciplinary Punishments" published last October by the Commission. This series of harsh regulations warned cadres and party members against "assembling factions within the party and forming cliques… [so as] to bolster the influence of individuals." (See *China Brief*, November 2).

So far, the only major party faction that has not been hit are China's princelings (太子党), the offspring of party elders and Politburo-level leaders. Members of the so-called "red aristocracy" figure prominently among the CEOs of state-owned enterprise (SOE) conglomerates; they also control a good number of the nation's largest and most wealthy private firms (Reuters, April 10, 2014; International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, January 24, 2014). That both President Xi and Wang Qishan, the PBSC member in charge of the CCDI, are senior princelings has given rise to criticism that cadres with "revolutionary bloodline" are spared the full rigors of the clean-governance crusade. However, one explanation credits revolutionary fervor for their high morals. According to Ye Xiangzhen, the daughter of Marshal Ye Jianying (1897–1986), founders of the party were "imbued with the serve-the-people creed." "Offspring [of party elders] are less prone to the temptations of corruption because they have been influenced by their forebears," Ye told Hong

Kong reporters (VOA Chinese, September 10, 2014; Ming Pao [Hong Kong], September 6, 2014).

By not incriminating a single princeling, Xi and Wang have thus opened themselves to accusations of "selective anti-corruption," meaning that they will not go after fellow princelings or their children. According to Beijing-based writer and blogger Murong Xuecun, Xi's most trusted allies and supporters were members of the red aristocracy. "These people [princelings] enjoy the kind of power and resources that ordinary people cannot even imagine," Murong wrote. "They also have a strong ability to snatch wealth. So far, almost noone among this elite group has been investigated [for graft]" (Ming Pao, November 12; New York Times Chinese Edition, January 19). The only well-known princeling to have her image tainted by innuendo about improper business practice is Li Xiaolin, the high-profile daughter of former premier Li Peng. Li, who used to chair the state-run electricity giant China Power Investment Group, was demoted in mid-2015 to the post of deputy general manager of the much smaller Datang Power Group. There were also reports that she was not allowed to leave the capital. It soon emerged, however, that Li, who was famous for her designer-label wardrobe, was not subject to any corruption-related investigations (Hong Kong Economic Journal, June 12; WantChinaTimes [Taipei], June 12).

Yet, the biggest problem of President Xi's anti-graft crusade is that it is often not waged according to the rule of law. This is despite Xi's repeated assertions that his administration would strictly abide by the Constitution and "rule by law" (People's Daily, February 24; Xinhua, December 31, 2014). Moreover, the Party mouthpiece *Global Times* argued that the reason why ongoing anti-corruption operations were more successful than previous exercises was that it was anchored upon "the background of [the promotion of] legalization in society and modernization of governance" (Global Times, July 26). A key factor is that the battle against graft is mainly handled by the CCDI, which, as a Party, rather than state organ, is not subject to the scrutiny of the legislature and the law courts.

Much has been written about the fact that the CCDI, reports only to President Xi. Moreover, the CCDI's chief, Wang Qishan, is a close ally of Xi. Often considered the second most powerful person in China, Wang vastly expanded the powers of the CCDI over the last three years. For example, an unprecedented number of CCDI cadres have been named to senior slots in central and regional departments. Foremost among them is CCDI Deputy Secretary Chen Wenqing, who was promoted last October to Party Secretary of the Ministry of State Security (MSS). Often dubbed China's KGB, the MSS is in charge of domestic security as well as counter-espionage. At about the same time, veteran CCDI investigators Geng Wenqing and Ren Jianhua were appointed head of the internal party disciplinary units of, respectively, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security and the National Development and Reform Commission (Southern Metropolitan News, October 8; People's Daily, September 1). Others have been dispatched to top positions in "corruption disaster zones," such as Shaanxi Province. Late last year, two Standing Committee members of the CCDI, Fu Jianhua and Huang Xiaowei, were respectively named Shanxi's vice governor and secretary of the Shanxi disciplinary inspection commission (People's Daily, November 18, 2014; Ta Kung Pao [Hong Kong], October 10, 2014).

As Peking University law professor He Weifang pointed out, clean and effective governance can only be built on the basis of democratic institutions. "Beating up tigers is no substitute for reform of the political structure," he wrote in his blog. "A newspaper that is not controlled by the party is more effective [in eradicating graft] than ten CCDIs." The prominent public intellectual added that "the fundamental strategy against corruption is to promote freedom of the media, independence of the judiciary, supervision by systems of people's

representatives and declaration of wealth by officials" (He Weifang's blog, July 25, 2014; He Weifang's blog, February 17, 2014). Given President Xi's well-known antipathy toward Western political norms and institutions, however, China's anti-graft movement will likely remain constrained by Communist-party exigencies such as the dictates of the faction in power.

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Three Scenarios for Understanding Changing PLA Activity in Cyberspace

By Peter Mattis

At the end of November, Chinese President Xi Jinping chaired a three-day Central Military Commission (CMC) forum on wide-ranging reform in the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), hosting senior military officers from the four general departments and other major work units. The outcomes heralded in Chinese press included reorganization of military regions, creation of a separate headquarters for the ground forces, and streamlining of the CMC in addition to the promised cuts of 300,000 troops (*PLA Daily*, November 28; *China Daily*, November 28). Although the Chinese military's role in cyberspace went unmentioned, this planned rationalizing of the PLA's management and activities raises questions about the future of the PLA involvement in economic espionage—an activity that does little to directly prepare the PLA to "fight and win wars" and compromises Beijing's efforts to "[safeguard] national security and developmental interests" (State Council Information Office, May 26).

Official sources are silent on Chinese economic espionage, apart from denials such as Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokeswoman Hua Chunying's latest denunciation of those who pedal "unfounded accusations" about Beijing's theft of intellectual property (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, December 2). Some rumors in China suggest the PLA's computer network operations units will be consolidated under a single command—a move that seems more credible in light of recent organizational reform announcements (Bloomberg, October 22). Recent press reports quote U.S. officials stating that the PLA signals intelligence organization, the Third Department of the General Staff Department (3PLA), is moving out of the economic espionage business following the U.S. indictments of PLA officers in 2014 and the cybersecurity agreement emerging out of Xi Jinping's state visit (*Financial Times*, December 1; *Washington Post*, November 30).

Drawing firm conclusions about what is taking place is difficult. Some information security analysts familiar with Chinese intrusion sets are less optimistic about 3PLA's movement out of stealing economic secrets to support Chinese companies, or changes to Chinese behavior in cyberspace (Associated Press, October 19). In this situation, it is worth sketching out several possibilities that might explain the reported changes in PLA computer network operations. The following sections will paint three plausible scenarios, all of which start with the assumption that the PLA is changing, if not necessarily curtailing, its hacking of purely commercial/economic targets.

Scenario 1 - Best Case Scenario: PLA Moving Out of Economic Espionage

The best case is that U.S. pressure and publicity have combined with Xi's military reform and anti-corruption drives in the PLA to spur a shift in behavior. Since Xi Jinping assumed the leadership in November 2012, he has pushed a two-pronged approach to modernizing the PLA and resolving the contradictions between the PLA's responsibilities and its capabilities—known by the CMC-endorsed moniker "Two Incompatibles" (两个不相适应) (*PLA Daily*, November 29). First, Xi has taken a direct role in guiding military modernization through the creation of a leading small group, overlapping in responsibilities but separate from the Central Military Commission, focused on defining future reforms rather than delegating this function to the General Staff Department as Hu Jintao had done (*China Brief*, March 20, 2014; *China Brief*, November 30, 2011). Second, Xi's has overseen a PLA anti-corruption drive to encourage a "good workstyle" that has run in parallel to Wang Qishan's campaign elsewhere in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) (Xinhua, July 30; Xinhua, December 13, 2014; *China Brief*, August 23, 2013).

In this scenario, the PLA's computer network operations done on and off the clock against commercial entities would be substantially cut-back, because the PLA could not justify them as either preparation of the battlespace or helping the PLA win wars. The use of military facilities and training to help Chinese private and state-owned enterprises or the pet corporate projects of local party officials gain competitive advantages benefits the individuals involved but not necessarily the PLA as an institution. Relatedly, the PLA has been reasserting influence over the intelligence apparatus to reclaim intelligence resources that previously had been directed to support national decision makers rather than military operations (*China Brief*, November 5, 2012).

Most beneficially, this outcome would demonstrate the value of the indirect approach Washington adopted on this issue, one previously employed in efforts to curb Chinese proliferation related to weapons of mass destruction. By never naming the Chinese leadership themselves as culpable and suggesting that the offending activity may be the work of "bad apples" at lower levels, the United States has left room for Beijing to maneuver and distance itself from the practice of economic espionage.

Injecting some skepticism into this "best case," however, is warranted, because of the importance of dual-use technologies to Chinese military modernization (*China Brief*, February 21, 2012).The question would be whether attempting to get inside the networks of defense industry companies or those companies producing dual-use parts would constitute economic espionage. At least as Washington has defined it, gaining access to defense technologies to anticipate adversary capabilities would still be acceptable since the intent was not commercial advantage.

Scenario 2 - PLA Divestiture 2.0: Cutting Back on For-Profit Freelancing, Using Stricter Control

In 1998, Jiang Zemin ordered the PLA to divest itself of much of the commercial empire it had created since the beginning of the Reform Era. Beginning in the 1980s, the Chinese leadership led by Deng Xiaoping placed military modernization at the bottom of their list of policy priorities, converting much of the defense industrial base to civilian use. The PLA was encouraged to engage the market, and budget stagnation meant that the PLA budget was not fully funded. The profits of these commercial endeavors also went into commander's pockets, leading to some wide-ranging corruption scandals in the mid- and late-1990s. The divestiture order did not remove the PLA entirely from the commercial world, but it limited PLA commercial activities to support activities directly relevant to PLA maintenance in garrison, such as spousal support and on-base services. **[1]**

The most important step the PLA may have taken

was to rein in its soldiers who had been freelancing for companies and local party officials with commercial stakes. This divestiture would represent a major reduction in financial opportunities, and it would take time to implement. The PLA signals intelligence apparatus is a far-flung operation with elements sitting inside 3PLA bureaus and military region technical reconnaissance bureaus across the country. **[2]** Local military commands also have been one of the major sources of the PLA's corruption problem, and, if endowed with useful capabilities, cyber militias could an addition source of problems for the PLA in controlling freelancing, as they provide an easy avenue for civilian technical talent to interface with local commanders. One sign that this is occurring would be occasional flare-ups against reform, such as the PLA Daily article suggesting some of Xi's reforms under consideration undermined social cohesion and could affect stability (*South China Morning Post*, November 19).

Under this scenario, the PLA are intended to rein in soldiers and contractors from conducting operations that are not tied directly to specific needs for military intelligence, defense industry, or national-level policymakers. Limiting computer network operations requirements to those tied to specific information requirements could cut back PLA hacking substantially. In this scenario, outside observers probably would see a drop over time in the military's activity as policy and operational guidance is conceived and promulgated, including an inevitable period where uncertainty by low-level actors about the precise boundaries of the new limits frequently pushes decisions about operations back up the chain of command. Economic espionage originating with the PLA would be reduced, but not eliminated, though some Western commercial sectors with military applications could become the target of even more focused attacks

Scenario 3 - Worst Case: Shifting Responsibilities to the More Skilled

The indictments issued by the U.S. Department of Justice as well as the publicity generated over time in reports by U.S. cybersecurity companies could have demonstrated conclusively to the Chinese leadership that the PLA effort to support Chinese companies was hopelessly compromised. Unlike Edward Snowden's revelations of U.S. cyber espionage policy and targets, these cybersecurity reports provided detailed forensic information that traced back to individual PLA officers at their keyboards. Even if not all military hacking was sanctioned, the freelancing served Beijing's goals for economic growth, building internationally competitive companies, and gaining access to potentially useful strategic information about international commercial competition. This would not be the first time that the growth imperative would create unintended incentives for government behavior not entirely in Beijing's interests (*China Brief*, July 29, 2011; *China Brief*, May 9, 2007). Consequently, even though the Chinese leadership still values computer network operations for supporting Chinese firms, they may have ordered the PLA out of the economic espionage business and designated the Ministry of State Security (MSS) as the lead.

Two reasons might justify the emergence of the MSS as the Chinese lead in economic espionage, especially in cyberspace. First, the ministry has thus far avoided public exposure and scrutiny in large part due to what global information security analysts see as superior tradecraft. Second, Xi Jinping appears to have a strong political grip on the MSS after several vice ministers were ousted for corruption and inappropriate political activity linked to former security chief Zhou Yongkang and more amenable officials with strong anti-corruption credentials were installed in their stead (*Jinghua Shibao*, January 17; The National Interest, January 20; *South China Morning Post*, October 8; Xinhua, February 2, 2013).

In this scenario, the joint affirmation made after Xi's state visit to the United States in September was a hollow one. The statement clearly Beijing

accepting the basic U.S. premise that using state intelligence resources to support companies was wrong: "neither country's government will conduct or knowingly support cyber-enabled theft of intellectual property, including trade secrets or other confidential business information, with the intent of providing competitive advantages to companies or commercial sectors" (U.S. Office of the President, September 25; Xinhua, September 26). Chinese behavior in this scenario simply shifts responsibility to the organizations best suited to perform the mission and the best natural linkages to Chinese firms poised to benefit from the ill-gotten riches provided by ministry hackers. Importantly, the MSS is better positioned with its clandestine infrastructure to find useful contractors who can act with deniability and expendable scapegoats who can be arrested to appease foreign governments as Beijing has done recently for perpetrators of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management breach (Xinhua, December 2).

Conclusion

These scenarios for what is occurring in China, all credible in their own right, suggest that foreign analysts should exercise caution against over-interpreting or rushing to judgement about what the PLA might be doing in cyberspace. Because the PLA is still the armed wing of a political party in a state that defines the preservation of its party-army-state as a core interest, for the PLA, defending and supporting CCP interests takes primacy over defending a national interest divorced from the Party's. Observers then, should keep two things in mind: first, China's leadership still holds an expansive view of national or state security that places preservation of the system at the core (*China Brief*, November 16). An important piece of that system is that the party guides the economy. Second, the PLA's role has never been purely to carry out military operations, and the Political Work Guidelines revised in 2003 and again in 2010 reemphasized the role of the military in shaping the political, non-military aspects of China's security environment. Most notable among the PLA missions is the "dis-integration" (瓦解) of enemy forces in a non-military context. The Gutian Conference of 1929—where Xi Jinping notably convened a conference in 2014—criticized those who believed the PLA's role was simply to fight the party's enemies. One of the mistaken ideas in the party was "the purely military viewpoint," and the conference report opined those who held this view "think that the task of the Red Army like that of the [Kuomintang] army, is merely to fight. They do not understand that the Chinese Red Army is an armed body for carrying out the political tasks of the revolution." **[3]** The logical extension in today's world and the context of cyberspace means that PLA intelligence capabilities may not necessarily be confined to assisting the Chinese military in "winning local informatized wars."

Multiple explanations exist for the changes some information security analysts are describing in cyberspace. U.S. pressure, Chinese military modernization and reform, party and military anti-corruption campaigns, as well as changes within the intelligence system inside China all might impact PLA computer network operations in complementary ways that are difficult to separate from one another. The implications of each scenario are very different, and, if related PLA reforms that will not be completed until 2020 and the evolving intelligence landscape, then change should be the natural state, not clear lines of authority and activity.

Notes:

1. Thomas Bickford, "The People's Liberation Army and Its Changing Economic Roles: Implications for Civil-Military Relations," in Nan Li, ed., *Chinese Civil-Military Relations: The Transformation of the People's Liberation Army* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 148–163.
2. Mark A. Stokes, Jenny Lin and L.C. Russell Hsiao, *The Chinese People's Liberation Army Signals Intelligence and Cyber Reconnaissance Infrastructure*, Project

2049 Institute, November 11, 2011 <http://project2049.net/documents/pla_third_department_sigint_cyber_stokes_lin_hsiao.pdf>.
3. Mao Zedong, "On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party," December 1929, English translation available at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_5.htm>.

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From Academia to Politics: When Scholars Rule China

By Zhibo Qiu

In late October, China's State Council announced the appointment of Professor Chen Yulu, President of Fudan University as the Vice-Governor of the People's Bank of China (PBOC) (Xinhua News, October 30). Including Prof. Chen, five university presidents have been appointed to senior political positions of State Council ministries and affiliated institutions during the past ten months. Chinese academics are increasingly being appointed to senior political positions. Some have the potential to take top leadership roles within the Chinese government. One such former scholar, Wang Huning, director of the CCP's Central Committee's Central Policy Research Center, has received an increasing amount of media exposure both within China and abroad. As a rising star, Wang is a competitive candidate for a spot on the seven-man Standing Committee of the 19th Politburo, China's top decision-making body.

Chinese officials having advanced degrees is not by itself a new phenomenon. However, the current wave of scholarly politicians includes scholars who have worked for many years in academia as professors before taking into their political offices. As a group, they are not only different from China's previous generation of technocrats who predominantly had backgrounds in engineering and the sciences, but also from professional politicians who acquired their Ph.D. degrees as top or fast-tracked cadres. Their training and experiences abroad could result in distinctive leadership styles and policies. Additionally, as these "scholarly politicians" gain power after taking their offices, it is likely that they will bring like-minded scholars into the government.

China Opens the Revolving Door

The opening of the revolving door from academia to politics accelerated with the appointment of Prof. Chen Jining, former President of Tsinghua University (where President Xi studied for his Ph.D.) as the new Minister of Environment Protection (MEP) in February. The appointment of three other university presidents to senior political positions quickly followed: in January Hou Jianguo, President of University of Science and Technology of China was appointed as the Vice Minister of the Ministry of Technology (MOT), in February Huai Jinpeng, President of Beihang University (Aeronautics and Astronautics) was appointed as the Vice Minister of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT); in March Wang Enge, President of Peking University was appointed as the Vice President of Chinese Academy of Science (People.com, October 30).

The top leadership's preference for educated officials drives this wave of scholarly politicians. President Xi Jinping has expressed his respect for knowledge, particularly in social sciences, in various diplomatic and domestic occasions. In recent state visits to the United States and United Kingdom, at an anniversary event at the French Embassy and during an interview with the Russian media, President Xi impressed the audiences with references to Western literature and writers in his speeches (Chongqing Morning News, October 16; Phoenix News, March 29, 2014). Xi also attached great importance to Party officials interacting with and learning from non-party intellectuals (Xinhua News, May 20). In his eyes, the knowledge level of

party officials directly affects their performance (Xinhua News, September 1, 2012). Interestingly, the official title for the First Lady, Peng Liyuan, has been changed to "Prof. Peng" in a recent Ministry of Foreign Affairs press conference after she was made a visiting professor at four universities—and also for serving as dean of the People's Liberation Army's Fine Arts Academy (Beijing News, October 15). Recent government action plans have further signaled that academics' newfound influence is here to stay.

At the end of last year, the CCP released a series of regulations which will accelerate the process of bringing more academics into political positions. The official document, *Action Plan Outline on Building National Party and Government Leadership 2014–2018* highlighted the need to recruit officials from State-Owned Enterprises, universities, research institutes and other related public institutions (People.com, December 26, 2014). In a special Circular, President Xi called to develop "new-type" Chinese think tanks with international influence and unleash the power of intellectual community for policy consultation and international publicity (Xinhua News, February 28). Later, President Xi presided over the passing of the *Action Plan on National High-Level Think Tank Pilot Programs* during the latest meeting of the Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reforms (Phoenix News, November 12). In line with the Party leadership, these think tanks are expected to provide innovative policy recommendations and pave the way for further reforms. Meanwhile, the State Council issued the *Action Plan on Developing China's World-Class Universities and Subjects* to provide sustained human resources for enhancing China's national power (Xinhua News, November 5). Both of these action plans will create more opportunities for scholars to be involved in the policy making process and advanced to political positions.

Another group with rising political clout is the Expert Advisory Group for China's 13th Five Year Plan, the Party's top intellectual brainstorming body. 80 percent of the 55 experts hold doctoral degrees, in the areas of economics, technology, law, environmental protection and public policy. Half of the experts have studied abroad. Among scholarly experts, six are from Academy of Social Sciences, five from Peking University and four from Tsinghua University. A notable metric for measuring the influence of this group is the amount of "face-time" these experts are having with China's top leaders. Though members of the politburo are regularly briefed on relevant topics, there has been an increase in such contact. Out of the Expert Advisory Group, 16 have given lectures to the Politburo so far this year (Xinhua News, July 13). The politicians they are lecturing are an increasingly educated group as well.

When Scholars Rule China

The educational background of China's top leadership has seen three distinct generations. First, for Chairman Mao and Deng Xiaoping's leadership, senior leaders were former revolutionary and military generals. Though several had experience abroad and some formal education, they were primarily shaped by their revolutionary experiences. Second, in the next two decades, engineering technocrats dominated the party and state's senior positions. President Jiang Zemin had a degree in electrical engineering. His Premier, Li Peng, studied hydroelectricity in Moscow. Their successors had similar backgrounds: Former President Hu Jintao studied hydraulic engineering and his Premier Wen Jiabao studied geology. For the current leadership, their educational background emphasizes the social sciences—President Xi studied Marxist philosophy and Premier Li Keqiang economics. Both received Ph.D.'s. The change is also reflected in official documents and speeches. Compared to Hu Jintao, Xi Jinping employs more florid language—with frequent use of metaphors and references to literature, instead of using data and other numerical arguments. Additionally, social media, cartoons and videos are frequently used by Xi and his office to deliver messages to younger generations (*China*

Brief, July 17).

Scholarly politicians remain distinct from this most recent group of professional politicians who acquired their doctorate degrees while continuing to work inside the government. Before taking the office, scholarly politicians spent their lives in the classroom, conducting field work and research projects. Their shared academic experiences could potentially imprint some common features on these newly-turned ministers and vice ministers that will affect China's policy directions and leadership styles.

Innovative and Transparent: Proponents for Reforms

There are indications that scholars tend to be more open and innovative regarding to possible policies, and more willing to taking political risks for non-conventional policies. They are likely to become proponents for President Xi's comprehensive reforms. For example, information safety has emerged and replaced conventional security concerns on top of China-U.S. relations. As one of China's most renowned information safety scholars, Huai Jinpeng, the newly appointed Vice Minister of the MIIT has used his position to call for upgrades to China's information technology infrastructure and protecting internet safety. His new position has given him a platform to air his views. Early this year, Huai gave a lecture on information technology and safety to the standing committee of the National People's Congress (Xinhua News, April 25). Scholars tend to adopt innovative approaches to challenge traditional practices. Chen Jining and his office vowed to implement strict enforcement of environmental protection laws. Chen introduced a new joint mechanism with the CCDI that holds local governments responsible for environment degradation and prevention. Instead of investigating polluting companies, the Ministry of Environmental Protection now holds local officials responsible when pollution cases are reported. Officials who fail to reduce pollution in their jurisdiction are subjected to further investigation and punishment by the CCDI (MEP website, March 23).

Effective Speakers For Domestic and Foreign Policy

Scholarly politicians tend to be more amiable and open, compared to professional politicians. This class of scholars are media savvy—they are active on Chinese social media and are confident and dynamic in front of the press—a far cry from their dour predecessors. They tend to use media interviews and public campaigns to actively engage with the public—an ability that has proven critical to handling fast-unfolding news events. For instance, two days after his official appointment, Chen Jining held a press conference with over 20 media outlets for his first official appearance. In the meeting, Chen stressed the importance of public participation and campaigns on environment protection. In another instance, less than 24 hours after famous investigative reporter Chai Jing unveiled an independent documentary about China's severe air pollution, Chen critically shared with the media that he expressed his appreciation for her work in a text message. **[1]** Further putting the MEP in front of the emerging news story, Chen pledged that the MEP will work closely with the media to increase contact between government and public and address public concerns (Xinhua News, March 1). Chai Jing's documentary received over 100 million views across Chinese websites. Though the video was later removed from Chinese websites, the timing of Chen's response was critical, with media exposure of the MEP press meeting extending to the Two Meetings (全国两会), the annual meetings of the National People's Congress and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, a few days later (Xinhua News, March 9). Following Chen's "media storm," the MEP launched a popular "Green Lifestyle" public campaign to increase public awareness and change social lifestyle and environmentally-friendly consumption pattern (Xinhua News, November

16). **[2]** The MEP also created official *Wexin* and *Weibo* accounts, and required provincial and local environment protection bureaus to launch their own social media presence and websites in June. In September, Chen's Ministry further passed new regulations to promote public participation on environmental protection (China News, July 3).

Well-Connected and Recognized Within the International Community

Scholars and university presidents have established extensive connections with international scholars, business and politicians during the course of their academic careers. All of the aforementioned five scholarly politicians previously studied and worked abroad. They have attended international conferences, drafted papers with international scholars and been interviewed by foreign media. With advanced English skills, an important consideration in the selection of scholarly politicians is the ability to better articulate China's positions internationally. Chen Yulu, the new Vice-Governor of the People's Bank of China, was a Fulbright scholar at the University of Columbia and a senior visiting scholar at the Eisenhower Fund. Before becoming a politician, Chen Yulu founded a Chinese think tank, the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies. This institute focuses on advocating China's positions within the international intellectual community for China's presidency of the G20 in 2016 presidency. Some media speculated that the next move for Chen Yulu is to take over as Vice President of the IMF (National Business Daily, October 21). These celebrity scholars have the potential to change the traditional perception of "pokerfaced" Chinese leaders and improve China's soft power.

Obstacles

Despite apparent advantages to putting more scholars in leadership positions, there are a number of obstacles that can prevent their rise. One important criterion is their political views. The *Outline* clearly stressed this point that political reliability and correctness is among top criteria for selecting officials (People.com, December 26, 2014). Despite the emphasis on bringing in alternative views to governance, a lack of political correctness or early ideological "indiscretions" in a scholars' career could end their prospects for leadership positions.

A second obstacle for scholarly politicians is their lack of political experience and shallow practical understanding of how bureaucratic systems work. Reform-minded scholarly politicians will meet strong resistance from the conservative bureaucrats. Scholars might potentially overestimate the efficiency of the policy implementation of their ideas. It depends on their previous political experiences and observations, as well as to what degree Xi's anti-corruption campaign will change bureaucratic culture and mentality.

Conclusion

The interaction between politics and academia will be enhanced through the "revolving door" between leadership positions and academia, as well as further development of think tanks during Xi's term. Compared to professional politicians, scholarly politicians' political ideology and policies are relatively more open and accessible, due to their generally large bodies of public work and frequent public appearances. Such a background will help build trust by clarifying a policymaker's intentions. It will improve the quality of governance within the Chinese government. After completing their terms, these scholars are likely to return to the universities and share hands-on experiences with Chinese students. A more professional and pragmatic education of political sciences and public policy will benefit China's future leaders.

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Notes

1. Chai Jing is one of China's most famous journalists. She previously worked the CCTV, state television station.
2. The Ministry of Environmental Protection has declared 2016 as "Green Lifestyle" year and June as "ecological protection month."

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China's Emerging "Af-Pak" Dilemma

By Michael Clarke

The Chinese Ministry Foreign Affairs recently dispatched Deng Xijun, an experienced Asia-policy trouble-shooter, to Afghanistan as China's special envoy (MFA, November 12). Mr. Deng met with Afghan political and military leaders, where he reemphasized China's commitment to the peace and stability of Afghanistan. This meeting comes at a critical moment. As China pursues its "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR) strategy, it is working to ensure that instability in Pakistan and Afghanistan do not disrupt the realization of President Xi Jinping's signature foreign policy project. With U.S. and NATO presence drawing down, China then is left with an "Af-Pak" dilemma of its own—now more than ever—responsible for balancing the two and holding this fragile part of its western border together.

China's approach to Afghanistan to date has been focused on achieving political reconciliation between Kabul and the Taliban—what it terms an "Afghan-led and Afghan-owned" peace process—and fostering economic development (MFA, January 6; MFA, February 12). Recent examples of this approach have included Chinese participation in a special meeting in Moscow with other regional stakeholders to discuss the future of Afghanistan, and China's hosting the Fourth Foreign Ministerial Conference of the Istanbul Process on Afghanistan in October 2014 and major investments in the resources sector such as the Mes Anyak copper mine (Ministry of Defense Online, October 9; Xinhua, October 24, 2014; *China Daily*, October 29, 2014).

A key element of Beijing's strategy to encourage a political settlement has been built on the assumption that it can leverage its influence with Pakistan to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table. **[1]** The continued practicality of this approach is now under question due to a number of developments. First, the death of Mullah Muhammad Omar and the fracturing of the group under his successor Mullah Akhtar Mansour, undermines China's push for a political settlement. Beijing is left with the situation of only being able to negotiate with a faction of the group, rather than a true leader. Second, the multiple bomb attacks by the Taliban in Kabul on August 10 and 12, 2015—which Afghan Prime Minister Ghani described as an example of Pakistan's "undeclared war" against his government—suggests that Beijing's goal of a peaceful settlement in the Afghanistan is not shared in Islamabad (Dawn [Pakistan], February 12). Additionally, the unwillingness or inability of its "all weather" friend Pakistan to eliminate Uyghur militants based along its frontier with Afghanistan strikes at Beijing's primary interest in ensuring the security and stability of Xinjiang. Finally, there have been suggestions that China's enunciation of the OBOR, the situation in Afghanistan and Beijing's concerns regarding Uyghur militants have created an alignment of interests with those of the United States to such an extent that they could form a real opportunity to develop greater Sino-U.S. cooperation. While Beijing and Washington both have an interest in countering radical Islamism in the region, the underlying geopolitical logic of the OBOR and China's own "war on terrorism" in Xinjiang are at odds with the interests of the United States.

Beijing's OBOR: An Opportunity for Sino-U.S. Cooperation?

A major problem in the current climate of Sino-U.S. relations has been to identify areas in which the interests of both parties overlap to "mutual benefit" more than they diverge. China's OBOR strategy, President Xi's signature initiative, which seeks to enhance Eurasian economic connectivity through the construction of a Silk Road Economic Belt and a Maritime Silk Road, is one such area that has been seen as holding positive potential here.

In 2011 the Obama administration launched its "New Silk Road Initiative" that sought to make Afghanistan a north-to-south economic corridor between Central and South Asia. **[2]** Since then administration officials have regularly argued that China's own initiatives such as the OBOR are "mutually reinforcing" of U.S. efforts to "support peace, stability, and prosperity" through the enhancement of economic opportunity and connectivity "in what is the least-economically integrated region in the world today" (U.S. State Department, October 25, 2013). From this perspective, Beijing shares Washington's desire to see a stable and secure Afghanistan due primarily to Beijing's own concerns with Uyghur terrorism in Xinjiang.

The strength of this view is primarily based on two major factors. First, the OBOR itself, while growing out of a decades-long agenda to firmly integrate Xinjiang and overcome Uyghur separatism and terrorism through the delivery of economic development, looks set to engage China more directly in the problems of the region. With its focus on the development of trans-regional infrastructure links and investment such as the planned $46 billion "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor" (CEPC)—linking Kashgar in Xinjiang's south-west with the largely Chinese built deep-water port of Gwadar on Pakistan's Arabian Sea coast and the Anyak copper mine in Afghanistan's Logar province—the OBOR looks set to give China a greater stake in the future security and prosperity of Central Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan (*China Brief*, July 31; *The Express Tribune* [Pakistan], February 15, 2014).

Second, the increasing number of terrorist attacks in Xinjiang, which China has attributed to militants based in the Af-Pak tribal areas, has arguably revealed to Beijing that it can no longer rely on the partial "outsourcing" of its security to the U.S. and NATO military presence in Afghanistan nor the Pakistani military along the Af-Pak frontier (Dawn [Pakistan], November 8, 2014). Rather Beijing, as it pursues the OBOR, must revise its to-date largely "hands off" approach to the security situation in Afghanistan.

Yet deeper consideration of both of these factors suggests that the potential overlap between U.S. and Chinese interests should not be overstated.

China's Interests in Af-Pak: Geopolitics, Xinjiang, and Uyghur Terrorism

Prominent Chinese scholar Wang Jisi has argued that China's "march westward" embodied in the OBOR is a "strategic necessity" as the "eastward shift" in strategic focus of the Obama administration (i.e. the "pivot" or "rebalance" to Asia) threatens to lock Sino-U.S. relations into a "zero-sum game" in East Asia. If China's "march westwards" succeeds "the potential for U.S.-China cooperation" will increase and "there will be almost no risk of military confrontation." For most of its history, Wang notes, China was strategically oriented to the east due to the "traditional development advantages" of the country's eastern provinces and the fact that the major strategic and military threats to the country emanated from its maritime frontiers. Now the "march westwards" is a necessity in order to ensure that: "harmony and stability" in Xinjiang (and Tibet) are not threatened by "extremism, terrorism and other hostile external forces"; "the supply channels for oil and other bulk commodities to the west of China's borders remain open"; and China can expand its economic

cooperation (including the provision of economic aid) with "all West Asian nations." **[3]** From this perspective, Central Asia emerges as a geopolitical "safety valve" for the expansion of Chinese influence given the perceived decline of U.S. influence and interest in the region after its withdrawal from Afghanistan. **[4]**

Greater Chinese security engagement in Afghanistan promises not only to make it a more overt target for radical Islamists, negatively impacting the security of Xinjiang, but also to damage Beijing geopolitically by bringing it overtly into conflict with Pakistani interests. China could also incur significant reputational costs given its previous insistence on contrasting its doctrine of "non-intervention" to that of the West's recent record of direct intervention into the affairs of others**.**

Despite recent developments on the ground in Afghanistan—including the possible fracturing of the Taliban in the face of the emergence of Islamic State, in the country—it appears that China's approach to the country remains cautious. Indeed it is difficult to discern a fundamental shift in approach to that described by Beijing's previous Special Envoy to Afghanistan, Sun Yuxi, when he noted in July 2014 that: "Preserving Afghanistan's stability is not a matter of adding troops but of helping Afghanistan to quickly rebuild" (MFA, July 28; *China Brief*, December 5, 2014).

Beijing's concern with the threat of Uyghur terrorism in Xinjiang and its links to Af-Pak are arguably increasing with the drawdown of the United States' and NATO military presence in Afghanistan. Beijing has recently made concerted efforts to draw links between attacks such as those carried out by Uyghur militants in Kunming and Urumqi in 2014 and radical Islamists beyond China's borders in Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and the wider Middle East. While a small number of Uyghur militants have travelled as far afield as Syria and Iraq to fight with Islamic State, the primary source of foreign support for Uyghur militants in Xinjiang is much closer to home along the Af-Pak frontier (Al Arabiya, July 28, 2014).

Chinese government spokesmen, for instance, linked the Kunming attackers to the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) (Xinhua, March 30, 2014). The attack was subsequently claimed by the leader of the Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP)—believed to be a successor organization to ETIM (Reuters, March 14, 2014). ETIM functioned from the late 1990s to early 2000s and was dealt a severe blow after the death of its leader, Hasan Mahsum, during a Pakistani military operation in Waziristan in October 2003. Despite Chinese claims, however, there has been little concrete evidence that ETIM ever mounted successful attacks in Xinjiang during that time. **[5]**

TIP emerged around 2006 and is believed to consist of hundreds of militants based near Mir Ali in North Waziristan and allied with the Pakistani Taliban and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), one of Central Asia's most resilient Islamist movements (*Terrorism Monitor*, March 17, 2011).

The connections between ETIM, TIP and the IMU and the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban pose a number of challenges for Beijing. Since the U.S. and NATO-led invasion of the country after the events of 9/11, China's approach to Afghanistan has been defined by a focus on the protection of its own narrow self-interests, namely insulating its restive province of Xinjiang from the destabilizing influences of Afghan-based radical Islamism and drugs trafficking, securing access to the natural resources of the country, and encouraging a negotiated political settlement between the Afghan government and the Taliban (*China Daily*, June 21, 2013).

China's pragmatism vis-à-vis the Taliban since its emergence in the mid-1990s was famously underlined by its then ambassador to Pakistan, Lu Shulin, meeting Mullah Omar in Kandahar in November 2000 to seek assurances that Uyghur militants from Xinjiang would be restrained. **[6]**

Even after the events of 9/11, and U.S. and NATO intervention to oust the Taliban, Beijing continued to seek similar assurances from the group's leadership council in exile in Pakistan, the Quetta Shura. In November 2014 it even reportedly hosted a number of senior Taliban representatives for talks in Beijing (The News [Pakistan], January 2). Ultimately, Beijing's approach has been based on the judgement that the Taliban will remain a core political actor in the country and that its goals remain limited primarily to Afghanistan. Prominent Chinese analyst, Zhao Huasheng, has argued that "China is not opposed to the organization but is instead opposed to terrorism, separatism and extremism." **[7]**

Conclusion

This approach now appears to be of diminishing utility. In particular, the reduction of U.S. and NATO military presence in the country and reports of the spreading influence of Islamic State amongst sections of the Taliban suggests that Prime Minister Ashraf Ghani's government will face a mounting security challenge (Pajhwok [Afghanistan], February 2).

The reported switch of allegiance of groups such as the IMU to Islamic State will also be of major concern for Beijing given that the IMU has in the past hosted Uyghur militants in camps along the Af-Pak frontier. The ongoing nature of this particular threat was underlined in February 2015 when Afghan government security forces arrested fifteen Uyghur militants in Kunar Province along the border with Pakistan who had formerly been affiliated with the Pakistani Taliban (Al Arabiya, February 20). There now appears to be public debate in China about what the country's role should be in Afghanistan. The *Global Times*, for example, published an editorial in October 2014 suggesting that while greater involvement in Afghanistan "will bring huge risks" Beijing has no choice but to "be there" and "bear the cost of being a major power" as U.S. and NATO forces withdraw (Global Times, October 30, 2014).

The extent of such risks were also neatly captured in a commentary published by *China Military Online* after the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's (SCO) 2014 anti-terrorism exercises, which argued that such exercises had a "profound significance" for regional security as the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan "will leave a huge security vacuum" that could be filled by not only a resurgent Taliban and associated groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Uyghur extremists from the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) but potentially Islamic State (China Military Online, September 9, 2014). With the Taliban fracturing, Islamic State influence on the rise and the utility of its close ties to Pakistan in the Afghan context potentially declining, the question remains as to how high a cost Beijing is willing to pay to secure its interests as a "major power" in Afghanistan? Given the mix of incentives behind Beijing's current level of engagement in Afghanistan, one may suggest that while Beijing may no longer be aloof from the country's problems it nonetheless will remain extremely cautious about deepening its level of engagement due to the potential risks to the security of Xinjiang, its broader geopolitical interests in Central Eurasia and its international reputation that may flow from such a decision. This would not appear to be conducive terrain for the development of closer Sino-U.S. cooperation.

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Notes

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