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## In a Fortnight:

### China-Indonesia Relations Heat Up Along the Third “Dash”

On March 19, Chinese and Indonesian media reported that a confrontation had taken place between Chinese fishing boats and an Indonesian Fisheries Ministry ship near the Natuna Islands, in the South China Sea ([Guancha](#), March 21; [Kompas](#) [Indonesia], March 21). Indonesian media reported that the country’s foreign minister, Retno L.P. Marsudi, had summoned China’s chargé d’affaires in Jakarta to lodge a letter of protest ([Kompas](#) [Indonesia], March 22).

When questioned about whether the Chinese fishing ship was in Chinese or Indonesian waters, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Hua Chunying responded that the vessel was in “traditional Chinese fishing waters” ([MFA \[China\]](#),

March 21). China concedes that the Natuna Islands, a small archipelago nearby, is not Chinese territory. However, the fact that the incident occurred within “traditional Chinese fishing grounds,” combined with the ambiguity of the nine-dash line that China uses to demarcate its territorial claims in the South China Sea, creates the potential for conflict.

The waters and island territories along the third and fourth “dashes” of China’s “nine-dash line” have traditionally been the calmest area of the otherwise contentious region. Though similar confrontations occurred in 2010 and 2013, China’s relations with nearby Indonesia and Malaysia, the countries whose claims overlap with the third and fourth dashes, have generally been characterized by greater coordination and less strident rhetoric than China’s relations with its closer neighbors, Vietnam and the Philippines. However, the size of China’s Navy and Coast Guard have both expanded greatly in the intervening years, and the construction on Cuarterton and Fiery Cross Reefs, roughly four hundred miles to the northeast, means that Chinese influence in the region is stronger than ever.

This dispute has occurred during what has been an otherwise positive upswing for China-Indonesia diplomatic relations. Whereas China has frequent, vocal and intense disagreements with its close neighbors, Vietnam and the Philippines over fishing vessels and government statements, Indonesia and China have instead chosen to downplay their bilateral tensions (see Vietnam MFA, March 17). In late February, Indonesian Vice President Jusuf Kalla said that he did not believe it was China's intention to take territory by force (Konpas, [Indonesia] February 29). However, this relatively sober relationship might now be changing, due in part to a stronger Chinese ability to deploy forces to the region by air and sea.

China has been rapidly expanding its Coast Guard forces by converting a number of aging navy destroyers and corvettes to Coast Guard use in order to bolster the already large numbers of Chinese Coast Guard vessels (China Brief, May 15, 2015).

Earlier, in late February, U.S. Director of National Intelligence James Clapper wrote an open letter to members of Congress in which he emphasized that China has greatly expanded its "installed surveillance systems" on islands and artificial features throughout the South China Sea (USNI, March 8). Director Clapper further emphasized, "Once these facilities are completed by the end of 2016 or early 2017, China will have significant capacity to quickly project substantial offensive military power to the region."

Economically, China and Indonesia had high hopes for further integration. A high-speed rail project worth \$5.5 billion, for example, was frequently cited as a hallmark of China's Belt and Road Initiative, meant to provide affordable infrastructure for other countries and help China build demand for its industries (China Brief, October 10, 2013). The project has since run into problems, mirroring a larger trend toward slackening bilateral trade (Jakarta Post [Indonesia], January 26). With slowing Chinese growth and the accompanying fall in Chinese demand for commodities, China's trade with Indonesia has slid dramatically. Minerals, which previously occupied more than 30 percent of Indonesia's total trade and more than half of its trade with China, dropped from a high in 2013 of \$3.6 billion to below \$1 billion in

2015 (World Bank, [accessed March 23]). According to the latest available statistics, Indonesia's exports to China over the first six months of 2015 only totaled \$7.5 billion, a decrease of 19.3 percent compared to the preceding year (Chinese Ministry of Commerce, [accessed March 23]).

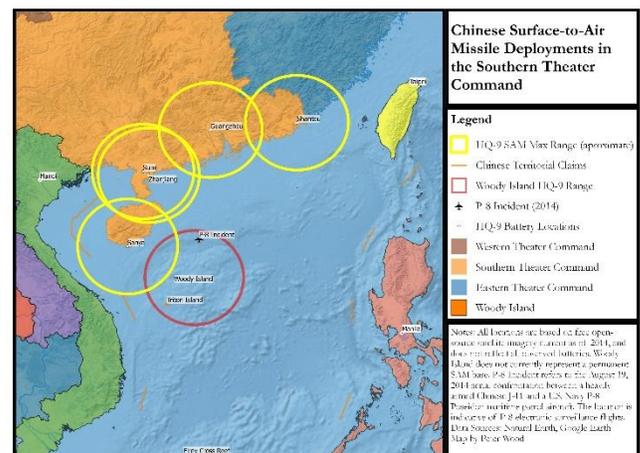
Indonesian President Joko Widodo is unlikely to want to see Indonesia dragged into a confrontation with China over fishing rights. Widodo's campaign for the presidency in 2014 was based on fighting corruption and ensuring economic growth.

China's artificial islands close to Indonesia are no longer mere heaps of sand, and are instead home to runways, hangars and radar stations. With fewer potential business deals with China in the offing, it remains to be seen how Jakarta will move forward with its relationship with China.

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## Beijing Ups the Ante in South China Sea Dispute with HQ-9 Deployment

By Timothy R. Heath



(See <http://www.jamestown.org/chinabrief/> for a larger image)

China's recent deployment of HQ-9 missiles to the Paracel Islands represent part of a larger effort to

consolidate the country's position in the South China Sea. While the deployment in itself only adds an incremental improvement to China's ability to control the Paracel Islands, its larger significance lies in its demonstration of Beijing's determination to strengthen control of the vital water and air space over the objections of its Southeast Asian neighbors, the United States and other countries. Even more worryingly, China's rising confidence in the moral, legal and, over time, military strength of its position may embolden it to risk a dangerous level of escalation in any militarized crisis involving the Paracels.

On February 16, media reported that China had deployed two batteries of eight Hongqi-9 (HQ-9) surface-to-air missile (SAM) launchers to Woody Island in the Paracels ([Guancha](#), February 17). Like the Russian S-300 system which it largely resembles, the HQ-9 is a modern, capable SAM system with a range of roughly 120 nautical miles (nm) ([AusAirpower.net](#), [accessed March 6]). Reportedly, the HQ-9 incorporates technology from the U.S. Patriot missile, namely its "track via missile" guidance system ([Missile Threat](#), [accessed March 6]). China continues to gradually replace legacy 1960s-era SA-2 strategic SAMs with more capable S-300 and HQ-9 SAM systems, and this deployment in part reflects the broader effort to replace legacy systems with more modern ones.

This is not the first time China has sent the advanced SAM system to those contested islands. Senior U.S. military officials have confirmed that China sent the missiles at least twice before to participate in exercises ([Military.com](#), February 19). This deployment differs from those previous occasions in that it was not part of any exercise. Moreover, the PLA has operated in the Paracels for decades, even formally incorporating Woody Island as the seat of the prefecture-level Sansha City that administers Chinese territorial claims in the area. China seized the Paracel Islands from then—South Vietnam in 1974. Today only Vietnam and Taiwan also claim ownership of the islands. This is in contrast to the more hotly contested Spratly Islands, in which China's military presence remains nascent. In addition to the recent extension of the island's airstrip to military-grade, Woody Island also features hardened gun emplace-

ments ([China Brief](#), October 23, 2014). Woody Island has also hosted visits by military ships and airplanes, including deployments of J-11 aircraft ([Sina](#), October 31, 2015).

### **Military Significance**

In military terms, the deployment of the HQ-9 on the Paracel Islands incrementally increases China's ability to control the airspace immediately surrounding Woody Island. However, its tactical significance increases when deployed in combination with other anti-access, area denial (A2/AD) weapons. Moreover, the weapon carries tactical and strategic implications that can affect the regional security order in peacetime, crisis and in conflict.

The most direct tactical effect in peacetime is to threaten the safety of U.S. surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft that may pass by the islands, such as the U.S. Navy's P-3 or P-8 patrol planes. China has long protested such missions and sortied fighter aircraft to intercept U.S. airplanes. Deployment of SAM systems such as the HQ-9 or S-300 along the coast or on disputed islands such as the Paracels adds a more threatening way for China to signal its dissatisfaction with the flights. The danger increases if strains in the bilateral relationship embolden Beijing to take provocative measures. Targeting the U.S. patrol planes with the SAM's targeting radar would represent a highly threatening gesture that could reinforce Beijing's point, although such a move would carry its own risks of aggravating military tensions with the United States.

The peacetime deployment of a SAM system to the Paracels also establishes precedent for the militarization of Chinese holdings in the Spratly Islands. Over time, China could increase both the scale of military weapons and systems on the Paracels as well as gradually introduce military weapons and platforms in other contested features, such as the Spratly Islands. China could cite any number of military activities on the part of the United States or other regional powers as justification for such an expansion. But the net effect would be to gradually strengthen China's military edge over a rival disputant and raise the stakes for the United States and any country that might seek to curb Chinese control of the features.

In a crisis involving the South China Sea, deployment of HQ-9 and similar systems to the Paracels, Hainan Island, the southeast coast and, perhaps, the Spratly Islands could strengthen Chinese control of the local airspace. Deployment of HQ-9–armed destroyers, such as the Type 052C or 052D, could provide additional coverage of the airspace, posing a severe threat to aircraft sortied by Chinese opponents. PLA Navy Destroyer *zhidui* at Zhanjiang, Guangdong Province, and in Sanya both include several such destroyers ([China Military Online](#), September 7, 2015; [China News](#), June 3, 2013). Combined with deployments of military aircraft and ships and surface-to-surface missiles, the SAM umbrella could place China in a strong position to dominate any of its rival neighbors in any crisis around the disputed features and raise the risk of a major escalation in a confrontation involving the United States.

It is true that in a major war, assets stationed on the Paracels, Spratlys, or other islands would be highly vulnerable to attack. After all, the features remain well within range of land-based cruise missiles, such as Vietnam's P-800 Oniks (range: 600 nm), among other threats. The confined space on remote islands renders useless the HQ-9's mobility. But attacking missiles on the islands would require striking what China regards as its territory, which would bring its own risks of escalation. If the United States, Vietnam, or other country opted not to hazard major war to remove the missile threat, then options to cope with the HQ-9 in a militarized crisis or clash would become much more limited.

### Political and Strategic Significance

Observers debate whether China sent the missiles in response to recent U.S. military activities that Beijing found objectionable. In January, Western media reported that a U.S. warship passed within 12nm of another occupied atoll in the Paracel islands, Triton Island (中建島) ([MOD](#), January 30). The same month, China criticized reports indicating growing South Korean interest in hosting U.S.-provided Terminal High Altitude Air Defense (THAAD) missiles. A “tit for tat” response to perceived U.S. military provocations would be very much in keeping with the

security policy of Xi Jinping's administration ([China Brief](#), June 19, 2015).

Chinese officials and commentators have in fact depicted the deployment as a “defensive response” to U.S. military activity in the South China Sea. At a press conference on February 25, the Ministry of Defense spokesman mocked U.S. efforts to make the HQ-9 a “hot issue” and claimed the deployment served “defensive purposes” ([MOD](#), February 25). A few weeks prior to news of the deployment, Chinese media reported that Wu Shengli, Commander of the PLA Navy, reportedly warned U.S. Chief of Naval Operations Admiral John Richardson that China's decision to send military capabilities to the contested region would “completely depend on the level of threat we face” ([China Daily](#), January 22). In the aftermath of reports of the HQ-9 deployment, Chinese commentary has similarly accused the United States of “militarizing” the South China Sea situation and depicted the deployment as a “defensive” response to U.S. “violations of international law” through naval and air operations near Chinese claimed maritime features ([People's Daily Online](#), February 20). An article in the semi-official populist newspaper, *Global Times*, explained that China would “respond with countermeasures” to “every provocation from the United States” ([Global Times](#), February 19). It echoed Wu's warning in declaring that China's choice of military deployment would “depend on the kind of threat posed by the United States and other outside forces.”

Efforts to depict Chinese military actions as being in the moral and legal right closely follow the style of politics that has prevailed under Xi Jinping. Xi's pledge of a “bottom line” principle set the tone in rejecting compromise on any territorial or sovereignty issue ([China Brief](#), January 7, 2013). The 2013 defense white paper similarly aims to establish China's moral high ground in repurposing the Maoist dictum that China will “never attack, but if attacked, we will surely counter attack” from one of defense against invasion to one in which China will “resolutely take all measures necessary to safeguard its national sovereignty and territorial integrity” ([SCIO](#), April 16, 2013). The more confident that Beijing feels that it has the moral and legal upper hand, the more inclined

it will be to tolerate risk in any crisis involving the disputed South China Sea islands.

### Conclusion

By itself, the deployment of an HQ-9 SAM system to Woody Island only incrementally increases China's control over the air space in the South China Sea (See map). Its range falls short of Hainan Island and scarcely covers more than a fraction of the vast air-space of the South China Sea. The most immediate threat posed is to aircraft that fly within its range—principally, U.S. reconnaissance and surveillance airplanes. Although China has long challenged the legitimacy of those flights, it is unlikely to shoot down the airplanes unprovoked. In a crisis featuring a military standoff involving U.S. forces in the South China Sea, however, Chinese willingness to risk a crisis to demonstrate its resolve would greatly increase the danger. U.S. commanders would have to weigh the hazards of flying within range of the system against the importance of signaling U.S. resolve and collecting intelligence. However, the threat goes beyond the United States. All other countries that traverse the South China Sea have reason to exercise caution. Indeed, Australian authorities have already expressed concern about potential threats to aircraft passing through the region (*The Australian*, February 19). Any other regional rival that sought to probe China's resolve to defend any of its claimed features in the South China Sea could similarly find itself at the receiving end of a military retaliation and all the risks of disastrous miscalculation that such a situation would entail. As China's confidence in the moral, legal, and, over time, the military strength of its position increases, its leadership will likely show an even greater willingness to tolerate risk for the sake of establishing its resolve to defend its claims.

Short of a crisis, the larger significance remains political and strategic. The deployment signals China's determination to consolidate its gains in the South China Sea, regardless of criticism by the United States and its allies. Beijing has firmly rejected demands by U.S. authorities to "stop" construction or militarization of its holdings in the South China Sea. China appears equally determined to demonstrate that however much countries in Asia may resent it, they are incapable of impeding Beijing's pursuit of

control over the critical maritime space. It is no coincidence that China has loudly promoted the potential economic gains of its "One Belt, One Road" and other regional economic initiatives at the same time that it has pushed its coercive, but so far non-violent expansion of control over the South China Sea. U.S. efforts to build international pressure through joint patrols and promotion of arbitration through international courts represent the right way to counter China's moves. However, determining the appropriate level of international pressure to dissuade Beijing remains a worryingly elusive task.

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## China's Fourth Evil: Drug Trafficking in the PRC

By David Volodzko

Cai Dongjia, party secretary for Boshe village in Lufeng, Guangdong province, and a man otherwise known as "the Godfather of Meth," was sentenced to death last week ([Guangdong Courts](#), March 7). Cai was arrested in 2014 when 3,000 police raided his village, confiscating three metric tons of methamphetamine and uncovering the involvement of over one-fifth of the households in Boshe village, leading reports to compare it to the television show "Breaking Bad" ([South China Morning Post](#), January 6, 2014). Two weeks ago, police in Harbin—in China's northeastern Heilongjiang province—apprehended three methamphetamine traffickers after a dramatic car chase ended in a collision later described as a scene from another American series, *Fast & Furious* ([Harbin News](#), March 9). Although drug busts like these are encouraging and the press they receive is welcomed by the government, they indicate the emergence of unconventional vectors and the unprecedented quantities of locally produced narcotics, two factors that may require Beijing to adopt a new approach, namely, enhanced government transparency and direct coordination

with foreign agencies at both the national and local levels.

One of China's biggest anti-narcotics victories was the recent capture of Sai Naw Kham, formerly a thug whose loyalty belonged to the Shan warlord and opium trader Khun Sa, but who later became head of the drug trafficking organization, Hawngleuk Militia, and as a result, arguably Burma's most powerful druglord. After initially denying the charges, Kham pled guilty to killing 13 Chinese sailors and was executed in Kunming, the capital of China's Yunnan province, in 2013 (CCTV, September 20, 2012; [Xinhua](#), September 21, 2012; [People's Daily](#), March 1, 2013). According to Ai Zhen, a foreign affairs official for Yunnan's Xishuangbanna, which borders Burma, Naw Kham's group was the "most powerful" in the entire the Mekong region ([China Daily](#), September 20, 2012).

Other recent victories include a number of major busts. Last year, Beijing Customs officials caught two Tanzanians smuggling 155 heroin capsules in their bodies, 2015's largest bust ([China Daily](#), March 4). Last month, Nanning officials seized 40 kilograms of drugs including ecstasy, ketamine and nimetazepam ([China Daily](#), February 22). Last week, Bao'an police seized 2.1 kilograms of methamphetamine ([Yangcheng Evening News](#), March 8). As police improve at catching culprits, the culprits learn to evade police. However, now there is an online drug trade through Chinese websites such as Qinjiayuan, which mimic the Silk Road website, which served as the first modern internet marketplace for drugs ([Global Times](#), July 7, 2015).

### Prosecuting Drug Crimes

According to Sun Jungong, spokesman for the Supreme People's Court, from 2007 to 2011, the number of drug-related trials increased by roughly 80 percent ([Xinhua](#), June 26, 2012). Last year, 1.06 million drug users were arrested in China, representing a 20 percent increase from the year before and constituting 14 percent of all criminal cases. Half of these were first-time offenders, 73.2 percent were amphetamine users, 60.6 percent of all users were between 18 and 35 years old and notably, 80 percent of traffickers were farmers or unemployed

([South China Morning Post](#), February 18). In China, drug trafficking is predominantly a young farmer's game. As the problem continues to explode, it is therefore China's poorest who will likely suffer most while authorities redouble their efforts, as seen by their execution of individuals found guilty of drug crimes ([China Daily](#), May 28, 2015). Given that these are members of the one-child generation, their executions extinguish family lines, reinforcing the cycle of poverty that likely drove these youths to try their hand at drug trafficking in the first place.

Moreover, as pointed out in an earlier issue of *China Brief*, China is currently suffering a serious security vacuum whereby law enforcement has become more and more concentrated in urban centers, leaving rural areas increasingly open to criminal activity and putting rural residents, and therefore China's poorest communities, at greater risk than ever before ([China Brief](#), September 4, 2015). Beijing's harsh policing and punishment of drug-related crimes may exacerbate ethnic conflict in rural regions without addressing the fact that, in addition to national security concerns, the illicit drug market is also fueling a looming health crisis. For example, methamphetamine use is currently contributing to a spike in HIV cases ([China Daily](#), February 24).

Beijing also uses its media control to promote anti-drug films, television shows, radio programs, and to extract confessions from celebrities found guilty of illegal drug use. In August 2014, Jaycee Chan, Jackie Chan's son, was caught in Beijing with over 100 grams of marijuana; individuals found possessing more than 50 grams potentially face the death penalty ([China Radio International](#), August 18, 2014). He later made a taped confession, featured on CCTV 13, expressing his regret to family and fans, saying, "I made a big mistake ... I did something wrong" ([Hong Kong Free Press](#), February 8). He was released after seven months in prison and his father is now making an anti-drug film entitled *Polar Night* ([Mtime News](#), June 12, 2015).

As the situation worsens, its transnational nature will require greater collaboration by Beijing with the international community. China's illegal drug market is presently dominated by heroin, ketamine, methamphetamine, other amphetamines, and

cannabis. Each of these is on the rise. From 2014 to 2015, for instance, ketamine seizures increased 140 percent ([South China Morning Post](#), March 4). Liu Yuejin, China's first counterterrorism chief, said in a statement last year that most opioids in China come from the Golden Triangle (the mountains of Burma, Laos, and Thailand) and the Golden Crescent (the mountains of Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan), while the primary domestic sources for methamphetamine and ketamine are Sichuan and Guangdong ([China Radio International](#), June 24, 2015). North Korea is also a significant source for methamphetamine ([Vice China](#), March 20, 2014). Thus, it is imperative to work together in order to staunch the flow of narcotics into China.

Domestic seizures are only half the battle. To strangle the demand that drives the drug trafficking market, China must also tackle exports, since not all drug trafficking within the nation is for domestic consumption. In the first half of last year, New Zealand authorities seized methamphetamine shipments from China totaling over \$163 million (USD), a record figure ([Global Times](#), July 22, 2015). Last month, Australian authorities found \$900 million worth of liquid methamphetamine—the largest such case in Australian history—hidden in the bras of four Chinese nationals ([China Daily](#), February 16). Days later, Sydney police made the largest methamphetamine seizure in Australian history, intercepting a shipping container from Hong Kong ([South China Morning Post](#), February 20). Further evidence of the international nature of the beast is given by the fact that, of China's five Interpol Red Notices for drug smuggling, two are ethnic Koreans, one is Nigerian, one is Iranian and one is a Canadian of Iranian descent ([Interpol](#), 2016).

In 2015, following the 11th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Xie Bohua, the Chinese delegation's counsellor, addressed Chairman Hu Jintao, saying, "to have a drug-free world, the international community must implement international drug control conventions in a comprehensive and effective manner" ([Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), October 7, 2005). He stressed the importance of working together to stop the flow of precursor chemicals, as well as the duty developed countries have to provide financial and technical

assistance to source nations. That year, Hu initiated the Peoples' War on Drugs and the government passed laws that, to this day, actively inhibit the precursor black market ([Ministry of Commerce](#), November 5, 2015).

### International Cooperation

China also works to help less developed countries answer the call. To this end, it has signed memoranda of understanding with Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam and the United Nations ([China Daily](#), December 16, 2011). In 2012, China gave \$600,000 to Laos for the development of drug rehabilitation centers and \$47.62 million to subsidize the farming of crops other than poppy in Burma and Laos ([Xinhua](#), June 5, 2012). Also that year, Beijing and Moscow agreed to work together to combat drug trafficking within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (SCO/RATS); Sergei Liu Jianing, director of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Far East Institute, commented at the time that the *sangu shili* (三股势力; three evils, i.e. terrorism, separatism and religious extremism) was an outmoded concept because it didn't include drug trafficking ([Russia Beyond the Headlines](#), September 26, 2012).

In 2008, the Tenth National People's Congress promulgated the nation's Narcotics Law ([Central People's Government](#), December 29, 2007). Also, the National Narcotics Control Commission (NNCC; 国家禁毒委员会), founded in 1990, implements drug policies, coordinates with relevant Chinese departments and international agencies, works to meet China's obligations under international drug control conventions and operates its own website to help raise public awareness ([Xinhua](#), April 24, 2015; [NNCC](#)). According to its 2015 drug report, in 2014 Chinese authorities captured 68.95 tons of illicit drugs including four tons of marijuana, 9.3 tons of heroin, 11.2 tons of ketamine and 25.9 tons of methamphetamine; including chemical precursors, the net capture was 3,847 tons ([State Council Information Office](#), December 19, 2015).

China also works to cultivate international efforts with Western agencies. It participates in Operation Purple, an intergovernmental tracking system for

potassium permanganate, a precursor used in the production of cocaine, and plays a role in Operation Topaz, an intergovernmental effort to restrict the flow of heroin precursors ([People's Daily](#), 2002 [accessed March 10]). Last year, Minister of Justice Wu Aiying led a delegation to the 13th UN Conference on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, and this year, the US-China Joint Liaison Group on Law Enforcement Cooperation, which deals with anti-drug criminal justice, will convene its 14th session ([China Daily](#), May 31, 2015).

### Historical Context

Beijing's strong stance on drugs had led to criticism that the sentences meted out are too draconian, although there is historical warrant for such severity; drugs are associated with periods of colonial aggression, such as the two Opium Wars, and national weakness, as exemplified by the *bainian guochi* (百年国耻; Century of Humiliation).

China has zero tolerance for certain drug offenses and makes liberal use of the death penalty in curbing the spread of narcotics, regardless of an offender's nationality. Juliana Lopez, a Colombian model and television presenter, currently faces the death penalty for smuggling drugs inside her laptop during a recent shopping excursion to China ([Chinese Radio International](#), August 2, 2015).

Last year, President Xi Jinping said, "drugs are a menace for society and a significant issue concerning public security." He added that the government would strengthen its stance against drugs in the future, observing, "a firm opposition to drugs is the routine standpoint of the Party and the government" ([China Daily](#), June 26, 2015).

### Conclusion

But Chinese still faces several challenges, one being corruption. A 2006 report by the U.S. embassy in Beijing noted, "corruption in far-flung drug producing and drug transit regions of the PRC limit the accomplishments of dedicated enforcement officials," and as the drug market grows, this problem only worsens ([U.S. Embassy, Beijing](#), 2006). Indeed, Cai Dongjia isn't the only Party member to use

illegal drugs; 41 members were expelled for drug use in Yunnan where, according to Yang Fuquan, vice president of the Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences, drug use is a chief cause of corruption ([China Daily](#), December 11, 2014).

In fact, the Guangdong methamphetamine market depends on the availability of certain licit chemical precursors that are only made available to methamphetamine cooks thanks to corruption within China's pharmaceutical industry ([South China Morning Post](#), February 22, 2015). Along with Yunnan and Guangdong, China's third major drug center is Fujian, where for instance, last year Fujian police seized one metric ton of narcotics in a single raid ([Sina](#), October 19, 2015). As one author bluntly wrote on the popular message board site Tianya Club, "Fujian is a hotbed of drug corruption" ([Tianya Club](#), July 2, 2006).

Another problem is inefficiency. The sledgehammer is inferior to the scalpel, yet particular aspects of Chinese bureaucracy prevent the NNCC from operating with anything like surgical precision. Principally, its lack of transparency perpetually hinders international collaboration. For instance, bilateral cooperation with U.S. drug enforcement officials remains hamstrung by China's restrictions on intelligence sharing, even concerning arrests made possible by U.S.-developed leads. Chinese policy also requires that all communication be routed through Beijing, a far less efficient process than direct communication with Chinese agents on the ground ([U.S. State Department](#), March 1, 2010; [U.S. State Department](#), 2015). Beijing must decide whether it wishes to keep a grip on *weiwēn* (socio-political stability) by continuing to hold its cards close to its chest or to instead prioritize victories against the illegal drug market, which is eroding that status quo.

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# The Chinese People's Armed Police in a Time of Armed Forces Restructuring

By Zi Yang

When China is at peace, foreigners will submit willingly. Therefore, if one wants to repel external threats, he must first bring internal peace.

—Zhao Pu (922–992), Prime Minister of the Northern Song Dynasty

China's People's Armed Police, or PAP, is the world's largest internal security force. Last reported to number 660,000, PAP units are quartered across China at every echelon of administration from the county-level up. [1] The PAP is one component of China's armed forces (中华人民共和国武装力量), along with the army and militia, though it receives little attention from international media compared to the People's Liberation Army (PLA). But the ongoing armed forces reforms championed by President Xi Jinping have placed the PAP under the spotlight. Questions are being raised about the future of the PAP, making it a suitable moment to revisit the organization, especially when previous military reforms that aimed to reduce the size of Chinese armed forces instead increased the size of the PAP. Given the PAP's core mission of maintaining social stability (维稳)—the elimination or containment of any genuine threat to public or state security—the PAP is likely to retain its size and develop further as an important tool in guaranteeing the Communist Party's rule of China.

## Mission and *Esprit de Corps*

The history of China's internal security forces before the advent of the PAP is characterized by volatility. During the upheavals of the Mao-era, the security force's official designation and chain of command swung according to the ever-changing political climate. [2] Yet its mission remained constant; to preserve the State against any sign of trouble. The PAP in its present form was created in 1982 with PLA personnel—two years after Deng Xiaoping's first military reform campaign—to combat vices associated

with China's economic liberalization ([Sohu News Online](#), September 4, 2015; [Law Science Magazine](#), no. 7 July, 2015). Although more than 280 regulations and policy papers regarding the PAP were issued since its founding, a comprehensive, publically available law detailing the role and mission of the PAP was formulated only 27 years later during the administration of Hu Jintao to delimit the power of Zhou Yongkang—a bitter rival who headed the Political and Legal Affairs Commission (政法委) overseeing China's public security system (公安机关). [3]

The “PAP Law” of August 2009 explicitly stated that the organization's *raison d'être* is to serve as the guardian of state security. Guo Shengkun, China's Minister of Public Security who simultaneously holds the titles of PAP First Political Commissar and First Party Committee Secretary (武警第一政委, 党委第一书记), left nothing to the imagination, stating that the “The PAP is an armed force under the absolute leadership of the Party, so it must prioritize obedience to the Party's command” ([Ministry of Public Security](#), May 10, 2013). Further clarifying the PAP's role, Xi Jinping, while touring a Beijing armed police unit, differentiated the PAP from traditional order police, calling it as “first and foremost a fighting force” that must “steadfastly follow the core demands of safeguarding state security and social stability” ([Legality Vision](#), no. 5, May 2014).

## The PAP's Organization

“The PLA and the PAP are twin brothers.” Like the PLA, members of the PAP are active duty servicemen ([CNKI](#), 1985). The ranking systems of the two forces are identical. During a time of war, the PAP serves as an auxiliary to the PLA. [4] But the PAP's chain of command is much more complex given its multifaceted internal security duties; it follows a dual command system known in official Chinese parlance as “integrating the vertical and horizontal” (条块结合). The power to command the PAP is divided between the State Council, the highest State organ in China headed by the Premier, and the Central Military Commission (CMC), the highest military organ chaired by the Party General Secretary. Although the PAP is recognized by a 1995 regulation as part of the

State Council's order (序列), the ultimate authority, as always the case in China, rests with the Party leadership, in this instance the CMC Chairman who simultaneously holds the title of Party General Secretary. [5] The State Council and CMC are tasked with setting general policy agenda for the PAP and taking charge during a national emergency, hence their "vertical" power. For everyday affairs, local government wielding the "horizontal" power commands PAP units at the corresponding level.

The Armed Police General Headquarters (GHQ) is the highest leadership body within the PAP system. The GHQ is made up of nine organs: the command staff, the political department, the logistics department, the 14 mobile divisions, and a command center for each of the PAP's five branches—the Internal Security Troops, the Gold Troops, Hydropower Troops, Transport Troops, and the Forestry Troops. [6] In addition, the PAP advises the Public Security Active Service Troops that are separately commanded by the Ministry of Public Security ([China Public Education Online](#), [accessed March 1]).

### **Backbone of the PAP: the Internal Security Troops**

The Internal Security Troops (IST; 内卫部队), constitutes about half of the PAP's total personnel. Present in every Chinese administrative division except Hong Kong and Macau, IST *zongdui* (总队; equivalent to a PLA division) are stationed at the provincial-level, *zhidui* (支队; regiment) at the prefectural-level, *dadui* (大队; battalion) and *zhongdui* (中队; company) at the county-level. The main task of the IST is to deal with internal security contingencies ranging from hostage situations to riot control. During natural disasters, the IST, along with other PAP, army and militia units are required to participate in disaster relief missions.

Befitting a combat-focused unit, IST training is completed both on base and in field exercises. A recent exercise, conducted by the Ningxia provincial *zongdui* included items such as organized river-crossing, chemical warfare training, log PT, manhunt in mountainous areas, team combat, field medical training,

ruck march, mountain climbing, close quarters combat in water, etc. [7] Contests, at the national and provincial-level are held periodically to increase competitiveness. The 2013 PAP national contest lasted for 11 months and pitted the IST's best soldiers against each other in competitions that lasted well up to 14 hours a day ([CNKI](#), 2015).

The education of PAP officers occurs at a number of colleges and academies administered by the GHQ. But PAP schools do suffer from issues that negatively influence the quality of education. An article by a staff of the Shenyang Command Academy reveals its library is underfunded and understaffed, pointing to larger deficiencies within the broader PAP education structure. A consortium system does not exist. And decision-making is entirely dictated by the will of the library manager (*Caizhi*, No. 4, 2011). Grassroots education of IST troopers is also lacking. Despite the law-enforcement role of PAP units, a survey of 20 *zhongdui* in Shandong and Shaanxi Province shows legal education is close to nonexistent. Only a few textbooks on law relate to the work of the PAP. In more than three-quarters of the time, the format of instruction remains old-fashioned monologue and note taking. [8]

### **The Economic Construction Corps**

Four other PAP branches are dedicated primarily to economic construction in geographically challenging areas of the country. The Gold Troops (GT) is the most unique among its peers. Founded in March 1979 as part of the PLA, the GT transferred to the PAP in 1985. [9] Its duties include, conducting geological surveys for gold and other precious minerals, guarding goldmines, and mining gold in remote and difficult areas. When called upon, the GT, like all other PAP units must serve as emergency responders to deal with internal security contingencies.

The GT has its own technical school and geological research institute and is organized as three *zongdui*, under each there are 12 *zhidui* (*Gold Science and Technology*, no. 4, August, 2012). Since its establishment to 2012, the GT has completed 1,600 geological surveys and discovered more than 200 gold deposits of various sizes totaling 1,851.581 tons. Although second in total known deposits, China has led the

world in gold production for close to a decade, due in large part to the Gold Troops (Wall Street Information, June 7, 2014; U.S. Geological Survey, January 2015).

Guarding strategic infrastructure is an important part of PAP duties. Given that China is the world's largest consumer of hydroelectric power, the PAP's Hydro-power Troops (HT) are tasked with building, guarding, and repairing levees, reservoirs, hydropower stations, transformer substations, and electric lines (Water Resources and Hydropower Engineering, 2013). Currently, the HT owns 3,042 pieces of equipment used in dam construction with a combined value of \$220 million, and have participated in more than 60 national key projects. Two-thirds of China's land is under threat from flood and flood-related disasters, the HT is tasked with emergency relief missions. Zhang Rongshan, a senior engineer of the HT, has lodged a series of criticisms of the HT's limits in professional training, cutting-edge equipment, and research and development geared toward bettering its disaster relief capacity.

Connecting China's western provinces with the rest of the country is of utmost importance to the State. Not only is infrastructure an economic project, it is equally significant in political terms. Greater integration of Xinjiang and Tibet means the State can better assert its authority. The Transport Troops (TT) exists for this purpose. Similar to its peers, the TT builds and maintains roads and bridges in geographically challenging places, especially in western China (PLA Life, March 2015).

Garrisoned in a dozen of China's provinces, the Forestry Troops (FT) have four main tasks—to conserve forest resources, suppress wildfire, protect wildlife and disseminate information on fire prevention. [10] Currently, FT units are present in six national forests, eight virgin forests, 18 natural heritage sites, and 183 wildlife and plants protection area. While the FT's primary focus is forestry matters; it also participates in internal security missions when called upon. The Tibet *zongdui* for example, assisted in securing key installations in Lhasa during the 2008 riots.

### The Mobile Divisions

During the PLA reform of 1996, 14 grade-B (乙种) PLA infantry divisions were transferred to the PAP and placed under the direct command of the GHQ as mobile divisions (MD). In contrast to ISTs, the MDs are fully equipped army divisions in every aspect but name only. MDs act as rapid reaction troops in the case of a large-scale disturbance, and are enforcers of martial law. Each MD division is composed of the following combat arms: infantry, artillery, armor, engineers, chemical defense, communications, and special forces (Journal of Equipment Academy, no. 2, April, 2015). A typical MD, such as Division 63 garrisoned in Pingliang City of Gansu Province has a long combat history dating back to the Chinese Civil War. At present, Division 63 is the only MD in the Gansu-Shaanxi-Ningxia-Qinghai quad-state area, and is on standby for any signs of trouble in Xinjiang or Beijing (Tie Jun, December 2015). However, from publically available literature, it appears that MDs also participate in civil missions. Servicemen of Division 63 also assist their PAP comrades in suppressing wildfire and snow removal. Chemical defense personnel of MD Division 81, for example, participated in putting out fires during the August 2015 Tianjin explosions (Youth Journalist, September 2015).

### Conclusion

Despite cuts to the army and militia in armed forces restructurings of the past, Chinese leaders have expressed a particular fondness for the PAP—preserving, if not augmenting its size during a time of austerity. An answer to this puzzle is as simple as the Chinese adage “keeping internal peace is required in repelling external threats” (攘外必先安内). A review of Chinese history shows internal factors brought down the vast majority of dynasties. The Chinese Communist Party, in fact, came to power at a time when a weak central government and local power vacuums created fertile ground for revolutionary activities. The history of the world communist movement only reinforced this established belief among Chinese leaders—communist states collapsed in the late 1980s and early 1990s due to domestic opposition. Thus, keeping a strong security force presence at all strata of society is of vital importance for regime survival. As a result, Xu Guangyu, a re-

tired PLA General and frequently quoted commentator speculated Xi Jinping will eventually integrate a large number of soldiers trimmed from the army during the present round of personnel cuts into the PAP ([Takungpao](#), September 4, 2015).

Another concern regarding the PAP's future is the current command system. As recently discussed in *China Brief*, there is a possibility the dual command of the PAP will change as part of ongoing military reforms (*China Brief*, February 4). The personification of the "leader as the state" has defined the Xi Jinping era; the Chinese President have so far demonstrated clear ambition in political centralization and breaking up old power blocs, made evident with the gerrymandering of PLA command theaters and purge of the officer corps under the guise of anti-corruption ([The Diplomat](#), December 17, 2014). A fundamental reworking of the PAP's dual command structure is probable according to General Sun Sijing, the PAP Political Commissar, who indicated in a recent speech of the need to institute the "CMC chairman responsibility system" (军委主席负责制) where all functional departments respond directly to Xi and the CMC ([Caixin News Online](#), December 24, 2015; [QQ News Online](#), March 7). But questions remain on how this will influence the principle of "integrating the vertical and horizontal" and the PAP's performance in future internal security missions. Granting the GHQ total autonomy is unlikely because that would be against Xi's goal of political centralization. Yet a complete integration of the PAP into the CMC's chain of command means the latter must divert valued time and resources to deal with complex everyday internal security issues, which contradicts the stated goal of making the PLA a more combat-capable force ([Xinhua](#), September 3, 2015). The rationale behind the "vertical and horizontal" system is to allow State organs maximum autonomy in exercising its governance expertise while enabling the Party a high degree of control. For example, the IST must work with officers of the local public security bureau. The local forestry bureau, specialized in forest management, is best to advise the FT. The CMC, staffed with PLA officers trained in the art of war, lacks the specialty in internal security or economic construction.

The PAP, as a favored wing of the Party, is positioned to survive another round of force reduction unscathed. Groomed to defend the Party-state from any threats, the PAP will likely be increased in size as China's economic growth slows and the possibility of social unrest rises.

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### Notes

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2. Xuezhi Guo, *China's Security State: Philosophy, Evolution, and Politics* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 187.
3. Ruojin Ma, "浅谈我国武警法研究现状 [Brief Discussion on the Study of the PAP Law in Our Country]," *Legality Vision*, no. 2 (January 2015), p. 181; A number of PAP regulations and policy papers regarding the PAP are still classified, according to Li, p. 25. For an English translation of the "PAP law," see: [Peking University Law](#).
4. Blasko, p. 28.
5. Qiliang Wang, "国家安全视野下的现代武警战略——起源、职能和走向 [Modern Armed Police Force Strategy in the Perspective of National Security—Origin, Function and Direction]," *Military Politics Review*, no. 1 (March 2015), p. 111.
6. The latter four branches of the PAP are dually commanded by State organs and respective GHQ command centers. The Gold Troops responds to the Ministry of Land and Resources. The Hydropower Troops responds to the Ministry of Water Resources. The Transport Troops responds to the Ministry of Transport. The Forestry Troops answers to the State Forestry Administration.
7. Tiefei Lei and Dengyuan Ma, "贺兰山下大练兵——武警宁夏总队开展实战化练兵提升部队战斗力 [Field Exercise under the Helan mountains—PAP Ningxia Zongdui Raises Fighting Capability by Actual Combat

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8. Yuanhai Shen, “武警基层中队法制教育研究 [Study on Legal Education at the PAP’s Grassroots Zhongdui],” *Legality Vision*, no. 15 (May 2015), p. 200.
  9. Guo Sun, “探秘武警黄金部队 [Discover the PAP Gold Troops],” *General Review of the Communist Party of China*, no. 9 (September 2010), p. 36.
  10. Delong Cong and Zheng Tie, “武警森林部队特色文化浅析 [A Brief Analysis On Characteristic Culture of The Armed Police Forest Force],” *Green China*, no. 7 (April 2015), p. 63.; *Ibid*, p. 64. Ke Wang, “翱翔雪域蓝天的雄鹰——记武警西藏森林总队副总队长徐雄光 [The Proud Eagle That Soars above the Snowy Land’s Azure Sky—on Xu Xiongguang, the Deputy Commander of the PAP Tibet Zongdui],” *Ecological Culture*, no. 4 (August 2014), p. 28.

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## The Influence of Russian Military Reform on the PLA Reorganization

By Yevgen Sautin

The Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is in the midst of the biggest reorganization and reform effort since the 1980s. Among the major changes announced, the country’s primary nuclear deterrent, the Second Artillery Corps, was upgraded to a separate service branch called the PLA Rocket Force (PLARF). In addition, the PLA Strategic Support Force (PLASSF) was set up to bolster space, cyber, electronic warfare, and other high-tech military capabilities. Finally, the ground forces received their own, separate headquarters to improve combat effectiveness. In February, China consolidated seven military regions (大军区) into five brand-new theater commands (战区) (*China Brief*, February 4). Perhaps most importantly, the PLA plans to cut 300,000 personnel. More changes are expected in the next few

years; the PLA’s military education system, command structure, and logistics and supply systems are all likely to be overhauled.

The reorganization accompanies and complements a modernization program intended to create a 21st century fighting force that is better equipped, modular and able to meet a wide range of objectives. These reforms and the planning for them did not take place in a vacuum. Chinese military thinkers have keenly watched military modernization programs in other nations. The experience of Russia’s military reforms in the wake of the 2008 invasion of Georgia have been of particular interest, and Chinese planners have closely followed Russia’s reforms and adopted some of their signature concepts. Compounding Russian influence, Russia’s military industrial sector is expected to play an important role in the PLA’s modernization, with Russian and Soviet legacy designs making up key components of China’s newest forces.

### Russia’s Military Reforms (2008-Present)

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, in 1991, the Russian military has been in a state of constant flux. The Kremlin recognized that major reforms were urgently needed to account for changing demographics and the growing sophistication of modern combat, but the economic turmoil of the 1990s combined with the Chechen Wars doomed several reform efforts.

Although combat readiness had improved in the 2000s, the 2008 Georgian War revealed many of the Russian military’s shortcomings. Orders were slow to travel down the chain of command, a lack of coordination between the air force and troops on the ground led to higher casualties, and a breakdown in intelligence and planning resulted in the Russian air force losing several aircraft to Georgia’s anti-aircraft missile batteries. Russian troops were able to overwhelm the overmatched Georgian army, but the after-action review left little doubt that changes were badly needed.

Shortly after the Georgian war Russia’s Defense Minister Anatoliy Serdyukov launched a sweeping reorganization of the army. Although Serdyukov’s (2008–12) reorganization is only one component of a broader, ongoing three-stage plan of rearming and

modernizing Russia's military by 2020, the reorganization has been by far the most controversial aspect of the modernization. In the span of four years, the Russian military did away with many of its long-held practices. Russia significantly reduced the size of its officer corps; the military moved away from a Soviet divisional model of organization to a NATO-like brigade structure. [1] Supply and logistics jobs were outsourced to private contractors; and the military education system was radically altered.

Proponents of the reform argue that the changes improved the combat readiness and professionalism of the army. Opponents counter that while reform was necessary, Serdyukov's initiatives were poorly thought-out and resulted in widespread chaos and demoralization. Serdyukov's reforms were met with fierce opposition from Russia's military establishment and remain a source of derision. And while Western analysts dismissed the criticism as personal resentment over losing coveted sinecures, there is anecdotal evidence that the transition to private contractors led to serious service and supply disruptions (Ekho Moskvyy [Russia], June 3, 2015). Moreover, even defenders of the reforms have admitted that the army continues to lack the promised high-tech and high-precision weaponry (Nezavisimoe Voennoye Obozrenie [Russia], July 23, 2010). The controversy surrounding the changes ultimately proved to be Serdyukov's undoing; he was sacked in 2012 and tried for corruption. Serdyukov's dismissal and trial seem to have placated critics of the reforms; his successor, Sergei Shoigu, has managed to keep most of the changes made by his predecessor.

Following Russia's sudden annexation of Crimea and the ongoing campaign in Syria, pundits have been quick to declare the Russian military to be a revamped, modern fighting machine—seemingly vindicating Serdyukov. Some Chinese commentators have also expressed admiration for Russia's latest military reforms and have openly urged the PLA to use the reforms as a model for their own efforts (People's Daily Online, October 5, 2015). Such views are by no means universal; PLA National Defense University Professor Wang Baofu has pointed out that in both Ukraine and Syria Russia is mostly using Soviet-era weaponry and technology. A combination of troop reductions and the increase in military élan has

given Russia some renewed military success, but its army is still largely a conscript force reliant on outdated weaponry (PLA Daily, November 27, 2015). Russia's large-scale snap exercises such as Vostok and Zapad have also impressed both domestic and foreign observers, but the 2014 Vostok exercises in the Far East exposed persistent problems in coordination and an acute shortage of modern military equipment (RIA Novosti, September 23, 2014).

On the surface, the PLA's reorganization and reform plan overlaps with several key objectives of Russia's recent military reorganization. Military strategists in both countries agree that organizing rapid reaction forces with an integrated command-and-control structure is a top priority. Even though Chinese military experts do not believe that copying the U.S. military model is feasible for either China or Russia, the Western brigade structure of command is generally favored (NetEase, February 16).

### Personnel Reforms

China has closely followed the evolution of Western armies and there is speculation that China will transition from a mixed division/brigade structure toward one predominantly made up of brigades. In 1999, two divisions within the 20th Group Army, the 58th Mechanized Infantry Division and the 60th Motorized Infantry Division, were reorganized into brigades. Both units had a decorated history starting from the Korean War and were chosen to be part of an experiment into using a brigade-level command structure. Russia's experience with moving to a brigade structure has been more contentious, and since 2013 two elite divisions, the 4th Guards Kantemirovskaya Tank Division and the 2nd Guards Taman-skaya Motor Rifle Division have been reconstituted. Ostensibly the move was made to preserve historical traditions of legendary units, but there is reason to believe that Russian commanders have not entirely bought into the Western-style brigade system of command. Indeed, the creation of an additional three divisions in the Western military district was announced in January of this year (EDM, January 19).

The announced troop reductions may be the most important element of the PLA reforms. So far, only the Nanjing Military Region Art Troupe has been axed,

but there are plans to do away with units that have outdated equipment, and personnel that serve in various non-combat related capacities. The cuts along with the creation of new theater commands necessitate major changes in army billeting. The changes may prove to be painful in the short term; Russia's experience in consolidating its military districts led to significant resentment over inadequate military housing. To create a more efficient command structure, the PLA must trim its officer ranks and increase the number and quality of non-commissioned officers (NCOs), another priority shared with Russia ([EDM](#), April 17, 2012; [China Brief](#), October 28, 2011). This will be a difficult endeavor; at the battalion-level, units are often understaffed, while higher up there is a proliferation of noncombat headquarters that are staffed by both commanding officers and Political Commissars (政委).

Little is known about the plans to “deepen the reform of army colleges” and the wider military education system, but changes will have to be made to better prepare officers for the demands of modern warfare. Today's officers are expected to learn several increasingly complicated weapons systems over the course of their careers, something that requires strong fundamentals. The Chinese military education system differs from both the U.S. and Russian models, and is often criticized as being too theoretical and lacking realistic practical experience. Serdyukov's attempts at revamping the Russian military education system were rolled back by his successor, and there is little to indicate that China's efforts will be any easier.

### Hardware Modernization

Another daunting aspect of the reforms is the need to replace outdated weapons systems and equipment. Despite the growth in defense spending and procurement, many PLA units continue to use Cold War-era relics. During the latest Stride-2015 (跨越) military exercises in Zhurihe (朱日和), Type 59 tanks (in service since 1959) were deployed alongside more modern equipment ([NetEase](#), February 16). Such outdated equipment is impossible to integrate into modern communication systems, and the vast quantity of antiquated weapons will take years to replace. Making matters worse, the Chinese arms industry has

struggled to produce indigenous high-quality weaponry. In the crucial sphere of air-defense, despite making gains in the last fifteen years, China still suffers from inadequate capabilities. The Chinese HQ-9 (红旗-9) SAM system has been billed to be an improvement over the U.S. MIM-104 Patriot and the Russian S-300, but China has struggled to attract foreign buyers ([Sina](#), April 8, 2015). China has been able to copy the Russian S-300, but according to Russian experts the reverse-engineered model is inferior to the original ([Nezavisimoe Voennoye Obozrenie](#) [Russia], November 27, 2015). Beijing is still covered by Russian-made S-300 systems.

China's R&D allocations have grown from \$3.1 billion in 1997 to an estimated \$40 billion in 2013 (amidst an almost exponentially growing defense budget), but China continues to trail both Russia and the United States in crucial technologies such as stealth and aircraft engines ([USNI News](#), November 10, 2014). [2] To address the technology gap, China has turned to both espionage and leveraging the private sector through the strategy of “integrating the army and the people, locating military potential in civilian capabilities” (军民结合, 寓军于民). [3] One area where Chinese manufacturers have been able to make gains is in guided missile technology; according to Chinese sources, Chinese know-how now surpasses that of the Russians ([Sina Military](#), March 4). China is also ahead in developing a fifth-generation fighter plane, the J-20. Overall, China's defense industry is encountering a similar problem to Russia's: more spending does not necessarily result in the procurement of new equipment in the quantity needed for true rearmament. With the Russian armament industry backed-up with domestic orders, the PLA will have to largely rely on Chinese capacity to meet ambitious refurbishment goals.

The political dimension of the unfolding PLA reforms is also worth comparing to Russia's efforts. President Xi Jinping has stressed that China needs to build a modernized, powerful army with Chinese characteristics that is loyal to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and able to protect national security and national interests ([People's Daily Online](#), March 3). The CCP's direct command of the PLA has always been a non-negotiable aspect of China's system, and there is no indication that Xi Jinping wishes

to attenuate the party's guiding role as part of the PLA's modernization. In terms of geostrategic vision, Beijing has voiced concerns that the international environment is becoming increasingly uncertain and that dangers posed to Chinese security have grown (People's Daily Online, March 3). On the surface such a view of the world is largely in congruence with the Kremlin's position, but that is where the similarities end. Beijing has shown no indication it wants to be a standard-bearer for any putative anti-Western bloc. Instead and despite the occasional tough rhetoric, Beijing has opted for a gradual chipping away of the status quo where it sees it to be unfair to China's long-term interests. That said, some PLA officers have called for greater protection of "overseas Chinese and overseas Chinese interests," in a language uncannily similar to Putin's justification for the Georgian War and Crimea's annexation (Global Times, October 25, 2011). Analogous language was included in China's 2015 Defense White Paper (China Daily, May 26, 2015). Whether PLA's reforms lead to an increase in assertiveness remains to be seen.

One area where decades-long doctrinal views may finally shift is in regard to foreign bases. The Chinese anti-piracy efforts off the Horn of Africa demonstrated the difficulty of repairing and supporting ships out at sea, and to that end China has already reached an agreement with Djibouti to establish its first foreign base (China Brief, January 26). Traditional reluctance notwithstanding, China's growing naval capabilities, coupled with growing international responsibilities and interests in potentially unstable developing countries, may result in a more active Chinese global military presence.

## Conclusion

The PLA has embarked on an ambitious course of reform and restructuring. Replacing outdated equipment alone will be a major challenge that will stretch far beyond 2020. China has closely studied the successes and mistakes of Western and Russian military reform efforts, gaining insight into best practices and potential pitfalls. While it is too early to render any judgment, the PLA should not be underestimated in its capability to carry out big changes; it successfully carried out major troop reductions in the 1980s and

1990s, rebuilt the military education system after the Cultural Revolution, and gave up control over many sectors of the Chinese economy.

## Notes

1. The Soviet army was organized into divisions that were usually comprised of 5–6 regiments, including support and fire regiments. The total number of soldiers varied from as few as 5,000 to upwards of 20,000, with most divisions having around 12,000 troops. The NATO brigade structure typically has three battalions plus supporting units. Usually a brigade consists of approximately 3,200 to 5,500 troops, roughly half the size of a Soviet division.
2. Roy Kamphausen and David Lai (Editors) *The Chinese People's Liberation Army in 2025*, (Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. War College Press: 2015), p. 145.
3. Ibid.

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