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Special Issue: Sino-Indian Relations

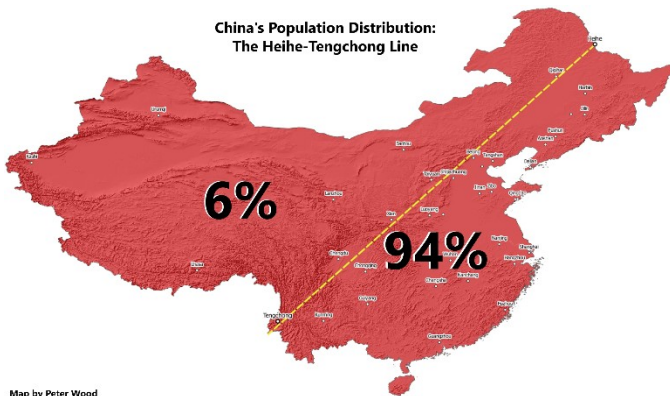
As Editor I have the pleasure of introducing our special issue on Sino-Indian Relations. The issue brings together a number of top China-watchers to examine the current security situation between the two countries.

The world's two largest countries face each other across a long, complex land border and increasingly in the maritime domain in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea. Despite their border war in 1962, the two sides have built extensive diplomatic and trade ties. Even so, Indian strategic thinkers continue to view China as a

rising threat and a bulwark for India's existential enemy Pakistan. A more active Chinese Navy operating on both sides of the Strait of Malacca reinforces the sense of encirclement. In contrast, China's focus largely remains locked on its East Coast and the various security issues arising from Taiwan, Japan, North Korea and Vietnam.

However, a volatile border, ethnic unrest and the threat of terrorism means that western China will continue to see rising levels of investment in security forces and military modernization. This is part of a broader attempt by the central leadership to better link its eastern and western halves.

For China, its vast west represents major opportunities for trade and expansion. It encompasses roughly 49 percent of China's landmass—seven provinces and parts of two more—but only 13 percent of its population.



In the 1930s Chinese demographer Hu Huanyong (胡焕庸) observed that a line drawn from China's northeast to its southwest corners split the country into a massive yet unpopulated west, and a densely populated east. Even with immigration to the west encouraged by the Chinese government after 1949, the percent of China's population living there has only increased by 2 percent.

China is attempting to conquer this space, throwing increasing numbers of highways and rail connections across Western China to further bind it to the ethnic-Han core. It recently inaugurated connections between Shanghai and Afghanistan along the path of the old Silk Road and sent the first convoy of trucks down the Karakorum highway through Xinjiang and Pakistan to Gwadar, the port it helped expand on the Indian Ocean. Both these land and sea connections are of vital importance as China, under Xi's direction attempts to continue its incredible growth by expanding into markets across the Eurasian land-mass. India itself offers great opportunities for Chinese companies. It is on track to be the most populous nation on earth by

2022, and is already a major destination for Chinese exports. [1]

This reinvigorated investment in the west will make getting an India policy right even more important. The two nations are attempting to heal old wounds, and both Presidents Modi and Xi have visited each other's nations with pledges of expanded trade and cultural exchanges. But high-level visits such as Xi Jinping's in 2014 have similarly been marred by incursions into Indian-claimed territory by groups of PLA soldiers, albeit small ones. The relationship is further complicated by China's close partnership with Pakistan, its "all-weather strategic partner," which regularly purchases large amounts of weapons from China, such as its 2015 deal to purchase eight submarines for \$5 billion (SCMP, April 26, 2015).

Starting this issue, Kevin McCauley provides a snapshot of China's newly created Western Theater Command (WTC), which has responsibility for the border with India as well as the complicated borders with Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan and Mongolia. McCauley notes that the WTC's geography creates its own challenges, forcing the PLA to be ready to fight in high mountains and deserts. Long distances compound the issue of terrain, making coordination of various units more difficult. The WTC's primary conventional role is focused on India, but it also faces social stability and counterterrorism missions. This recently came into play during the first week of January, when units in Hotan (和田) were involved in a counterterrorism operation that resulted in the deaths of three terrorists (SCMP, January 9). As the PLA modernizes and introduces advanced air defenses and better tanks to units, it will need to improve both its ability to communicate amongst itself and the roads and other logistics

infrastructure it needs to sustain a protracted campaign in a conflict with India.

Oriana Mastro tackles the complex issue of China's intentions toward India, examining how Chinese press responds to India's own modernization and military exercises. She notes that while India has made its own major investments in border infrastructure, mountain warfare units and its navy, China primarily remains focused on Japan, Taiwan and the United States.

Sudha Ramachandran observes that culturally and politically, Tibet is a sore point for China and India. After the Tibetan Uprising in 1959, the Dalai Lama fled to northern India, setting up a government in exile in Dharamshala, India. China's reaction to the Dalai Lama's upcoming visit to Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims, is illustrative of some of the underlying political issues at stake. Geographically the region is critical to security in India's Northwest but also sits astride an important valley connecting greater Tibet to the south. The Dalai Lama's visit—particularly given his advanced age and China's hope that his successor will accept Tibet's Chinese-defined borders has the potential to significantly inflame relations. India's support of the Tibetan government-in-exile will continue to complicate this relationship.

Finally, Jonathan Ward examines Sino-Indian competition at sea. Both China and India's navies are expanding at a rapid rate and are improving military facilities on their peripheries to better exert maritime control. Heavily dependent on exports for their economies and on imported petroleum to keep those economies running, both see their Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs) as core vulnerabilities. In turn, they are cultivating allies on each others' doorsteps with India improving its relations with Vietnam,

and China investing significantly in Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Mauritius.

From the Himalayas to the Straits of Malacca, China and India are set to compete militarily and economically. Both nations have important roles to play in the global economy as developing nations transitioning to more mature economies. I hope this special issue will lay some useful groundwork for understanding their strategic competition over the next few years.

Peter Wood is the Editor of China Brief. You can follow him on Twitter @PeterWood_PDW

Notes

1. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2015). World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision, Key Findings and Advance Tables. P. 4
https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Publications/Files/Key_Findings_WPP_2015.pdf

Snapshot: China's Western Theater Command

Kevin McCauley

Despite continuing high-level meetings between China and India's military, Beijing has not settled its border disputes with India, and continues aggressive military activity along the disputed border regions ([China Military Online](#), November 22, 2016). This is despite China's resolution of most disputed land borders

including those with Russia and Vietnam. China has also continued construction of infrastructure to support military operations in a conflict. The current round of ambitious PLA reforms, including creation of peacetime joint theater commands, will significantly increase joint operations capabilities in the newly formed Western Theater Command with responsibility for the Indian strategic direction. [1]

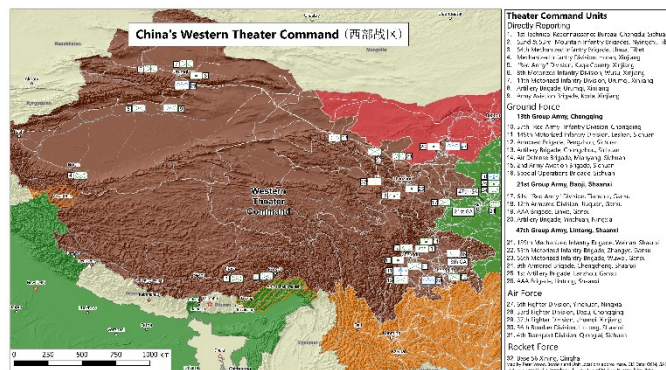
Each of the five new theater commands will focus on combat operations and enhancing joint training of subordinate forces based on wartime missions. The new commands include the Eastern Theater Command (TC) based on the former Nanjing Military Region (MR) responsible for Taiwan operations and territorial disputes with Japan; the Southern TC based on the Guangzhou MR responsible for operations against Vietnam and the South China Sea region, as well as providing forces for operations in a Taiwan conflict; Western TC based on the former Chengdu and Lanzhou MRs; Northern TC based on Shenyang MR plus Inner Mongolia and Shandong Provinces responsible for responding to potential instability on the Korean peninsula or possibly supporting operations against Japan; and a Central TC based on Beijing and Jinan MRs with responsibility for capital defense and serving as a strategic reserve to reinforce other theaters (*Global Times*, February 2, 2016; *Xinhua*, February 1, 2016).

The Western Theater Command

The Western Theater Command (WTC) is the most expansive of the new theaters with complex internal and external operational requirements. The theater commander is Army LTG Zhao Zongqi, former commander of Jinan MR (2012–2016). LTG Zhao participated in combat against Vietnam, served as commander of

the 52nd Mountain Brigade in the early 1990's, and commander of the 14th Group Army (2005–2008) before moving to assignments in Jinan MR. These experiences demonstrate extensive operational knowledge of mountain warfare, making Zhao a good choice as WTC commander (*Xinhua*, February 1, 2016; *The Beijing News*, February 2, 2016; *China Military Online*, March 3, 2016).

The WTC is the largest theater and has complex terrain including desert and high mountains, long borders, and challenging social conditions. Theater missions include supporting the People's Armed Police Force maintaining internal stability in the restive Tibet and Xinjiang regions. Disaster relief requiring liaison with civilian organizations is also an important theater mission. External responsibilities include responding to possible unrest in Central Asia under the auspices of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The SCO sponsored series of Peace Mission exercises since 2005 have trained SCO forces for combined operations responding to large scale unrest. However, the WTC's primary strategic direction is India and the contested border regions (*Xinhua*, August 18, 2014; *China Military Online*, March 3, 2016).



has been elevated by one level compared to other provincial-level military districts and placed under the PLA Army (PLAA). Most provincial-level military districts are under the National Defense Mobilization Department of the CMC with responsibility for reserves, militia and conscription. An article in *The Global Times* reported that the Tibet Military Command will be responsible for operations against India, at least in the Arunachal Pradesh area, training forces for specialized high-altitude mountain warfare and long-range mobility for such a contingency (*Global Times*, May 13, 2016). However, Army command would appear to usurp the theater's command responsibility. The Xinjiang Military District is also under PLAA command. The current reforms and reorganization make the services responsible for force development and training their respective forces, which would appear to include the Army commands in the Tibet and Xinjiang Military Districts. Since the WTC has a difficult internal mission, the Army might additionally be responsible for internal missions in Tibet and Xinjiang, acting as an intermediate command level for the theater, which would have a daunting span of control if widespread unrest occurred in both areas, compounded by an external crisis.

The WTC headquarters includes a joint operations command center also located in Chengdu. The theater Army headquarters is in Lanzhou. The new Strategic Logistics Support Force has subordinate Joint Logistics Support Centers in each theater, with one in Xining for the WTC. The WTC can deploy subordinate PLAA and PLA Air Force (PLAAF) units, and request additional forces from the CMC if required. Each theater will require time to fully transition from the Army dominated MR headquarters to establish joint commands, gain familiarity between the services, as well as train personnel in their new joint

positions. For example, the WTC brought together experts to address theater construction and develop plans to promote joint operations from February 28–29, 2016. The newly formed PLA Rocket Force (PLARF) as well as the other services have assigned high quality officers to the new joint commands. The PLARF reportedly assigned approximately 100 officers to the five new theater commands to support planning and training. It is not yet clear whether PLARF conventional missile launch brigades remain directly subordinate to the CMC or are theater assets. If they remain under centralized control, the CMC would assign launch brigades to support to the theaters as required (*Global Times*, February 4, 2016; *Xinhua*, April 6, 2016; *China Military Online*, April 7, 2016; *Global Times*, April 12, 2016; *China Military Online*, May 10, 2016; *PLA Daily*, March 2, 2016; *MOD*, January 11, 2016).

The theater headquarters likely includes service departments and other specialized elements. A joint command post structure could include a command and control center, intelligence center, communications center, information operations center, firepower coordination center, air defense operations center, special operations center, military affairs mobilization department, political work department, logistics and equipment support department, and other elements as required. The theater would likely include a main, alternate, rear, and possibly a forward command post to command operations in a conflict (*PLA Daily*, May 28, 2016). [2]

WTC Training

The theater contains the combined arms tactical training bases (CATTB) located at Xichang and Qingtongxia. These CATTB's are highly developed training facilities for both combined arms

and joint training with the PLAAF. CATTB's typically contain direction, evaluation and simulation facilities. Exercise umpires, multiple integrated laser engagement systems (MILES), data collection systems, and Opposing forces (OPFOR) are employed to promote training realism and evaluation. Qingtongxia CATTB, established around 2000, includes an urban warfare training village, electromagnetic environment simulation, monitoring and control systems, as well as a 1:500 scale (900 meters x 700 meters) mock-up of the contested Aksai Chin border region. The PLAAF experimental training base at Dingxin, Gansu Province, is used for live fire and complex electromagnetic environment training. PLAAF units rotate through this large training area, which also contains a mock-up of Taiwan's Ching Chuan Kang Air Force Base (清泉崗). A PLAAF training base at Korla contains an airfield mockup resembling the U.S. Kadena Air Base in Okinawa. The PLARF uses the airfield mock-ups as targets for live fire training. The PLA also employs military training coordination zones for joint exercises, and the WTC contains joint training coordination zones in the Tianshan Mountains, in Gansu Province, and in the Chongqing area (*PLA Daily*, January 2, 2009; *The Register*, July 19, 2006; *WantChinaTimes*, December 30, 2014; *PLA Daily*, March 2, 2006; *PLA Daily*, November 3, 2010; *PLA Daily*, October 6, 2006).

PLA training exercises in the WTC have featured offensive and defensive mountain and cold weather warfare training and long-distance movement of units. The Stride (跨越), Joint Action (联合行动), and Firepower (火力) series of exercises have trained units, including those from the WTC, to move long distances by multiple means to reinforce another region and engage in combat. Firepower-2016 in Qingtongxia featured units from the five theaters training

against a 47th GA brigade acting as a simulated enemy (*China Military Online*, February 28, 2016; *China Military Online*, July 12, 2016; *China Military Online*, October 12, 2015).

Potential PLA Operations in the Indian Strategic Direction

The primary border areas under dispute are the Chinese-occupied Aksai Chin in the west, and Arunachal Pradesh in the east controlled by India. China and India have conducted combined "Hand-in-Hand" (携手) counter-terrorism exercises on a small scale and have established high-level dialogue on border issues to alleviate tensions. There has also been tension between the two countries over Chinese activity in the border regions as well as the Indian Ocean. The WTC would have to coordinate operations with the responsible command for naval operations against India. The WTC focuses on relevant campaign scenarios to train troops for potential combat operations. PLA publications detail several campaigns that the WTC could conduct including Antiterrorism Stability Maintenance operations to combat internal unrest; Joint Border Counterattack Campaigns to defend against an attack and regain lost territory; Mountain Offensive Campaigns; and Joint Fire Strike Campaigns usually supporting another campaign, but also an independent campaign (*Global Times*, September 5, 2012). [3]

China is rapidly improving infrastructure in the Sino-Indian border region as part of development plans for Tibet as well as to prepare for possible defensive or offensive operations. China has constructed roads to and along disputed areas, along with additional airbases, landing strips and logistics sites to support military deployments and operations. India has also improved transportation infrastructure in its

controlled areas, and plans additional infrastructure construction to support its military and paramilitary forces along the border. India has also deployed additional forces to the border regions since 2012 (*China Brief*, September 13, 2016; *Times of India*, February 20, 2014; *Daily Excelsior*, February 11, 2016; *NDTV*, July 21, 2016).

The Sino-Indian disputed borders represent isolated high-altitude regions with difficult terrain and weather conditions presenting problems for troops, weapons and equipment. Ground combat will occur mainly along roads that normally follow valleys or ridges, limiting support and cooperation between forces operating on different axes. The lack of cross-terrain mobility limits the ability of ground forces to conduct penetrating or outflanking operations against enemy forces. PLA publications stress airmobile landings in the enemy rear area to overcome the restricted terrain and enemy defensive positions. Special operations forces available to the WTC would represent highly qualified units to operate in the enemy rear area to disrupt operations and attack vulnerable lines of communications. The high-altitude reduces aviation performance and lift capabilities, and increases maintenance requirements on equipment in general, although the thin air increases the range of projectiles and shrapnel. Weather conditions would mostly limit air operations to June through September. The 1962 Sino-Indian War was fought in October and November without air support. Cold high-plateau regions place increases requirements on engineering and support operations, and the thin air is difficult for the troops even after acclimation. This situation reduces unit combat capabilities and increases non-combat losses. Training new recruits could affect an operation depending on the timing. New recruits would likely achieve a minimal operational capability to conduct small unit combat by late spring, which

should be adequate for the restricted terrain which will limit maneuver and dictate primarily small unit operations. Depending on the timing of the crisis, the PLA could decide to delay mobilization of soldiers in the WTC to retain full combat capability of units. [4]

The Aksai Chin border terrain mock-up at the Qingtongxia CATTB depicts mostly Chinese occupied territory with only a small portion of Indian controlled terrain. This appears to indicate a focus on a Joint Border Counterattack Campaign in response to an Indian military incursion. However, the exact purpose of the large terrain model is unclear. The border counterattack campaign was originally considered an Army offensive campaign, although some PLA books now refer to it as a joint campaign. This campaign includes initial border defense actions with a transition to the offense to regain lost territory and restore the situation. The two mountain brigades and independent mechanized brigade are the closest ground forces to Arunachal Pradesh, although the 13th Group Army trains in mountain warfare and could deploy as needed. While no PLA forces are permanently garrisoned in the Aksai Chin area, it is likely that the mechanized infantry division in Hotan (**see map**) would deploy to this area. Air and missile strikes would support the ground operations to annihilate and expel invading enemy forces depending on the weather, or as in the Sino-Indian Border War operations could consist of mostly ground operations. [5]

The PLA would conduct a Mountain Offensive Campaign or possibly a Joint Fire Strike Campaign if Beijing issued orders for offensive operations. A Joint Fire Strike campaign would support the border counterattack or mountain offensive, but could also represent an independent campaign. The terrain, weather, and difficult

engineering and comprehensive support conditions restraining the deployment and sustainment of forces could make a joint fire strike appear more advantageous to a mountain offensive. A mountain offensive would require a substantial advantage in the correlation of forces for the attacker operating under terrain and weather restrictions. As an independent campaign, a joint fire strike could represent punitive strikes against key Indian targets. A joint fire strike campaign is a long-range precision strike by long-range rocket, missile and air forces with the objective to destroy important enemy targets, paralyze the enemy's operational system of systems (integrated force grouping), weaken the will to resist and destroy war potential, or create conditions for other operations. The Chinese leadership could conclude that conducting precision strikes against key Indian targets was preferable to conducting difficult offensive ground operations where the defender has an advantage. [6]

Future Prospects

The creation in peacetime of theater joint commands accelerates the PLA's plan to develop an integrated joint operations capability, promotes theater joint training and greater familiarity between the services, and provides for a rapid transition from peacetime to wartime operations. The theater commands will train units for wartime operational missions which will decrease the need for pre-war preparations and pre-battle training. Ultimately this development will increase the combat effectiveness of forces not only in the WTC, but also in the other theaters.

It will take time for the theater commands to achieve an optimal joint operational capability as the joint commands and personnel need to

establish coordination procedures and working relationships. The PLA also recognizes the requirement to improve joint professional military education for its officers, which will take time to fully implement throughout the military educational institutes, graduating a quantity of officers adept at integrated joint operations. However, PLA joint operations are constantly improving and joint exercises for more than a decade provide increased joint experience and improving capabilities.

Kevin McCauley has served as senior intelligence officer for the Soviet Union, Russia, China and Taiwan during 31 years in the U.S. Government. He has written numerous intelligence products for decision makers, combatant commands, combat and force developers, as well as contributing to the annual Report to Congress on China's military power. Mr. McCauley's new book is titled, "Russian Influence Campaigns against the West: From the Cold War to Putin."

Notes

1. This article is based on an article appearing in the *Indian Military Review*, Vol. 7, Issue 9, September 2016.
2. *Theater Joint Operations Command* (Beijing: National Defense University Press, 2016), pp. 76–82; *Military Terms* (Beijing: Military Science Press, 2011), p. 173; *Science of Joint Tactics* (Beijing: Military Science Press, 2014) pp. 130–136.
3. *Science of Campaigns* (Beijing: National Defense University Press, 2006); *Military Terms* (Beijing: Military Science Press, 2011).
4. *Science of Army Campaigns Under High-Tech Conditions*, (Beijing: Military Science Press, 2003), pp. 303–323.
5. *Science of Army Campaigns Under High-Tech Conditions*, (Beijing: Military Science

Press, 2003), pp. 303–323; *Military Terms* (Beijing: Military Science Press, 2011), pp. 70–71.

6. *Science of Campaigns* (Beijing: National Defense University Press, 2006), pp. 404–425.

China's Lukewarm Response to Indian Military Modernization

By Oriana Mastro

Between September 14–27, the United States and India conducted a joint military training exercise in Uttarakhand, an area less than 100 km from the Chinese border (*Global Times*, September 12). This combined exercise, known as Yudh Abhyas, or “training for war,” started as an army training cooperation event in 2004 and has since evolved to include the air force as well (U.S. Army Pacific, March 12, 2012). Until 2008, the main focus had been sharing logistics and tactics. Between 2009 and 2012, the exercise focused on the UN-style peacekeeping missions (U.S. Army Pacific, March 12, 2012). Since then, the main theme has shifted to counter-insurgency and more recently, counter-terrorism (U.S. Army, September 12, 2015; *The Diplomat*, September 16). Each year, the United States and India takes turn in hosting the exercise.

China tends to be strident in its criticism of U.S. military operations and presence in the Asia-Pacific, to include U.S. increased cooperation with allies and partners as a result of the rebalancing (State Council Information Office, May 2015). The Chinese government and media repeatedly

emphasizes that the “rebalance” ended the tranquilization and peace in the region (Xinhua, June 2; *Global Times*, September 30) Official media often directly accuses the United States for replaying the Cold War politics and the arms competition (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, April 29). Chinese Defense Minister Chang Wanquan echoed President Xi Jinping, denounced the US and its increasingly military cooperation with allies as “seeking its own security by scarifying the others,” and is bringing “instability” to international security (*People's Daily*, May 21; Xinhua, June 26; *Global Times*, June 26).

But strangely, China's response to Yudh Abhyas did not follow this pattern. The Chinese government did not publish any statement on the exercise and official media sources did not regularly report on it. This year, *Huanqiu* expected a criticism from Beijing for holding the exercise too close to the border with China (*Global Times*, September 12). However, neither an official statement nor an article followed up on the exercise. Even in the years the official media has reported on the exercise, the articles have been very short and limited to reporting basic information such as the date, location and purpose (Xinhua, May 20, 2013; *Global Times*, September 12; *Global Times*, September 16). There is one minor exception—in 2009 two major media outlets, Xinhua and *Huanqiu*, did report on the exercise in detail, probably because the purpose of the exercise shifted from training to combat simulation that year (*Global Times*, October 13, 2009; Xinhua, October 27, 2009).

Chinese Response to Indian Border and Maritime Exercises

China's lack of attention to this combined exercise is not surprising – China tends to respond

mildly, if at all, to Indian military training and exercises. India conducted 29 military exercises in 2016, four of which were with China and 22 were with other foreign states. [1] Of all of these, Chinese reporting covered only eight of India's exercises, with information mostly being conveyed through online outlets instead of printed papers (Huanqiu, February 9; PLA News, April 13; Huanqiu, May 5; Global Times, June 12; Global Times, July 7; Global Times, September 12; China.com, October 20; Global Times, October 24; Ministry of Defense, November 15). The low level of interest is also evident from the RIMPAC exercise; China only focused on its participation and entirely overlooked India's presence (Xinhua, August 4; PLA News, August 7).

This is the case even when those exercises have direct application to the Sino-Indian border dispute, which has been heating up since 2007 (China Brief, December 21, 2015). In February 2016 India's new mountain corps conducted an exercise designed to prepare them for combat along the whole border. The Indian parliament also approved a 9.4-billion-dollar worth of budget to recruit 80,000 soldiers for these troops. The government approved several social projects to rebuild infrastructure in the Sino-Indian region (Global Times, March 9). The Global Times, known for its over the top nationalistic coverage, mentioned matter-of-factly on July 5, 2016 that India announced a plan to enhance defense and combat capabilities in Arunachal Pradesh in response to the intrusion of 250 Chinese soldiers the month before. The Indians also conducted an exercise there and issued a stern warning to China that they are learning Chinese to prepare to chase out the Chinese the next time. [2]

Even in the case of the maritime sphere, in which there seems to be a budding rivalry between the

two countries in the Indian Ocean, China's media coverage of Indian exercises is still balanced (Central Compilation and Translation Bureau, February 15, 2015; Global Times, April 11; Global Times, July 29; China News, September 8). For example, in June 2016, Japan, India and the United States conducted an exercise together in the East China Sea as part of the annual naval Malabar exercise. One would expect a strong PRC response to India interfering in Chinese sovereignty disputes, but instead Chinese media coverage rationalized away Indian participation. One article mentioned India wants to be a Pacific power with its Look East Policy, but it is not trying to flex its muscles like Japan and the U.S. With this exercise, India merely wants an opportunity to flush out its submarines (People's Daily, June 16). India wants closer relations with Japan to facilitate its Look East policy, but India's visit to China after the exercises shows Delhi wants to maintain good relations with Beijing as well (China Youth Daily, June 23). In February 2016 India dispatched four vessels to Vietnam and the Philippines to, in the words of a Chinese official, demonstrate their growing military capability and implement the Act East policy. The article concludes only that military activities are good diplomatic activities, but perhaps India should have been more careful about their timing (Global Times, June 2). The harshest treatment was a Global Times article that said for India Malabar was a good way to pursue alliance diplomacy without entering into an alliance or losing strategic autonomy, and India welcomed a greater U.S. role to facilitate its economic rise and prevent Chinese dominance of the region.

Why does China respond in such a relatively neutral, balanced way? One possibility is that Indian military activities remains insignificant, and therefore does not require a Chinese response.

But Indian bilateral and multilateral defense cooperation with other regional actors such as Australia, Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Vietnam, has increased in unprecedented ways in recent years (Center for a New American Security, June 2013). [3] Just this year, India hosted its first multilateral military exercise entitled “Force 18” with ten Asian nations and eight dialogue partners, including China, Australia, Japan, and the United States (The Diplomat, February 28). Indian forces also regularly participate in the Malabar series of tri-lateral naval exercises with the U.S. and Japan, and in 2016, 12 Indian Air Force aircraft participated in the multinational “Red Flag” exercises held by the US Air Force in the United States (People’s Daily, June 16; Global Times, May 7). On the bilateral level, Indian troops conducted counter-terrorism exercises in 2015 with Russia (INDRA-2015), while Indian Air Force aircraft exercised with Russian aircraft in Aviva Indra-2014 in 2014, and flew with fighters from the British Royal Air Force in Exercise Indradhranush in 2015 (Global Times, November 6, 2015; The New Indian Express, August 25, 2014; Aviation Week, July 31). In June 2016, the United States, Japan, and India conducted the Malabar naval exercises off the coast of Okinawa. Chinese ships monitored the exercises, tracking Indian and U.S. vessels with intelligence platforms to gather information (The Hindu, June 16; People’s Daily, June 16).

China Responds Strongly to Other Countries

Another possibility is that this neutral coverage of Indian military modernization and activities is merely the result of Chinese reporting. There may be a desire in general to avoid stoking nationalism, or ignore external threats to Chinese national interests. But Chinese coverage of other countries casts doubt on this alternative hypothesis. Coverage on Japan is clear that about the

threat Japan’s military buildup poses to China (China Daily, December 18, 2013; Xinhua, April 30, 2015; Xinhua, July 21, 2015). The media responses strongly to every move—for example when Japan moved radar equipment to Yonaguni Island (east of Taiwan), China called the move “concerning” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 23, 2014) and indirectly criticized the move, stating “we hope the Japanese side learns from the hard lessons of history [and] sticks to the path of peaceful development” (Sina News, March 29). Additionally, Chinese entities consistently suggest that this alliance is a Cold War relic and should not be directed against China (Xinhua, April 30, 2015; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, April 30, 2015; People’s Daily Overseas Edition, April 25, 2014). Xinhua railed, “Washington has simply signed a Faustian pact with a Tokyo that has a knack of alienating its neighbors,” and that the U.S. “is actually emboldening a warmonger whose martial zeal had been proved by history repeatedly” (Xinhua, April 28, 2015).

China is also quick to point out the challenge of Vietnamese and Philippine military modernization. On the Vietnamese acquisition of submarines, a Chinese vice admiral’s commented in 2010 that “is naturally becoming a challenge to neighboring countries, including China” (China News, February 27, 2010). When Vietnam uses its military to protect its territorial claims, as India does on the border, China holds no punches. In June 2012 when Vietnam’s Su-27 fighter jets flew patrols over the Spratly Islands and Hanoi passed a law placing disputed islands under Vietnamese sovereignty, China Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei proclaimed the Vietnamese actions to be “illegal and invalid,” and they “complicate and magnify the issue” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 21, 2012). Likewise, when Vietnam sent Israeli-made EXTRA rocket launch-

ers to its outposts in the Spratly Islands in August 2016, the Foreign Ministry stated “China resolutely opposes the relevant country illegally occupying parts of China’s Spratly Islands... [and] illegal construction and military deployments” (*Global Times*, August 10). The *Global Times* opined that this deployment was “a terrible mistake,” and that Vietnam should “draw some lessons from history” (*Global Times*, August 11).

On the Philippines, even though China spends approximately 59 times more on its defense and military than the Philippines (*Xinhua*, March 5), when Major-General Raul de Rosario unveiled a plan to spend \$22.11 billion on the Filipino military through 2028 (*The Diplomat*, July 8, 2015), Chinese media outlets suggested Manila was contributing to an escalating regional arms race. Expectedly, China takes serious issue with the Philippines’ efforts to bolster its alliance with the U.S. In response to the 2016 Balikatan exercises, a commentary in *Xinhua* remonstrated, “the exercises... caps Manila’s recent attempts to involve outsiders in (a) regional row,” proceeding to castigate the U.S for “unscrupulous inconsistency between fear-mongering deeds and peace-loving words” (*Xinhua*, April 4). In response to the 2016 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (ECDA) allowing American forces access to five additional military bases in the Philippines, Defense Ministry spokesman Yang Yujun reverted to the common Cold War refrain regarding U.S. allies in Asia. He warned, “to strengthen military alliances is a reflection of a Cold War mentality (*State Council Information Office*, March 31). China also lashes out when the U.S. and Philippines conduct joint patrols in the South China Sea, with the Defense Ministry depicting these activities as “militarization in the region, which is harmful to regional peace and stability” (*Xinhua*, April 15).

Conclusion

While Beijing is quick to jump to conclusions about other countries modernization efforts being directed at China and undermining Chinese security, China surprisingly responds calmly to Indian military activities. Even when India spends more resources on its military, many that have a direct application to a conflict against China along the border, Chinese media and official statements either ignores these developments or rationalizes that these developments are directed at other actors. This provides a strategic window of opportunity for expanding U.S.-Indian relations—we will have to wait and see whether President-Elect Trump capitalizes on it.

Dr. Oriana Skylar Mastro is an assistant professor of security studies at Georgetown University. Her recent publications include “The Vulnerability of Rising Powers: The Logic Behind China’s Low Military Transparency” in Asian Security and “A Global People’s Liberation Army: Possibilities, Challenges, and Opportunities” with Kristen Gunnness in Asia Policy. Her full bio can be found [here](#). Dr. Mastro would like to thank Lynn for her expert research assistance.

Notes:

1. For a list of all these exercises, see the Indian Ministry of Defence’s 2015-16 annual report.
2. Wu Zhaoli, “India’s Asia Pacific Strategy: Development, Objectives and Implementation [印度亚太战略发展、目标与实施路径],” *South Asian Studies* [南亚研究], (2015 Vol. 4), p. 114.
3. See Liu Yangjian, “浅析中印关系中印度的两面性 [Analysis on the Two Faces of India in Sino-Indian Relations],” *Legal System and Society* [法制与社会], (July 25,

2009); Wang Xinlong, “印度海洋战略及对中印关系的影响 [India’s Ocean Strategy and Its Implications for Sino-Indian Relations],” *South Asian Studies Quarterly* [南亚研究季刊], (June 30, 2004).

Arunachal Pradesh: Cultural and Strategic Flashpoint For Sino-Indian Relations

By Sudha Ramachandran

Sino-Indian relations are likely to become strained in early 2017. The Dalai Lama is scheduled to visit Tawang in the northeast Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh in March. According to the Chinese Foreign Ministry, by granting the Dalai Lama permission to visit Tawang, India is providing “a stage for anti-China separatist forces,” further warning that it would “only damage peace and stability of the border areas and bilateral relations” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [PRC], October 29, 2016). China views the Dalai Lama’s visit to Tawang, an area of cultural and political significance to Tibetans, as potentially destabilizing. His previous visit to Tawang in 2009, which came close on the heels of violent unrest in Tibet, was similarly criticized by Beijing (Economic Times, November 4, 2009). In the run-up to that visit, tension between India and China escalated. The Indian media reported build-up of troops on both sides of the disputed Sino-Indian border (Greater Kashmir, September 23, 2009 and Rediff.com, November 4, 2009).

Other visits to Arunachal Pradesh by Indian leaders and foreign officials have drawn Beijing’s ire. When India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Tawang in February 2015 to participate in celebrations marking 29 years of Arunachal Pradesh’s full integration into the Indian Union, the Chinese government summoned the Indian ambassador in Beijing to express “strong dissatisfaction and staunch opposition” to his trip. The visit has “undermined China’s territorial sovereignty, rights and interests,” Beijing said (Times of India, February 21, 2015). More recently, it objected to U.S. ambassador to India, Richard Verma, visiting Tawang and accused Washington of trying to “disturb peace and tranquility of border areas and sabotage peaceful development of [the] region” (Hindustan Times, October 24, 2016).

China claims 90,000 square kilometers in the eastern sector of the Sino-Indian border, which roughly corresponds to Arunachal Pradesh. But Tawang is the “focal point” of its demands in the eastern sector. Indeed, China regards Tawang as “the central question at the heart of the boundary dispute” (The Telegraph, April 22, 2012 and The Hindu, October 22, 2012). Underlying China’s territorial claims in the eastern sector are its apprehensions over Tibet. The Dalai Lama is ageing; he is 81 years old. China, which is keen to control the Dalai Lama institution and can be expected to appoint a successor when the present Dalai Lama dies. There is growing concern in Beijing over instability in Tibet and the role that Tawang could play in resisting the Dalai Lama Beijing imposes and in fueling unrest in the post-Dalai Lama era. China’s prickliness over the Dalai Lama’s upcoming visit to Tawang must be seen in this context.

Tawang's Significance

Located on the southern slopes of the Eastern Himalayas, Arunachal Pradesh is India's easternmost state. It shares international borders with Bhutan, China and Myanmar. Tawang is at the southwest edge of Arunachal Pradesh (See map).

Arunachal Pradesh's significance for India lies in its geography; the state extends a protective arm around much of India's northeast. Control over Arunachal Pradesh is essential for India's defense of the Northeast, and Tawang plays a key role in this defense. Tawang is a critical corridor between Tibet and the Brahmaputra Valley. During the 1962 border war Chinese troops invaded India through the Bum La pass, located north of Tawang town, before going on to occupy a large swath of territory in the Northeast. Indian military officials warn that ceding control over Tawang to China could culminate in India losing control of the Assam plains (Force India, January 2015). **[1]** Worryingly for India, the Chinese garrison town of Nyingchi, which is home to two People's Liberation Army (PLA) mountain infantry brigades, is located near Arunachal Pradesh. China's road and rail network here would enable it to deploy soldiers along the McMahon Line very quickly (Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses [IDSA], November 2008)

Tawang's significance goes beyond geo-strategic concerns; it has strong historical, cultural and ecclesiastical links with Tibet. Its predominantly Monpa tribal population practices Tibetan Buddhism and speaks a language similar to Tibetan. Tawang is an important center of Tibetan Buddhism. The 6th Dalai Lama was born here. The town is home to the Tawang monastery, the largest Tibetan Buddhist monastery in the world

after the Potala Palace in Lhasa (Times of India, October 17, 2012).

Tawang is also politically significant. When the Dalai Lama fled Tibet in 1959 in the wake of China's suppression of the uprising there, he crossed into India through the Bum La pass and stayed at the Tawang monastery for some weeks. Thus, Tawang figures prominently in the history of Tibetan resistance against Chinese rule.

Growing Stridence of Chinese Claims

Historically a part of Tibet, Tawang became a part of British India only in 1914 when the rulers in Lhasa agreed to the McMahon Line as the border between Tibet and British India. The Simla Convention put Tawang south of the McMahon Line and thus in British India. Yet, Tibet continued to administer Tawang for several decades. It was only after China annexed Tibet that India took administrative control of Tawang in 1951. **[2]**

China rejects the legality of the McMahon Line and claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of "South Tibet." It maintains that that its position on the McMahon Line is "consistent and clear" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 29, 2016). However, "its assertive claim to Arunachal Pradesh is relatively recent" (The Wire, May 20, 2015). From the signing of the Simla Convention in 1914 till January 1959, "the Chinese never raised any formal objections to the McMahon Line; although they had many opportunities to do so." Their main quarrel with the Simla Convention was with its Article 9, which laid out the boundaries between Inner and Outer Tibet. It was only in a letter dated January 23, 1959 that Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai in a letter to his Indian counterpart, Jawaharlal Nehru, for the first time formally

raised China's differences with India on the border. "The Sino-Indian boundary had never been formally delimited," Zhou said. He clarified this further in a letter dated September 8, 1959 where he said that the McMahon Line "has never been recognized by any Chinese Central Government and is therefore decidedly illegal" ([IDSA](#), July 3, 2014).

Since then, China has made several U-turns. During the 1962 war, it occupied much of the North East Frontier Agency as Arunachal Pradesh was known then, but withdrew from it soon after, leaving it again in India's control. [3] Indeed, it was even willing to give up its claims over Arunachal Pradesh. Under a package deal it offered India in 1960 and 1980 (the offer was withdrawn thereafter), China suggested that in return for India recognizing Chinese sovereignty over Aksai Chin in the western sector, Beijing would recognize the McMahon Line as the border in the eastern sector. But in 1985, during the sixth round of the Sino-Indian border talks, China for the first time pressed claims south of the McMahon Line. [4] In 1986, when India granted full statehood to Arunachal Pradesh, repeated Chinese intrusions at the Sumdorong Chu Valley culminated in serious skirmishes between the two sides.

Then in 2005, China signaled willingness to accommodate Indian concerns. Under the "Agreement on Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question," India and China decided that a settlement to the border dispute would not involve exchange of areas with "settled populations" ([Ministry of External Affairs](#), Government of India, April 11, 2005). In effect, China was willing to give up its claims over Tawang, an area with a large settled population ([The Wire](#), May 24, 2015).

But a significant turnaround in China's position became evident soon after. In 2006, days ahead of President Hu Jintao's visit to India, China's ambassador in Delhi, Sun Yuxi, said that "the whole of the state of Arunachal Pradesh is Chinese territory. And Tawang is only one of the places in it. We are claiming all of that" ([Hindustan Times](#), November 19, 2006). China has also refused to issue visas to residents of Arunachal Pradesh or issued them stapled visas on the grounds that they are in fact Chinese citizens ([The Hindu](#), June 1, 2015). In 2009, for the first time ever it blocked an Indian application for loans from the Asian Development Bank for development projects in Arunachal Pradesh ([Indian Express](#), April 14, 2009). China is also buttressing its claims by strengthening its military muscle and access near the McMahon Line. This has prompted India to step up its own military preparedness and border infrastructure in Arunachal Pradesh ([China Brief](#), September 13, 2016).

Chinese Anxieties

So what lies behind China's increasingly strident demands in the eastern sector of its border with India? The Sino-Indian border dispute is entwined with China's concerns over the stability of its control over Tibet. Its claims over Aksai Chin in the western sector of the LAC, for instance, were linked to its need "to assert and uphold authority over Tibet." Following its annexation of Tibet in 1950, China needed to send in a large number of troops and civil administration to quell unrest and establish control over the region. Of the three available routes into Tibet, the route via Aksai Chin was the most convenient. It provided all-weather access to Tibet and, being unpopulated, was free from attacks by Tibetan insurgents. [5]

If China's claims over Aksai Chin were aimed at establishing military and administrative control over Tibet, its demands on Tawang are linked to concerns over Tibet's stability. Such concerns have grown since the 2008 unrest in Tibet ([Business Standard](#), May 14, 2015). China is anxious that when the present Dalai Lama dies, resistance to a Beijing-appointed successor could trigger an uprising in Tibet similar in intensity to the one in the 1950s ([Outlook](#), May 30, 2007). A Beijing-appointed Dalai Lama would be all the more unacceptable to Tibetans if the present Dalai Lama determines who his successor will be. He has said that his "reincarnation" could happen "outside Tibet, away from the control of the Chinese authorities" ([His Holiness The 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet](#)). Should the next Dalai Lama be "discovered" in Tawang, "a Chinese rival may not enjoy the same legitimacy" ([Business Standard](#), April 13, 2014). Additionally, like the present Dalai Lama, he would be outside China's control and Tawang would emerge as another rallying point for Tibetan resistance to Chinese rule. [6]

In the months ahead of the Dalai Lama's 2009 visit, discussion on the succession issue gathered momentum, triggering speculation that he would announce a successor in Tawang ([Indian Express](#), September 3, 2008; [Open](#), October 31, 2009 and [Economic Times](#), November 04, 2009). There is similar speculation among Tibetan exiles about the Dalai Lama's upcoming visit ([Tehelka](#), July 11, 2015).

Although India has consistently denied backing Tibetan insurgents and does not allow Tibetan exiles to engage in political activity on its soil, China believes it does ([Hindustan Times](#), August 7, 2012; [Hindustan Times](#), September 21). China's fears are growing as India-U.S. has increased since 2005, including in Arunachal Pradesh. In May 2016, China strongly protested a

statement by the U.S. Consulate-General in Kolkata that Washington regards Arunachal Pradesh as part of India ([Business Standard](#), May 14, 2015; [Arunachal Times](#), April 13, 2016 and [Indian Express](#), May 4, 2016).

Conclusion

China's concern over instability in Tibet underlies its claims on Tawang, which have grown increasingly strident over the past decade. This demand is likely to grow, as uncertainty over the Dalai Lama's succession and the likely unrest in Tibet mounts. The growing proximity of India and the U.S. compounds China's anxieties over Tibet. Under these circumstances, relations between India and China, which are already fraying, can be expected to deteriorate further. A settlement of their border dispute is unlikely in the near future.

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Notes

1. John W. Garver, *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 98–100.
2. Srinath Raghavan, "The Boundary Dispute with China," [Seminar](#), 2008.
3. It is possible that poor road connectivity between Tibet and Tawang, lack of supply lines and a hostile local population could have prompted China to withdraw from Arunachal Pradesh after occupying it.

4. Ibid. pp. 100–105.
5. Ibid, pp. 80–88.
6. Of the 14 Dalai Lamas so far, only two—the fourth and the sixth—were born outside Tibet, in Mongolia and India (Tawang), respectively and Mongolian Buddhism has close ties with Tibetan Buddhism, raising the possibility of the 15th Dalai Lama being ‘discovered’ in Mongolia. Hence, China’s sensitivity and strong response to visits by the Dalai Lama to Ulaanbaatar, as well. His recent visit prompted Beijing to take “punish” landlocked Mongolia for its “erroneous action” by suspending ongoing bilateral talks, hiking overland transit charges and blocking a border crossing between the two countries (Global Times, December 8).

Sino-Indian Competition in the Maritime Domain

By Jonathan D. T. Ward

The naval build-up of the world’s two most populous nations, China and India, will contribute to a new era in the importance of naval power. Owing in part to a collapse in relations in the late 1950s and early 1960s which culminated in the China-India Border War of 1962, relations between China and India continue to be marked by distrust. In the past, geopolitical tensions between China and India were largely confined to the Himalayas, where the border dispute between the two nations remains unresolved. In this century, however, the geopolitics of China-India relations are increasingly defined by the

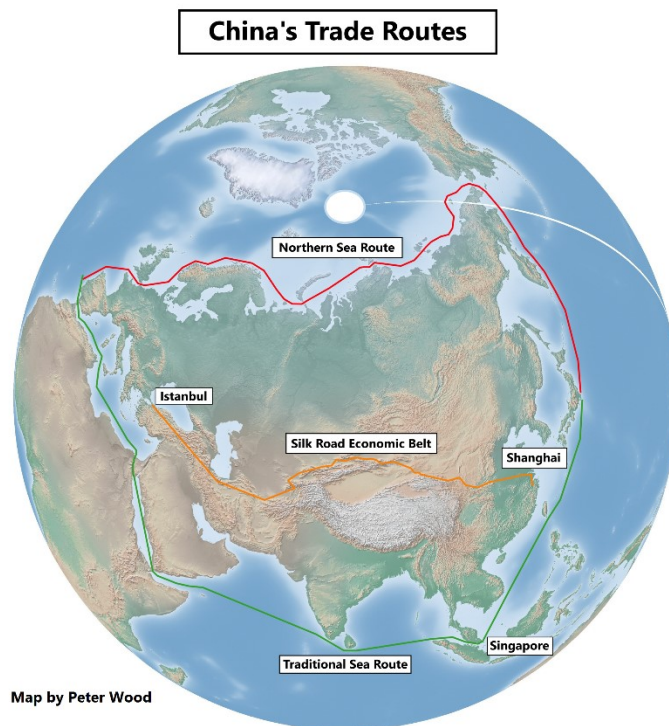
maritime domain. The Himalayan territories of the disputed China-India border were once considered a “life-line” by Chinese leaders, important to the CCP’s consolidation of control over Tibet following the founding of the PRC. Today, Chinese interests and activities have expanded significantly beyond the regions that defined China-India relations in the past. As the world’s leading nation in trade, surpassing the United States in 2013, owning the fourth largest commercial shipping fleet, and many of the world’s largest deep water ports, including Shanghai and Shenzhen, the Chinese economy, and the imperative for Chinese leaders to sustain economic growth, is defined by maritime engagement with the globe. With this comes great vulnerabilities, and a new dimension to China-India relations in which naval power will be paramount.

Both China and India are dependent on sea-borne trade and shipping routes. Hemmed in by the Himalayas to its north and gaining little economically from its neighbor Pakistan, India’s natural geography is maritime. The South Asian nation depends on the sea for 90 percent of its trade by volume and for 90 percent of its oil imports, with the majority of its imported oil coming from the nearby Persian Gulf (MEA, March 20, 2015). India’s maritime geography is hospitable as the nation dominates the Indian Ocean region with easy access to some of the world’s most vital sea lanes. China’s economic life-lines, by contrast, pass through much more difficult terrain.

China’s Indian Ocean Dependency: the “Malacca Dilemma”, the South China Sea, and China’s Growing Presence in the Indian Ocean

As China's global economic footprint increases, its Indian Ocean dependency is increasing in kind. Chinese access to vital African resources, Persian Gulf oil and gas, and sea-borne trade with Europe all depends on the passage of these goods across the Indian Ocean. To reach the People's Republic, all of this must then pass through the Straits of Malacca, a narrow, pirate-infested waterway which is less than two miles across at its narrowest point. The Straits of Malacca is one of the world's most significant maritime chokepoints: 25 percent of the world's traded goods and 25 percent of all sea-borne oil pass through it. According to the US Energy Information Agency, roughly 80 percent of China's imported oil passes through the Straits, leading President Hu Jintao to label this strategic bottleneck the "Malacca Dilemma" (马六甲困局), in 2003. **[1]** The phrase encapsulates two problems: on one hand the fact that the lifeblood of China's economy must pass through a two mile wide channel after transiting the Indian Ocean, and on the other hand, the concern that, as President Hu phrased it, "certain powers" could control the Straits and put China at risk with comparative ease.

Importantly, China's dependence on the Indian Ocean is likely to be long-standing. As Professor Zhang Li, director of security and diplomatic studies at Sichuan University's Institute of South Asian Studies explained to this author in 2014, the Indian Ocean would be the region which most of China's energy imports would transit "for the next forty years", also explaining that "There is a very strong fear in India about China's intentions in the Indian Ocean" (*China Brief*, June 19, 2014). Indeed, as China takes steps to offset its Malacca dilemma by building both military and industrial infrastructure in the Indian Ocean region, frictions with India are likely to increase.



of "One Belt, One Road", (OBOR) an initiative to build up ports, pipelines, roads and railways that will link Eurasia, Africa, and the Indian Ocean more closely to China, facilitating the transport of goods and natural resources to and from the People's Republic. Chinese or Chinese-funded port building is underway or under contract in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Myanmar, and along the East African coast. The heart of OBOR's Indian Ocean initiatives is arguably the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, (CPEC) a \$46 billion investment plan by the PRC to build port and overland infrastructure links that would give China access to the Arabian Sea just to the east of the Persian Gulf. Along with existing port-to-rail facilities in Myanmar that link the Bay of Bengal to China's southern Yunnan province, CPEC provides a major potential offset to the "Malacca Dilemma". Importantly for India, however, China's infrastructure building in the Indian Ocean is not purely for economic purposes.

China's 2015 Defense White Paper, made clear that "[T]he security of overseas interests concerning energy and resources, strategic sea lines of communications (SLOCs), as well as institutions, personnel and assets abroad, has become an imminent issue" ([SCIO](#), May 29, 2015). The document tasks the People's Liberation Army with "safeguard[ing] the security of China's overseas interests" and tasks the PLA Navy (PLAN) with "gradually shift[ing] its focus from "offshore waters defense" to the combination of "offshore waters defense" with "open seas protection" ([China Brief](#), June 19, 2015). The first signs of this shift in naval focus are taking place in the Indian Ocean region. While the PLAN has been participating in multi-national anti-piracy operations off the Horn of Africa since 2008, signs of a more permanent Indian Ocean presence, as well as the use of China's OBOR architecture and relationships for military purposes have emerged. In 2016, the PRC began construction on its first overseas military base, in Djibouti. In 2014, a PLAN nuclear submarine and military support ship docked in Colombo, Sri Lanka, alarming New Delhi, and in 2015, a Chinese submarine docked in Karachi, demonstrating that the long-standing China-Pakistan partnership also has value for the projection of naval power ([Times of India](#), June 27, 2015).

Chinese island building in the South China Sea should also be viewed in an Indian Ocean context. Taken together with a new overseas military base in Djibouti, China is effectively building up military infrastructure at both ends of the Indian Ocean, on both ends of the sea-lanes which the Chinese economy has come to depend on. Additionally, military infrastructure in the South China Sea offers China protection for its major submarine base at Sanya on Hainan island. South China Sea military infrastructure also of-

fers China an advantage in the event of any military blockade of Malacca such as that which concerned President Hu in 2003.

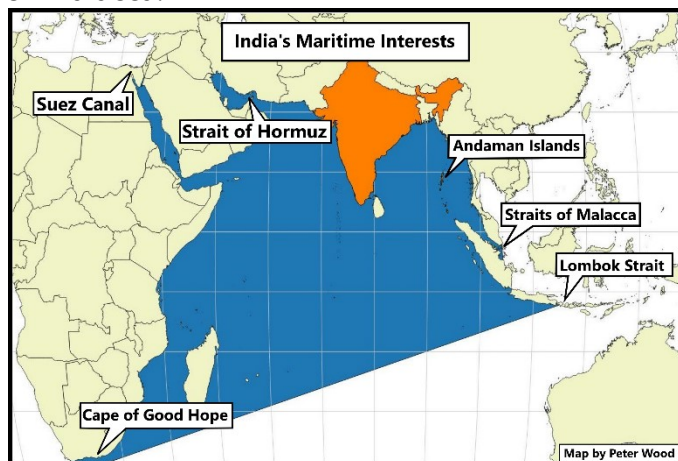
A pattern may therefore be emerging, of South China Sea military infrastructure as a basing point for PLAN patrolling in the Indian Ocean Region. While OBOR-related infrastructure has been used militarily, China is also expanding its Indian Ocean naval presence by proxy, supplying Pakistan with eight diesel electric submarines, and thus giving India's neighbor a transformative boost in its undersea capabilities ([Tribune \[Pakistan\]](#), August 31, 2016). Chinese rhetoric has likely done little to allay Indian concerns about either China's growing Indian Ocean presence or China's use of strategic relationships in the region. As Professor Shen Dingli of Fudan University stated earlier this year: "China actually has many ways to hurt India. China could send an aircraft carrier to the Gwadar port in Pakistan. China turned down Pakistan's offer to station military units in the country. If India forces China to do that, of course we can put a navy at your doorstep." Gwadar port, of course, is at the heart of the "One Belt, One Road" initiative.

China's Maritime Power and India's Growing Navy

The Indian Navy, in its 2015 maritime security strategy, shows that India's "Primary Areas of Interest" cover the entire Indian Ocean, from the Cape of Good Hope to Indonesia's Lombok Straits, including the Straits of Malacca (see map below).

Chinese fears of Indian naval capabilities are subtle, but long-standing. While Indian analysts and planners have long had their concerns about Chinese port building in the Indian Ocean,

fearing encirclement by a “string of pearls”, Chinese analysis has pointed out a further complication to the “Malacca dilemma” presented by India’s Andaman and Nicobar islands, just west of Malacca.



One Chinese naval analyst has suggested that India could fortify these islands into a “metal chain” (铁链) that could blockade Malacca, and others have suggested that the Andamans could be used as a “strategic springboard” (战略跳板) for India’s “Look East” policy, or for forward basing to reach into the South China Sea. **[3]** Chinese strategic concerns aside, India is engaged in a significant naval build up, aiming to have a 200 ship navy by 2027 (*Economic Times [India]*, July 16, 2015). Moreover, the South Asian nation is actively coordinating with other major democracies that are embroiled in maritime disputes due to Chinese claims in the East and South China Seas in the West Pacific.

In 2015, the annual Malabar naval exercises between India and the United States were upgraded to include Japan as a permanent member. India and Australia also began conducting bilateral naval exercises in 2015. India and the US have established a Joint Working Group on Aircraft Carrier Technology, and India may receive advanced carrier technology from the United States, including use of the Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System (EMALS) created

for America’s Gerald R. Ford class carriers, on its second indigenous aircraft carrier (*The Diplomat*, February 24, 2016). This year, India and the United States discussed cooperation on anti-submarine warfare, and also signed the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) which allows India and the US to use each other’s military facilities for supplies and repairs, all of which demonstrates that US-India defense cooperation is moving forward (*Indian Express*, August 31, 2016). The two nations issued a statement called “Joint Strategic Vision for Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region” in 2015, which mentioned “safeguarding maritime security and ensuring freedom of navigation...especially in the South China Sea” (*Whitehouse.gov*, January 1, 2015). The joint vision also mentioned “support for regional economic integration” and “accelerated infrastructure connectivity”, suggesting that it could be further developed as a counter-point to China’s OBOR initiative.



Figure 3. The First and Second Island Chains. PRC military theorists conceive of two island “chains” as forming a geographic basis for China’s maritime defensive perimeter.

Sensitive technology sharing, establishment of new naval partnerships, and assistance in the build-up of India’s naval capacity all show an embrace of Indian aspirations as a naval power by major maritime democracies. However, India’s naval presence goes beyond the U.S.-Japan-India trilateral. Indian naval outreach in

Southeast Asia has also intensified. In 2015, India signed the Joint Vision Statement on Defence Cooperation with Vietnam, and this year two Indian warships, a stealth frigate and a corvette, visited Cam Ranh Bay (*Indian Navy*, May 30, 2016). India inaugurated naval exercises with Indonesia in 2015, and the Indian Navy has trained Vietnamese submariners at Visakhapatnam (*Indian Navy*, May 10, 2015; *Times of India*, October 28, 2014). Indian maritime security outreach in the Indian Ocean itself is also underway, with Modi's visit to the Seychelles, Mauritius and Sri Lanka in 2015, where an Indian-led initiative on maritime surveillance has begun, which is meant to establish radar stations in these Indian Ocean island nations.

Conclusions

China's geopolitical challenge is breaking out of what it sees as encirclement or containment, both by foreign militaries and by geography itself. As the country is economically dependent on global sea-borne trade, and as its interests proliferate to every continent, the importance of naval power will be paramount. Liu Huaqing, China's most influential naval strategist, envisioned a Chinese navy capable of reaching the First Island Chain by 2000 and the Second Island Chain by 2020.

The corresponding rise of the Chinese navy and the proliferation of anti-access/area-denial capabilities that threaten the US Navy in the West Pacific continues to occupy the attention of the US defense and policy-makers. However, China's most vital economic interests may in fact lie in the Indian Ocean Region, and here, China expands its military footprint both at far greater risk geographically than it does in pursuing "near seas" operations, and also in the presence

of another major power engaged in its own determined naval rise. The PRC will continue to do all it can to circumvent its confounding geographical puzzle in Malacca, including showing great interest in a future waterway—the Arctic's Northern Sea Route. As Chinese leaders employ the full range of the nation's resources: diplomacy, financial power, engineering capabilities, and of course the building of a substantial blue-water navy and submarine fleet, China's strategic presence in the Indian Ocean will continue to grow, contributing in turn to India's own emphasis on naval power. There is little doubt that sea power in this century will be defined by the rise of the Chinese and Indian navies.

Jonathan Ward has recently completed his DPhil at the University of Oxford, specializing in China-India relations, with a dissertation on the China-India Border War of 1962. He studied Philosophy, Russian and Chinese at Columbia University in New York City as an undergraduate, and continued his language studies at Beijing University in China and St. Petersburg State University in Russia. From 2006 – 2011 he lived and traveled extensively in Russia, China, Latin America, and the Middle East, and speaks Russian, Chinese, Spanish and Arabic. He consults on China-India relations, the Indian Ocean Region, and Maritime Asia for Oxford Analytica, and is a Research Associate at Oxford's Changing Character of War Programme.

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1. Marc Lanteigne *Asian Security*, China's Maritime Security and the "Malacca Dilemma", 4:2, 2008. pp.143–161.
2. Holmes, Winner and Yoshihara, *Indian Naval Strategy in the Twenty-first Century*, Routledge 2009.

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