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PLA Attempts to Attract Higher-Quality Recruits

By Peter Wood

In late August, China's annual conscription (征兵) period ended. This year's newest group of PLA recruits was reportedly among the worst in recent memory, with widespread reportage across Chinese and international media about the recruits' health issues. As an article in the Chinese military's official newspaper put it, "One [unnamed] cities' physical exam washout rate for conscripts was 56.9 percent—enough to leave one speechless" (PLA Daily, October 28). Recruits were overweight, inactive or psychologically unfit.

Conscription, which began in early May, accepts young men and women between the ages of 18–22 and forms the bulk of the PLA. Conscripts serve for two years, before leaving the PLA or advancing to become Non-Commissioned Officers. Recruits for the PLA's officer track are brought in at the same time. According to the Chinese Ministry of Education, over 1,070,000 college students joined the PLA in 2017, an increase of 5.6 percent over last year ([Ministry of Education](#), August 30).

China's changing demographics and transitioning economy are having an impact on its ability to attract high-quality recruits. The PLA has traditionally had a social and economic function as well as its military purpose—the bulk of recruits have been from rural areas, and the PLA provided them with skills to help move up the labor

value chain. As China's level of urbanization reaches higher levels (57.35 percent as of 2016), recruits will increasingly need to be drawn from urban areas ([China Economic Net](#), January 20).

Although China's One Child Policy was ended in 2015, it will continue to have a lingering effect on the PLA—most recruits for the next 15 years will likely not have siblings. **[1]** The policy also contributed to China's dramatic population aging (老龄化), which according to some estimates will lead to there being two retired people for every working class person by 2050 ([China Brief](#), November 2, 2015). Population aging could have a chilling effect on recruitment, as more young people are needed in the work force, with higher paying jobs, to support their parents.

As the PLA modernizes and adopts more sophisticated equipment, higher levels of education among recruits are necessary. To attract more highly educated students the PLA has created a number of incentives. One of the pathways for college students, "National Defense Students" (*Guofangsheng*; 国防生)—somewhat similar to Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) in the United States—are an increasingly important proportion of PLA recruits. In Beijing, undergraduate students receive \$31,680 per year. Recruits from trade schools receive \$31,278 ([China Daily](#), July 27). As the program continues to attract greater numbers of students, the PLA is increasing its standards. In May, the Central Military Commission (CMC) announced that the PLA would begin to focus more on direct recruitment of college students ([People's Daily](#), May 30).

The PLA also extends special consideration to a number of categories, including bilingual ethnic minorities. Though the number of women serv-

ing in the PLA is small (only 115,000 of 1.6 million in 2016), they have increasingly been given higher profile roles, including combat positions, in recent years (see [China Brief](#), [October 4](#); [October 26](#)).

In addition to financial incentives, the PLA has borrowed from the Pentagon's Hollywood playbook and invested in TV series and movies targeted directly at encouraging young people to sign up. In late July CCTV premiered the PLA Navy-focused *Sharp Sword of the Deep* 《深海利剑》, a 34-episode series following a group of young college students from their recruitment into the Submarine Force through training and eventually to performing missions escorting PLAN surface ships on anti-piracy missions. The series, which received direct support from China's South Sea Fleet and the Submarine Academy in Qingdao, directly addresses issues such as China's changing class structure and attempts to make the navy life appealing to a broad audience. **[2]** Though widely panned on Chinese review sites such as *Douban.com*, the series is at least indicative of the PLA's willingness to spend significant amounts to reach young Chinese through popular television.

Not to be left out, the Chinese Air Force is involved in the production of the big-budget *Sky Hunter* 《空天猎》, a blockbuster film featuring major stars such as Fan Bingbing planned for release on September 30. In an interview with the *Global Times*, one of the producers of the film, a former PLAAF officer, clearly expressed the recruitment value of the film:

"The original intention of the PLA Air Force to produce this movie is simple. We don't intend to make money; we want to use it to tell the

people, especially the youth, what the PLA Air Force is like and what it can do to protect the country in this era and the future" (*Global Times*, September 10).

These TV series and movies, as with earlier productions such as *Soldiers' Sortie* 《士兵突击》, appear to be having an effect and are widely cited as helping inspire young Chinese to join the PLA (*China Daily*, July 27; *China Brief*, July 26, 2013).

China's economic situation is also helping incentivize more young people to join the PLA. Since hitting a five-year low in 2014, Chinese youth unemployment is again rising—has stood at over 10 percent since 2010. [3] With financial incentives and the chance for specialized training, the PLA remains a decent option for many Chinese youths.

The primary challenges then remain to attract high-quality recruits and to decrease corruption in the recruitment system.

The Chinese government is clearly concerned about the physical and mental health of recruits. In April, the CCP Central Committee and State Council instituted nationwide *A Mid-Long-term Youth Development Plan (2016-2025)* to "urgently improve the standard of physical health of young people" (*Gov.cn*, April 13).

The PLA has also struggled to rid itself of a culture of corruption. The selling of officer commissions reached to the highest levels of command, including former CMC member Xu Caihou. Although Xi Jinping and Wang Qishan's anti-corruption campaign has targeted both "tigers" [like Xu] and "flies", corruption remains a prob-

lem, PLA media periodically reports on local efforts to recruit 'honest inspectors' to reduce corruption at the grassroots level (*MOD*, August 21).

To achieve China's "strong military dream" (强军梦) the PLA is going to have to continue to invest heavily in its people: providing more financial incentives, job training, and better living standards. For the majority of people in China, life has improved dramatically in the past twenty years, but prosperity is bringing its own challenges, with associated health problems from richer foods, and demographic problems due to the One Child Policy. These longer-term trends have the potential to undercut the PLA's strength just as it makes major strides in improving training, equipment, and technological development.

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Notes:

1. The One-Child Policy always had exceptions for people in rural areas, minorities and other categories.
2. End credits for *the Sharp Sword of the Deep* thank the following PLA Units (using their Military Unit Cover Designator).

PLA Units involved in the Production of 《深海利剑》	
92730	Navy Submarine Academy (Qingdao)
92474	32nd Submarine Zhidui (Sanya)
92196	2nd Submarine Zhidui (Sanya)
91458	Yulin Support Base (Sanya)
91959	9th Destroyer Zhidui (Sanya)
91911	U/I
91128	U/I
92118	Peace Ark hospital Ship (Zhanjiang)
92781	U/I
	4802 Factory
	401 Hospital
	Navy Engineering College (Wuhan)

The real unit name is provided where possible

3. World Bank, Youth Unemployment Rate for China, retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/SLUEM1524ZSCHN>, September 19, 2017.

What is Xi Jinping Thought?

By Willy Lam

Ahead of the 19th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), scheduled to begin on October 18, media attention has focused on top-level personnel changes. While the selection of China's new group of leaders is certainly important, recent announcement that current CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping's political philosophies—*Xi Jinping Thought* (习近平思想)—are to be enshrined in the Party Constitution will have a tremendous impact on the political development of the Party and country ([Xinhua](#), September 18). Since late 2016, President Xi, who is also Chairman of the Party's Central Military Commission, has given himself the titles of "core leader" of the Party and "supreme commander" (最高统帅) of the country's military forces. The promotion of Xi Thought as the official guiding principle of the party and state will mark another milestone in the president's agenda of relentless self-aggrandizement ([Radio Free Asia](#), August 17; [HK01.com](#), July 15).

Resistance to the elevation of *Xi Thought* to party-and-state dogma seemed evident from the communique of the Politburo meeting on August 31. The Politburo meeting, which was

chaired by General Secretary Xi, indicated that the Party would abide by and carry out "the essence of General Secretary Xi's series of important remarks and the new governance concepts, thoughts and strategies of the central party authorities (中央党)." On previous occasions, Party mouthpieces often attributed "governance concepts, thoughts and strategies" to Xi, the "core of the leadership." By pointing out that these concepts, thoughts and strategies were those of the "central party authorities," the Politburo seemed to endorse collective decision-making rather than the personal contributions of paramount leader Xi ([BBC Chinese](#), September 1; [Apple Daily](#) [Hong Kong], September 1).

It is important to note, however, that changes in either personnel or dogma are still possible until the last one or two weeks before the Congress opens. *Xi Jinping Thought* has been cited officially or unofficially by top-ranked Xi protégés such as Politburo member and Director of the General Office of the Central Committee Li Zhanshu (栗战书) as well as the newly promoted Beijing party secretary Cai Qi (蔡奇). Moreover, the authoritative journal *Party Construction Research* (党建研究) stated in July that the party's ideological and policy-related innovations since 2012 can be summarized as *Xi Jinping Thought* ([Ming Pao](#) [Hong Kong], August 5; [Beijing Daily](#), August 4; [HK01.com](#), July 15). Equally important is the fact that Xi has again asserted his formidable grip over power by engineering a reshuffle at the top echelons of the People's Liberation Army. In August, he installed protégés and allies, Generals Li Zuocheng, Han Weiguo, Miao Hua, Ding Laihang as respectively the Chief of the Joint Chiefs Department, Commander of Ground Forces, Director of the Political Work Department, and Commander of the Air Force. Xi also

sacked two top generals promoted by his predecessor, ex-president Hu Jintao. Former Chief of the General Staff Department Fang Fenghui and Director of the General Political Department Zhang Yang, were last month put under investigation for alleged disciplinary violations (*Ming Pao*, September 2; *SingTao Daily* [Hong Kong], September 1; *South China Morning Post*, August 23).

For a “leader core” who seems to be pulling out all the stops to consolidate his powers, the enshrinement of *Xi Jinping Thought* in the CCP Charter is a long-cherished goal. In the CCP’s 96-year history, the dictums and aphorisms of leaders ranging from Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai to Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin have invariably been praised in the state media as “great, brilliant and monumental” contributions to official dogma as well as guiding principles for the party’s future. Yet only Mao’s ideas and pronouncements have been put together as Mao Zedong Thought, which is deemed on par with Marxism-Leninism. While Deng, the Great Architect of Reform deserved much of the credit for the “Chinese economic miracle,” his sayings were compiled as Deng Xiaoping Theory. In Party parlance, “theory” is at least one rung below “thought” in terms of authoritativeness and weight. While ex-president Jiang’s theoretical innovations, particularly the admission of private businesspeople into the party, are referred to in the party charter as “the important thought of the ‘Three Represents,’” Jiang’s name did not show up in the document. The “Three Represents” was thus considered to be a product of the collective leadership under Jiang. Ex-president Hu Jintao’s governance philosophy was cited in the CCP Constitution as the “Scientific

Chinese Communist Political Ideology		
Mao Zedong Thought	毛泽东思想	Mao Zedong
Deng Xiaoping Theory	邓小平理论	Deng Xiaoping
The Important Thought of "Three Represents"	“三个代表”重要思想	Jiang Zemin/Party Consensus
Scientific Outlook on Development s	科学发展观	Hu Jintao/Party Consensus
Xi Jinping Thought	习近平思想	
Chinese Dream	中国梦	
The Essence of General Secretary Xi Jinping’s Series of Important Remarks	习近平总书记系列讲话精神	
General Secretary Xi Jinping’s new governance concepts, thoughts and strategies	习近平总书记治国理政新理念新思想新战略	
Four Comprehensives	四个全面	
Four Self-Confidences	四个自信	
The Four Greats	四个伟大	

Outlook on Development” but his name was also omitted. Also significant is the fact that while the theoretical contributions of various leaders are put into the CCP Charter only after their retirement, Xi Jinping Thought could be given this high honor at the end of his first five-year term (*Citizen News* [Hong Kong], August 23; *Apple Daily* [Hong Kong], August 19).

But what, exactly, is Xi Jinping Thought? And will its elevation the loftiest set of guiding principles for the Party-State spell a significant direction for major policies? Xi Thought is a compendium of dictums and slogans that the supreme leader has given since he took power at the 18th Party Congress in late 2012. Official media’s first summation of Xi’s ideology and statecraft, “the Essence of General Secretary Xi Jinping’s Series of

Important Remarks” (hereafter “Important Remarks”), provides some useful insights. The authorities indicated at the Fourth Plenum of the Central Committee that party members must “deeply implement the spirit of General Secretary’s Important Remarks.” “Important Remarks,” said Party mouthpieces, encompass “new concepts, new ideas, and new strategies” in areas including political, economic and social construction, party and army construction as well as the cultivation of “environmental civilization.” But what exactly is new? Xinhua has noted that “Important Remarks” comprise “one core idea, and two fundamental points.” The core idea is Xi’s “Chinese dream,” which is a super-nationalistic narrative about China becoming a superpower. The “two fundamental points” refer to “comprehensively deepening reform and upholding the mass line” ([China.com.cn](#), November 6, 2015; [People’s Daily](#), July 17, 2014). Given the lack of concrete political or economic reforms in the past five years, as well as the gaping rich-poor divide among the populace, it is difficult to avoid the impression that Xi’s publicists are merely regurgitating hackneyed slogans. For example, the Chinese dream about the “renaissance of the Chinese nation” has been talked about by intellectuals since China’s first effort at Western-style political reform in the 1890s. “Upholding the mass line” or similar slogans such as “serving the people,” were first coined by Mao in the 1950s ([Sichuan Daily](#), May 25; [Thepaper.com](#) [Shanghai], October 24, 2014).

Befitting a leader with no formal higher education and who likes to talk in populist tones, Xi’s words of wisdom are often expressed as catchy rallying cries. Specifically, Xi Dada—as he is fondly identified—likes to encapsulate his instructions in terms of four-fold criteria or objectives. In the wake of the Chinese Dream and Important Remarks, the propaganda machinery

has since 2015 gone into overdrive extolling Xi’s “Four Comprehensives:” comprehensively building a moderately prosperous society, comprehensively deepening reform, comprehensively governing the nation according to law, and comprehensively governing the party in a strict manner. While this simple-to-remember dictum has been praised by the *People’s Daily* as a “strategic scheme for spearheading the renaissance of the [Chinese] people,” it breaks no new ground in Party ideology ([Outlook Weekly](#), August 20; [People’s Daily](#), September 8, 2015).

Instead of advocating new-fangled and sometimes controversial goals such as Deng’s revival of private enterprise or Jiang’s decision to seek fast-track accession to the World Trade Organizations, Xi is more interested in ways and means to preserve the party’s “perennial ruling status.” The “core leader” has repeatedly underscored the imperative of party cadres possessing Four Self-confidences” (四个自信), namely self-confidence in the path, theories, systems and culture marked by socialism with Chinese characteristics. Apparently inspired by the Maoist principle that the quality of cadres and soldiers was a matter of life and death for the Party, Xi demanded that officials must be cadres with Four Iron Qualities (‘四铁’干部) ([People’s Daily](#), September 26, 2016; CCP News Net, December 14, 2015). This means that their faith and belief [in Chinese-style socialism] must be hard as iron; they must have ironclad discipline and a sense of responsibility as unshakeable as iron. In addition to the anti-corruption campaign, Xi has launched an ideological crusade against the “Four Evil Winds” or aberrant lifestyle among officials. This is a reference to combating formalism, bureaucratic work style, hedonism and a decadent lifestyle ([Xinhua](#), September 9, 2016; [People’s Daily](#), May 3, 2013).

Xi's latest edict for strengthening the party and the country is described by official mouthpieces as the "Four Greats" (四个伟大). This is a reference to "waging great struggles, building great projects, promoting great enterprises, and realizing great dreams." While the focus on great projects, enterprises and dreams are somewhat platitudinous, "waging great struggles" is reminiscent of Chairman Mao's famous saying that "it is great fun to struggle against heaven, struggle against earth, and struggle against human beings." According to Han Qingxiang, a professor at the Central Party School, "the four greats are a major theoretical innovation at the critical historical juncture of [China] developing a moderately prosperous country and launching a new great leap forward in socialist modernization" (*Nanfang Ribao*, August 21; *People's Daily*, July 28).

According to a group of propagandists who use the collective pen-name of "Notes on Studying Xi" (学习笔记) "waging struggles" is nothing less than the quintessence of the supreme leader's worldview regarding both Party and foreign affairs. Thus, Xi has raised the moral level of officials through his anti-graft operations and through political movements consisting of "ideological struggles" among senior cadres. In yet another genuflection to Mao, the "leadership core" also wants to wage struggles against colonialists and imperialists as well as against trade protectionism. Equally significantly, the Xi administration is committed to struggles against separatism, which includes pro-independence movements in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Tibet and Xinjiang (*Qiushi* [Beijing], August 17).

The emphasis on "great struggles"—or what Xi himself repeatedly calls "brandishing the sword"—could mean that the CCP administration might adopt more aggressive tactics toward

handling its disagreements with the United States, Japan and ASEAN members which have territorial disputes with the PRC. Moreover, the new-found emphasis on fighting "Hong Kong separatism," which was first mentioned by Xi when he visited the Special Administrative Region on July 1 to mark the 20th year anniversary of the handover of sovereignty to China, could mean that Beijing would redouble efforts to muzzle dissent in Hong Kong (*Post852.com* [Hong Kong], August 24; *South China Morning Post*, November 11, 2016).

Overall, it is not expected that the elevation of Xi Jinping Thought to official state dogma would augur well for political, economic or social reforms. The personality cult being built around the "core leader" as well as the emphasis on ideological purity among party cadres go against basic tenets of Deng Xiaoping. After having absorbed the lessons of the Cultural Revolution, the Great Architect of Reform insisted in the early 1980s that the party and country be run by a collective leadership, and that ideological hair-splitting should take a back seat to economic construction. Xi, however, has reiterated that "ideological and thought work"—a reference to brainwashing and Mao-style ideological campaigns—is "an extremely important task of the party" (*BBC Chinese*, June 27, 2014; *People's Daily*, August 21, 2013).

Even more disturbing for reformers is Xi's warning against "subversive errors" in the political or economic field. This was a reference to Gorbachev-style liberalization that might end up vitiating the power of the Communist Party. The fear that an overly reformist policy could indirectly lead to the party's demise is behind Xi Dada's famous "Theory of the Titanic." Xi said in 2013 that a country as big as China could be compared to the Titanic: "if the Titanic really

sinks, it will sink just like that." On another occasion, Xi and his advisers were at pains to point out that irrespective of how effective or perspicacious a new idea or policy is, it could not be adopted if it was proven to be detrimental to the CCP's monopoly on power. "If our Party becomes weak, scattered and [if it were to] even break down, what good will policy achievements do?" asked Xi (*Southern Weekend*, December 4, 2015; *Jinghua Times*, October 9, 2014).

Perhaps the biggest difference between Mao Zedong Thought and Xi Jinping Thought is that the former is oriented toward the future, and the latter is consumed with self-preservation. Mao, who compared himself to the proverbial foolish man who wants to move the mountain, wanted to "open up new heaven, new earth." It is a supreme irony that despite China's having emerged as a fire-spitting quasi-superpower, Xi's obsession is to preserve the "perennial ruling party" status of the CCP as well as his status as undisputed leader. One of Xi's most significant speeches was made in 2008, one year after his unexpected induction to the Politburo Standing Committee. The heir-apparent told a graduating class of the Central Party School, of which he was president, that the CCP's ruling party status cannot be taken for granted. Xi had this to say about the fickleness of power: "Whatever we possessed in the past we may not no longer possess them now; and whatever we have now doesn't mean we will have them forever" (*Southern Metropolitan Daily*, September 9, 2008). Instead of speeding up thorough-going reforms, Xi Jinping Thought could mainly serve as a rationale for the party to uphold its Leninist roots, and for its supreme leader to tighten his grip on power. Thus while the enshrinement of Xi Thought in the CCP Charter testifies to his ever-expanding power, it could also significantly bolster the essentially conservative nature of the

strongman's statecraft.

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Himalayan Impasse: How China Would Fight an Indian Border Conflict

By Kevin McCauley

At the end of August, Chinese and Indian troops both pulled back from the Doklam region in Bhutan after weeks of tense posturing. The face off began in June when Chinese construction crews accompanied by soldiers began building a road. The area is sensitive to Indian national interests not only because of its ally Bhutan, but also due to area's proximity to a narrow corridor connecting eastern India with the rest of the country. Beijing repeatedly ratcheted up the messaging to India, including the release of a Ministry of Foreign Affairs legal justification of China's territorial claims against India (*China Daily*, August 3, 2017). If the two sides decide to face off again, forces on both sides will need to contend with the difficult mountain terrain and complex weather conditions. To prepare for such a contingency, both India and China have invested significantly in units capable of

mountain and high-altitude warfare. An examination of the Chinese Military's doctrine and training of such units provides important insights into how such a conflict would be conducted.

Mountain and High Altitude Campaigns

Mountain and high altitude operations would be conducted in the complex terrain found in many regions of China, in particular border regions, as well as Taiwan where mountain and urban on island operations could occur. Special terrain and their meteorological conditions have significant impact on informationized military operations. PLA border defense and counterattack campaigns would include mountain and high altitude mountain specialized warfare.

Environmental Characteristics

Mountains account for approximately 33 percent of China's total area, and a high percentage of the border regions. Mountainous regions normally contain few roads and other infrastructure, little population, and limited resources. Mountain ranges twist and turn making line of sight complex. Erosion, steep slopes, lush vegetation in some areas, floods during rainy seasons, and rivers restrict mobility. Limited roads and paths generally follow valleys and ridgelines, or through passes and other choke points. [1]

Impact on Military Operations

Mountainous terrain creates difficulties for command and coordination, as well as mobility and maneuver. These regions are advantageous for defensive actions where relatively small forces can hold key passes and valleys against superior forces, using natural obstacles to support an in-

depth defensive system. The terrain often provides the defense with shelter and concealment. The restrictive terrain limits offensive force deployments along restricted mobility corridors, splitting offensive formations along independent directions. The terrain generally favors employment of light and airmobile forces, although small heavy groups can operate along roads, in flat terrain in some valleys or plateaus, or provide support to lighter forces. The narrow mobility corridors make envelopments and flank attacks difficult, as well as reducing operational tempo in general. The mountainous terrain can conceal force concentration and movements. Mountain combat rely on non-linear (非线性) operations with a focus on rapid penetration, flank attacks, envelopments, ambushes, air assault and special operations insertions. Non-contact (非接触) operations with joint fire strikes and information attacks are critical to a successful campaign. [2]

Mountainous areas often have low population densities featuring high socio-cultural complexities, limiting the ability to rely on local supplies and support. [3] The difficult terrain and weather conditions increases the requirements for logistics, equipment and operational support. Consumption rates for materiel, oil, and medical support are higher than in general terrain. Lack of local maintenance support combined with severe mountain terrain and weather conditions increase maintenance and repair requirements. Ethnic and religious factors increase the importance of political and psychological operations to ensure the support of the local population. Forces also require high levels of communications to support dispersed units, engineering for mobility and protection, reconnaissance and meteorological support for situational awareness and targeting. [4]

The annual recruitment, demobilization and training cycle could influence the timing of operations. The impact would be greatest on the ground forces relying on higher percentages of two-year recruits than the other services. This problem could be circumvented by retaining troops in anticipation of combat, although this could provide indication and warning of possible operations.

The 2006 *Science of Campaigns* (SoC) places great emphasis on conducting a penetration and breakthrough of the enemy's first line defense. This PLA study does emphasize employing pincer attacks, envelopments, and insertion of airborne and special operations forces (SOF) into the enemy rear area when possible to support frontal attacks. The 2013 *Lectures on the Science of Army Campaigns* provides updated PLA thinking on campaigns. An informationized military would experience greater offensive advantages than in the past in conducting sudden, concealed indirect attacks with dispersed forces to disrupt the cohesion of the enemy's defensive system. Informationized reconnaissance, communications, navigation and positioning systems can support concealed assembly, deployment, maneuver and attack. The modernized force could better conduct three-dimensional maneuver and multi-directional feints to confuse and stress the defender, seize key terrain, and achieve a deep attack against the enemy. The PLA also believes that informationized logistics and equipment support can overcome many of the difficulties posed by the complex environment. [5]

Mountain and High Altitude Training

Ground Force

PLA campaign publications on mountain and high altitude warfare define the significant impact on offensive and defensive operations, supporting operational planning, training and equipment requirements for combat in this complex terrain. PLA units in the Western Theater Command (WTC) train at mountain and high-altitude combat, particularly the 52nd and 53rd Mountain Infantry Brigades, and the 54th Mechanized Infantry Brigade located in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, as well as a Mechanized Infantry Division garrisoned in Hotan. This training acclimates troops to the high-altitude mountain and meteorological conditions (*Xinhua*, July 3; *China Brief*, January 13). The 76th and 77th Group Armies train in high altitude mountain terrain over 4000 meters, as do motor transport units in the region providing heavy equipment transport and logistics support. Army training includes joint operations with Air Force and Rocket Force units (*PLA Daily*, February 19, 2017; *MOD*, May 17, 2017; *PLA Daily*, September 19, 2016; *People's Daily*, August 19, 2015; *PLA Daily*, August 24, 2017).

Air Force

The WTC Air Force is undergoing restructuring to adapt to the new joint command structure and operational requirements. The Air Force command is concentrating on forming an Air Force operational system of systems (作战体系 – an integrated force grouping), as well as improving combat readiness. Air Force elements including aircraft, surface-to-air missile, radar units, and communications train in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. Training includes joint operations with Army units, long-range mobility, ground attack

and air defense, emergency operations, and operating under complex meteorological conditions (*PLA Daily*, October 31, 2017; *MOD*, September 9, 2016). Imagery analysis has shown increased Air Force aircraft deployments and facility improvements over the past few years, as well as recent increases in aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), at regional air bases which could better support operations against India. UAVs include the CH-4 recon/strike UAV deployed at Xigaze. (*Offiziere.ch*, December 30, 2015; *Offiziere.ch*, January 11, 2016; *Offiziere.ch*, August 4).

Rocket Force

While the Rocket Force command likely resides with the Central Military Commission, Rocket Force personnel are deployed to theater commands to support operational planning and coordination. The Rocket Force conducts training at night and dispatches foreign reconnaissance satellite warnings supporting concealed deployment of missile brigades to launch sites. The Rocket Force also trains in various climatic conditions as well as mountain terrain. Rocket Force brigades designated to support a WTC operational plan against India would have pre-surveyed launch positions prepared to support the joint fire plan (*Global Times*, April 12, 2016; *PLA Daily*, August 12, 2017; *PLA Daily*, August 23, 2015). [6]

Specialized Light Equipment

The editor of the journal *Ordnance Knowledge* (兵器知识) has stated that the PLA is developing lightweight equipment to better conduct mountain operations (*China Daily*, July 17). Army units in the Tibet region are equipped with some specialized light mobile equipment, including armed 8X8 all-terrain armed vehicles and the

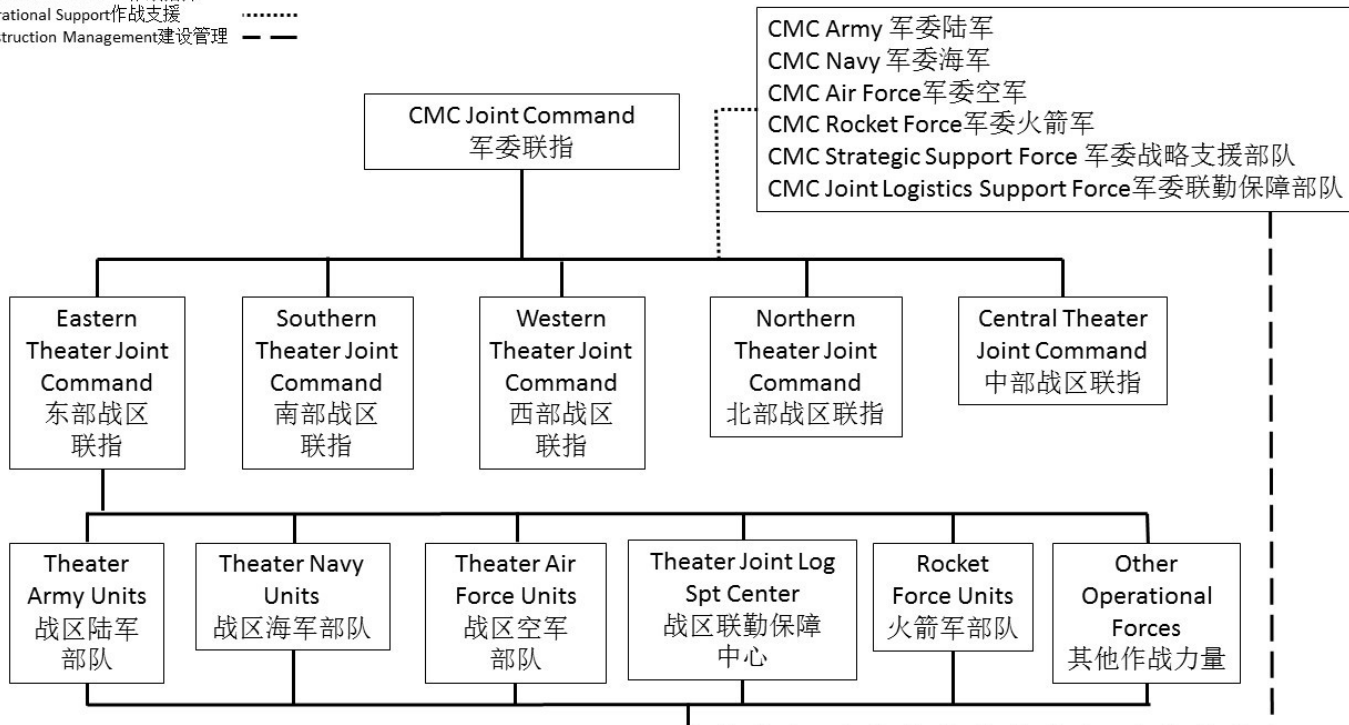
PCL-09 122mm truck-mounted howitzer (*MOD*, January 4, 2017; *MOD*, May 23, 2017). China has also developed a new light tank to replace old Type 62 light tanks that had been deployed to many units in the southern mountain regions. The new 35-ton tank is equipped with a 105mm main gun and has been tested on the Tibet Plateau (*MOD*, June 30, 2017). The Z-20 medium lift helicopter reportedly has similar capabilities to the U.S. Black Hawk and is capable of operating at high altitudes (*China Daily*, January 3, 2014).

Command and Forces

The theater Army would form a command post within the theater command for the operation with ground force units forming the primary component supported by the other services (*PLA Daily*, May 19, 2016; *Global Times*, February 3, 2016; *Global Times*, May 13, 2016). Campaign forces will likely employ a combination of centralized command (集中指挥) on the main attack axis and decentralized command (分散指挥) on secondary axes. Command staffs conduct detailed terrain, climatic and mobility analysis that can impact operations to develop the operational plan. [7] The figure below shows the theater joint command relationships. [8]

A mountain campaign typically is conducted by an Army commanded campaign formation (战役军团) either consisting of or supported by Air Force, Rocket Force, and other services. The figure below shows a notional border campaign operational system of systems composed of the theater command and joint campaign formations. The theater receives support from the Strategic Support Force for strategic intelligence and information warfare support, and Joint Logistics Support Force, as well as the theater Joint Logistics Support Center. Subordinate joint or combined arms tactical formations could be

Operational Command作战指挥 ———
 Operational Support作战支援
 Construction Management建设管理 - - -



Source: NDU Diagram by Kevin McCauley

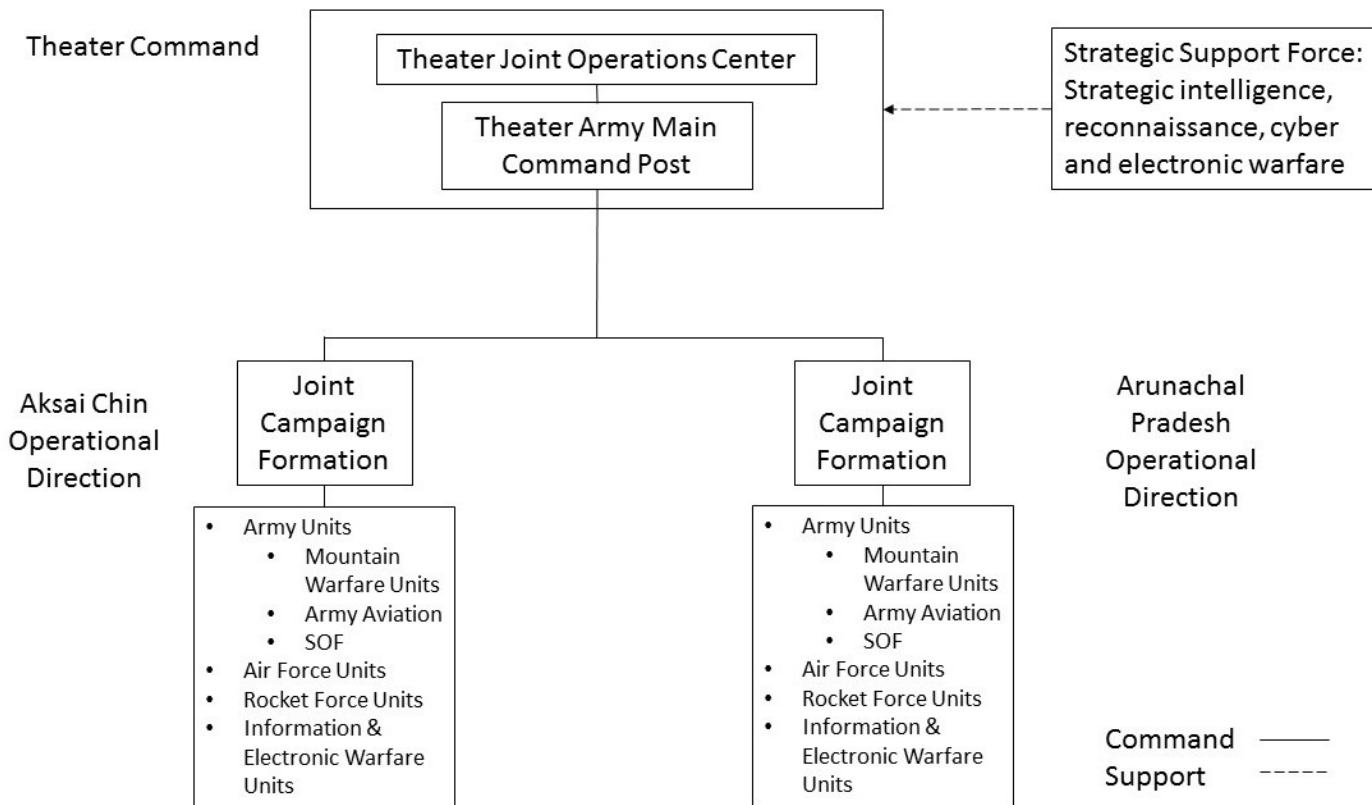
formed to conduct independent actions along separate attack axes. These larger task forces in turn would form various specialized tactical groups. [9]

Operations

Recent PLA publications emphasize paralysis of the enemy defensive system over destruction. Enhanced capabilities to conduct deep attack via firepower and vertical envelopments improve offensive capabilities and decrease the reliance on costly frontal attacks. Precision strikes are emphasized to support ground operations and increase operational tempo by destroying enemy fortified positions. Ground-based precision artillery and missiles can overcome the loss of aviation fire support caused by weather conditions. The fire plan will include a layered assault and interdiction throughout the enemy's depth. Artillery and Army Aviation strike forward and shallow depth positions, while longer range

rocket, Air Force aviation, and Rocket Force missiles strike in-depth targets. [10] SOF also play a key role providing intelligence, strike guidance and damage assessments, as well as attacking key targets other forces cannot easily strike. Recent PLA publications also stress that restricted terrain can isolate defenders and degrade reconnaissance, allowing the offensive force to employ navigation and positioning systems and terrain masking to surprise, penetrate and encircle enemy positions. [11]

Defensive operations establish multi-zone, in-depth defensive positions with interlocking fire that control lines of communications and key terrain. Ambushes are set, and an active defensive posture maintained. A strong tactical and



Notional Border Campaign Operational System of Systems: Theater Command and Operational Forces

Diagram by Kevin McCauley

campaign reserve is formed to implement counterattacks and transition to offensive operations. Materiel is prepositioned to overcome enemy interdiction and resupply problems caused by weather and terrain. [12]

High Altitude Plateau Campaigns

High altitude plateau is a very special geographical and climatic environment characterized by average elevations above 4000 meters and reaching over 7000 meters. This battlefield environment is found in the Qinghai-Tibet plateau and would affect operations during a Sino-Indian conflict. [13]

Environmental Characteristics

The high altitude environment is characterized by bad weather and snow, thin air, severe cold,

oxygen deficiency, high-intensity ultraviolet radiation, and generally poor living conditions. The terrain is complex with steep mountains, and weak infrastructure including few and poor quality roads and airports leading to significant mobility and resupply problems. Most areas have little vegetation limiting camouflage capabilities. The region contains mostly minority populations creating sensitive ethnic and religious issues. [14]

Impact on Military Operations

The impact of mountain terrain on combat is similar, but much more severe in high-altitude cold mountain terrain. There is a significantly adverse effect on personnel with increased non-combat attrition, as well as reduction in the performance of weapons and equipment. These factors greatly reduce combat effectiveness of

the force, which will continue to decline over the course of the operation due to environmental factors in addition to combat. Personnel acclimatized to the high-altitude will still experience a physical and mental decline, with susceptibility to various medical conditions. Vehicles experience reduced power, increased fuel consumption, and high maintenance and repair requirements. Weapons exhibit greater failure rates, ammunition experiences higher numbers of dud rounds, and long-range missiles experience problems with course deviation. [15]

The climate limits the time frame to conduct combat actions, as well as being unpredictable. The snow season lasts for six months; and the rainy season experiences flash floods, deep water levels in rivers, and muddy roads inhibiting mobility. The climate and terrain limit force size and campaign scale. Armored vehicles, large-caliber artillery and other heavy equipment will experience limited mobility. Weather conditions would limit air operations to June through September. The 1962 Sino-Indian War was fought in October and November without air support. The high-altitude reduces aviation performance and lift capabilities, although the thin air increases the range of projectiles and shrapnel. [16]

Operations

Operations in high altitude terrain will be similar to those in mountain terrain, although forces will be smaller, and logistics, equipment and operational support requirements greater. Firepower requirements will increase greatly, with additional fire support included within the campaign formation and joint forces in support. Greater reliance on ground-based precision fire support is emphasized to overcome terrain and the decline in combat capabilities of other forces, as well as the potential loss of aviation fire support.

Psychological operations are important to bolster the morale of troops, weaken the enemy's will to resist, and retain support of the ethnic population. [17]

The terrain and climatic conditions greatly favor the defense, as in mountain warfare. The defense will initially remain relatively passive in in-depth fortified positions protected by obstacles. The defense will concentrate on tenaciously holding their positions, and concentrate on large-scale attrition of enemy forces. Small scale spoiling attacks and ambushes can be conducted to thwart enemy operations and maintain a more active defense. Stockpiles and reserves of supplies should be strategically positioned to meet combat requirements. The Air Force and Rocket Force will strike key enemy objectives in-depth and conduct battlefield interdiction to disrupt offensive operations, and support the transition to offensive operations. [18]

Conclusion

Mountain and high altitude warfare present specialized problems for military operations. The complex terrain will restrict force employment and deployment, creating difficulties for mobility and maneuver. The conditions generally favor the defense, although recent PLA doctrinal writings express a belief that high tech weapons and equipment can mitigate some of the specialized problems and enhance offensive capabilities. These newer publications emphasize greater use of precision strikes to overcome terrain and enemy defenses to support ground operations and increase operational tempo. The PLA considers air and information superiority to be critical factors for successful operations. However, aviation support is significantly restricted by altitude and weather conditions. High altitude terrain will stress personnel and equipment, increasing

non-combat losses, as well as maintenance and repair requirements. Psychological operations are important targeting friendly and enemy troops, as well as civilians.

Despite the difficulty of operations in mountainous or high altitude conditions, the PLA has specialized forces and equipment for such combat. PLA units train in terrain and weather conditions similar to potential conflict areas in preparation for operational missions. Campaign and tactical doctrine provide guidance for specialized training and operational planning for contingencies in these terrain conditions.

PLA mountain and high altitude combat doctrine provides insight into operations during a potential Sino-Indian border conflict. Forces would be relatively small because of the restricted terrain, and would be limited to troops that routinely train and are acclimated to the special conditions. Joint precision strikes would constitute an important component of the operation to overcome the complex terrain, destroy the cohesion of the enemy's in-depth defensive system, and support and increase the operational tempo of ground force combat. Insertions of airmobile and special operations forces into the enemy rear area would support frontal ground force combat, seize or destroy key targets, support the joint fire strike, and interdict enemy forces. Ground-based precision strikes could compensate for reduced aviation support. Information attacks, electronic and psychological warfare would be important components in achieving information superiority critical for a successful operation.

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Notes

1. *Lectures on the Science of Army Campaigns* (Beijing: Military Science Press, 2013), pp. 218-219
2. *Lectures on the Science of Army Campaigns* (Beijing: Military Science Press, 2013), pp. 219-220; *Science of Campaigns* (Beijing: National Defense University Press, 2006), p. 31
3. In Tibet population centers are primarily in the Lhasa, Xigaze and Nyingchi area. The PLA has likely prepositioned materiel in areas of operations.
4. *Lectures on the Science of Army Campaigns* (Beijing: Military Science Press, 2013), p. 220; *Science of Campaigns* (Beijing: National Defense University Press, 2006), p. 406
5. *Lectures on the Science of Army Campaigns* (Beijing: Military Science Press, 2013), p. 220; *Science of Campaigns* (Beijing: National Defense University Press, 2006), pp. 416-421
6. *Theater Joint Operations Command* (Beijing: National Defense University Press, 2016), p. 340
7. *Science of Campaigns* (Beijing: National Defense University Press, 2006), p. 409; *Lectures on the Science of Army Campaigns* (Beijing: Military Science Press, 2013), p. 221; *Military Terms* (Beijing: Military Science Press, 2011), pp. 176-177
8. *Theater Joint Operations Command* (Beijing: National Defense University Press, 2016), p. 340

9. *Science of Joint Tactics* (Beijing: Military Science Press, 2014), p. 119; *Science of Campaigns* (Beijing: National Defense University Press, 2006), p. 404
10. Rocket Force participation would include but not necessarily be limited to the 56th Base headquartered in Xining. Operational requirements and targets would determine the types of missiles required to support the operations. Missiles that could carry either a nuclear or conventional warhead present a warning problem to the two nuclear states, risking escalation.
11. *Lectures on the Science of Army Campaigns* (Beijing: Military Science Press, 2013), pp. 221-222; *Science of Campaigns* (Beijing: National Defense University Press, 2006), pp. 413 and 423-424
12. *Lectures on the Science of Army Campaigns* (Beijing: Military Science Press, 2013), pp. 222-224
13. *Lectures on the Science of Army Campaigns* (Beijing: Military Science Press, 2013), p. 224
14. *Lectures on the Science of Army Campaigns* (Beijing: Military Science Press, 2013), p. 224
15. *Lectures on the Science of Army Campaigns* (Beijing: Military Science Press, 2013), p. 224
16. *Science of Army Campaigns Under High-Tech Conditions*, (Beijing: Military Science Press, 2003), pp. 303-323; *Lectures on the Science of Army Campaigns* (Beijing: Military Science Press, 2013), pp. 224-225
17. *Lectures on the Science of Army Campaigns* (Beijing: Military Science Press, 2013), p. 226
18. *Lectures on the Science of Army Campaigns* (Beijing: Military Science Press, 2013), pp. 227-229

Chen Quanguo: The Strongman Behind Beijing's Securitization Strategy in Tibet and Xinjiang

Adrian Zenz, James Leibold

Over the last year, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) Party Secretary Chen Quanguo (陈全国) has dramatically increased the police presence in Xinjiang by advertising over 90,000 new police and security-related positions. **[1]** This soldier-turned-politician is little known outside of China, but within China he has gained a reputation as an ethnic policy innovator, pioneering a range of new methods for securing Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rule over Uyghurs, Tibetans and other ethnic minorities in western China.

Born into a poor family in rural Henan province, Chen worked his way up the CCP ladder, serving first under Premier Li Keqiang in his native Henan, before becoming Party Secretary of neighboring Hebei province. In 2011, he was handed the difficult task of ruling the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), which had once again erupted into violence in 2008. During his five years in Tibet, he restored stability through the construction a sophisticated network of surveillance and control. After being transferred to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in August 2016, he quickly rolled out the same securitization strategy, accomplishing in a single year what took him five years in the TAR.

In Tibet and now Xinjiang, Chen Quanguo lifted a strategy directly from the imperial playbook, with past colonial powers like England and Japan enlisting "native" populations to watch over

their own people. Ethnic minorities have long served the CCP in China. However, the numbers of Uyghurs and Tibetans that have been recruited into China's security apparatus under Chen far exceed public recruitments during the preceding decade and are potentially setting a historic record.

Chen Quanguo's Policing Strategy in Tibet

Within two months of assuming power in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) in August 2011, Chen Quanguo rolled out his first and perhaps most effective security innovation, the so-called convenience police stations (便民警务站), street-corner bulwarks for community-based policing. In October 2011, the TAR advertised 2,500 police positions, with 458 of them designated for Lhasa's new convenience police stations ([Xueyu jiaoyu](#), October 21, 2011). By August 2012, Lhasa had established 161 of these concrete structures with a distance of no more than 500 meters between stations ([Ministry of Public Security](#), August 12, 2012).

This dense network of surveillance is at the heart of what Party officials call "grid-style social management" (社会网格化管理), a practice that segments urban communities into geometric zones so that security staff can systematically observe all activities with the aid of new technologies ([ChinaChange](#), August 8, 2013; [China Brief](#), August 17). The system relies on big data analytics, connecting a network of CCTV cameras with police databases to achieve enhanced, even automated surveillance. Grid management was first trialed in Beijing in 2004 ([Chinese Academy of Social Sciences](#), October 28, 2013). Chen's implementation of the convenience police station network in China's West is probably the most sophisticated implementation yet.

By 2016, the TAR had established over 700 of these stations throughout all urban and semi-urban centers ([News.163.com](#), March 4, 2016). In order to man them, regional authorities dramatically increased security recruitment. Between 2007 and the summer of 2011, the TAR advertised 2,830 positions for all types of police officers. Between 2008–2009, annual police recruitment averaged 866 positions, already a steep increase over the 260 positions advertised in 2007 before the Lhasa riots. However, after Chen Quanguo assumed office, recruitment skyrocketed. Between the autumn of 2011 and 2016, the TAR advertised 12,313 policing-related positions—over four times as many positions as the preceding five years.

Chen Quanguo Applies His Security Strategy to Xinjiang

During Chen Quanguo's five-year rule in Tibet, this previously restive minority region experienced no major incidents of unrest. Only eight of the 150 self-immolation incidents (a form of protest) occurred in the TAR, with no self-immolations or other incidents of major social unrest reported in the region after 2012 ([International Campaign for Tibet](#), [accessed August 30]). Chen's performance was praised in the Chinese language media, with one report noting that "TAR society maintained stability, with no major reported incidents of unrest, whereas [such incidents] did occur in the surrounding Tibetan regions" ([Phoenix Information](#), August 29, 2016).

Chen's firm grip on stability in Tibet did not go unnoticed in Beijing. While there was talk of replacing former XUAR Party Secretary Zhang Chunxian with a close ally of Xi Jinping, Chen Quanguo emerged as a capable and politically reliable candidate in 2016 ([Aboluowang](#), April

18, 2014). By proving himself with a difficult ethnic portfolio and being one of the first senior Party officials to speak of Xi Jinping as “core” of the Party leadership, Chen gained Xi's confidence (Wenxuecheng, August 31, 2016). He will likely be rewarded with a seat on the Politburo at the 19th Party Congress.

At the time of Chen's new appointment, Xinjiang represented a far greater security concern for Beijing than the TAR. Under his predecessors, Xinjiang had already considerably ramped up the recruitment of police and other security officers in response to the 5 July 2009 riots in Urumqi. Between 2003–2008, Xinjiang advertised about 5,800 such positions, yet these intakes multiplied to nearly 40,000 between 2009 and July 2016. On average, police adverts increased from just below 1,000 to nearly 5,000 positions per year. As described in more detail in our previous article, this recruitment drive relied increasingly on contract-based positions outside the formal civil service system (China Brief, March 14). This strategy enabled a cost-efficient expansion of the police force. It leveraged the limited manpower of formal and better-equipped regular police (人民警察) and special police units (特警) through the establishment of a new underclass of poorly-trained and (traditionally) lower-paid assistant police (协警 or 辅警).

Between August 2016 and July 2017, Chen Quanguo pushed this multi-tiered policing system to its logical conclusion. Within the space of a single year, Xinjiang advertised 90,866 security-related positions—nearly twelve times the number advertised in 2009 following the Urumqi riots. The vast majority of these jobs (95 percent)

were assistant police positions associated with the establishment of an estimated 7,500 convenience police stations across Xinjiang (Energy News, January 12). **[2]** Depending on their size, convenience police stations have a staffing quota of six to thirty security personnel, while current advertised recruitments stand at around 12 assistant police per station. This suggests that Chen's recruitment drive will likely continue into next year (Zhongguo xiaofang Zaixian, January 16, 2017; Zhonggong jiaoyu, May 9). **[3]**

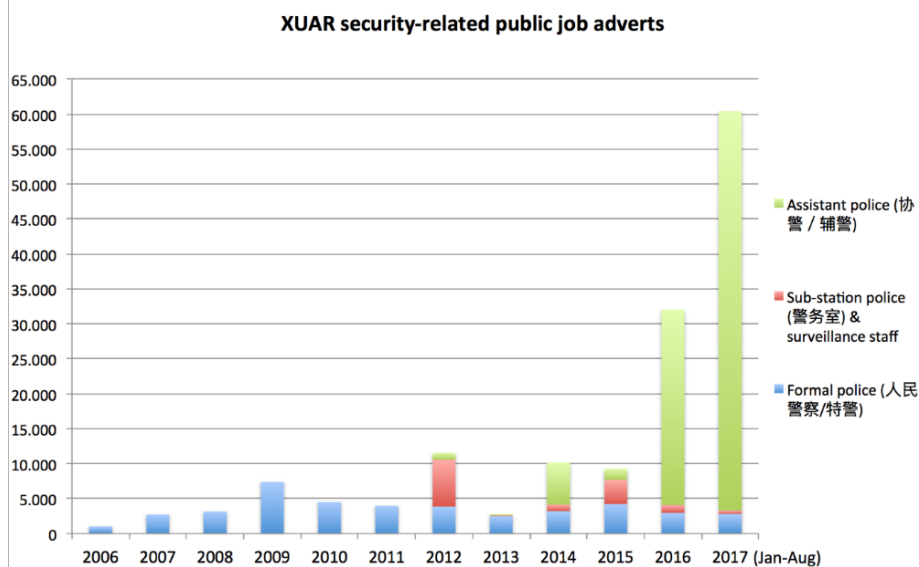


Figure 1. Source: XUAR civil service, public service, and other public job announcements. "Surveillance" pertains to various positions related to internet and video surveillance systems. Formal police positions also include security-related civil service positions in the court, justice and prison systems.

Comparing Chen's Security Buildup in Xinjiang and Tibet

How do these astonishing figures in Xinjiang compare to the TAR? The larger recruitment and police station figures for Xinjiang are not surprising, considering that the XUAR's population

in 2015 stood at 23.2 million, more than seven times the TAR's 3.2 million.

Xinjiang is also Beijing's top domestic security concern at present. First, Uyghur resistance and fear of "Islamic extremism" are now viewed as a far greater threat to CCP rule than Tibetan unrest. Second, stability in Xinjiang is crucial to the success of Xi Jinping's signature One Belt, One Road (一帶一路) initiative, with Xinjiang reemerging as a "core region" (核心区) and strategic crossroad for trade and investment opportunities in Central and South Asia, as well as Europe and the Middle East ([Xinhua](#), June 4, 2015).

When comparing figures for the two regions per capita, the available data indicates that the XUAR might now have considerably more convenience police stations per capita than the TAR: 323 versus the TAR's 216 per 100,000 of the population. On the other hand, the TAR advertised 400 policing-related positions per 100,000 of its population during Chen Quanguo's rule there, while Xinjiang advertised 394 such positions. **[4]** Yet the security build-up in Xinjiang is continuing, and likely to surpass the level achieved in the TAR as early as September this year. That said, the sheer number of positions advertised in the XUAR during such a short period of time is apparently making it increasingly difficult to attract new applicants. **[5]**

Unrest in Tibetan regions has been much more sporadic since 2008, with most acts being limited to self-harm. Uyghur militants, on the other hand, have carried out a string of deadly attacks on local police stations and other public settings that have resulted in thousands of deaths since 2009. Most notably, a series of high-profile terror attacks outside the XUAR, including a suicide car bombing in Beijing (October 2013) and the train station stabbing in Kunming (March 2014)

seriously unnerved the Chinese populace and prompted the central government to take an even tougher stance.

After the April 2014 Urumqi market bombing, which left 43 dead and over 90 injured, Xi Jinping announced a nationwide counter-terrorism campaign. Xinjiang party secretary Zhang Chunxian called for a "people's war on terror", while Xi spoke of the need to build "walls made of copper and steel" ([People's Daily](#), May 26, 2014; [Xinhua](#), May 29, 2014). The concurring rise of Xi's Belt and Road Initiative, whose land route relies on Xinjiang as the primary traffic hub, further elevated the importance of the region's security.

In response, advertised police recruitments in 2014 and 2015 increased rapidly in Xinjiang. They significantly exceeded the per capita count of the 2009 intake following the Urumqi riots, being three to four times as high as in 2007-08, 2010-11 or 2013. However, as Figure 2 reveals, this build up for Zhang's 'war on terror' was actually quite minor when compared to the massive increase in advertised policing positions under Chen Quanguo (2016/17).

On the surface, Chen Quanguo's strategy seems to be producing results. As in Tibet, there have been no major incidents of ethnic unrest or violence since the establishment of the convenience police stations, with the last major incident occurring in September 2015 when a stabbing at a coal mine in southern Xinjiang left 50 dead. Since then, there have only been comparatively minor and apparently unpremeditated knife attacks.

Advertised policing-related positions per 100,000 of the population
Includes all types of formal and informal public police or security forces except the People's Armed Police and Ministry of State Security agents

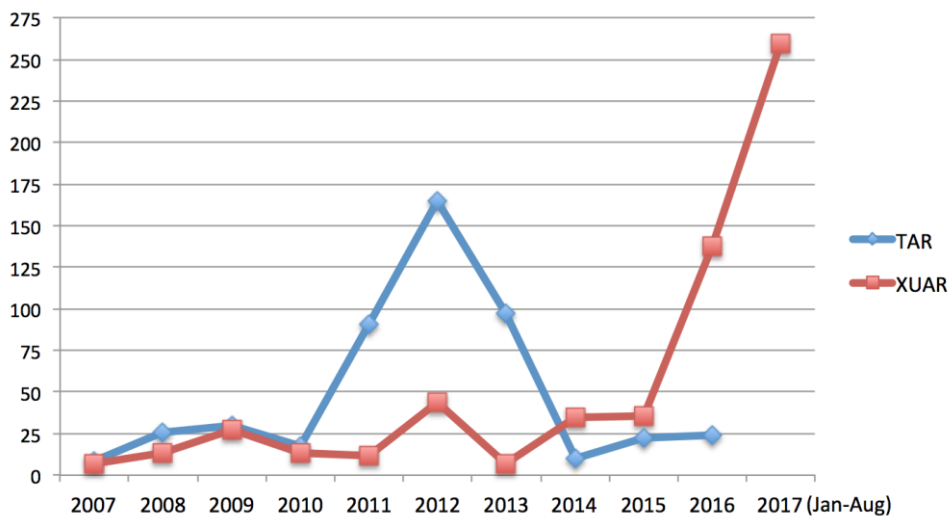


Figure 2. Population figures are from 2012 (sources: TAR/XUAR Statistical Yearbooks).

In fact, the XUAR's new network of convenience police stations were praised for the quick response to a stabbing in Pishan County in February 2017, despite the fact that five innocent bystanders were killed before armed police shot dead three assailants ([Sina](#), February 22). While limits on reporting from the region preclude any reliable statistical accounts of incidents in Xinjiang, it seems less-than-likely that any major incident would go completely unnoticed.

Securitization as Employment Strategy

A unique aspect of Chen Quanguo's securitization strategy is the provision of unprecedented numbers of public jobs for local citizens, including Tibetans and Uyghurs. In November 2011, only three months after arriving in the TAR, Chen issued a "full employment" promise to all university graduates with TAR residency ([Zhongguo gongchandang xinwenwang](#), December 26, 2011). [6] Between 2011 and 2016, the TAR more than doubled its number of advertised public service positions, from an average of

4,500 spots per year (2007 to 2010) to nearly 12,000. By 2015, the region had nearly four times the numbers of core government employees per capita than the national average. [7] Many of these new positions were security-related: 35.5 percent in 2012, and on average 23.6 percent between 2011 and 2015, higher than in any other Tibetan region in China.

Chen Quanguo's securitization strategy achieves two stability maintenance (维稳) goals at the same time: the construction of a dense network of police surveillance, and a range of new employment opportunities in a region where stable, well-remunerated jobs are still relatively scarce. Our analyses of recruitment documents indicate that Tibetans have benefited significantly from Chen's job bonanza. Based on the available data, we estimate that between 2012 and 2016 about 77 percent of applicants who either obtained or were close to obtaining a government job were Tibetan. [8] While this share is lower than the overall Tibetan population share of 90.5 percent, it exceeds the share of Tibetans among all TAR university graduates (only tertiary graduates are eligible to apply for formal government jobs). [9]

Even though Chen has not replicated the full employment promise in Xinjiang, security-related work is now the single most important source of new jobs. Growth in "urban non-private units," a technical term that refers to stable, well-remunerated posts in a) public institutions and b) larger private corporations, slowed down

considerably in 2014 and 2015 compared to previous years. **[10]** Excluding employment in public institutions, Xinjiang's private corporate sector by itself virtually stagnated during that period. Key sectors such as manufacturing, mining, construction, and transportation actually saw a reduction in employment. This is likely a negative side effect of the region's exorbitant new security measures. A local businessman told us that Chen's security measures have resulted in numerous businesses going bankrupt, even in the wealthier north. As a consequence, investors are said to be withdrawing their capital, and qualified employees are leaving the region. Official data reflects this trend. In 2016, XUAR fixed-asset investment from private investors fell by 22 percent or nearly 100 billion RMB, a sharp reversal compared to several years of double-digit growth. After years of double-digit growth that trumped the national average, Xinjiang's per capita GDP declined by 1.4 percent in 2015 and only grew by a tiny 1 percent in 2016, now far below the national figures. **[11]**

In this precarious situation, Chen's security recruitment drive is more than compensating for the employment trough in other sectors. Between 2014 and 2015, Xinjiang's entire private corporate employment sector added only 38,000 jobs. **[12]** This is less than half the nearly 91,000 security-related positions advertised during Chen's first year in Xinjiang. While lower-tier security jobs typically pay much lower salaries than corporate private sector work, their pay levels are increasing significantly in Xinjiang. In 2017, they averaged around 4,700 RMB/month, only 13 percent below the region's average public institutional and corporate private sector wage level of 5,386 RMB/month (2016). These assistant police jobs now pay substantially more than the average non-corporate private sector wage of 3,133 RMB/month for Xinjiang and

3,300 RMB/month for China (both 2015). **[13]** Furthermore, they now come with a standard set of social benefits, the so-called "five insurances" (五險) of age, medical, unemployment, injury and maternity insurance. And in the current political environment, these contract-based positions are likely very secure. In 2017, 27 percent of them even offered salaries and benefits commensurate with formal government employment, with others permitting recruits to apply for entry into the formal police service after two or three years.

As in the TAR, Xinjiang's ethnic minorities (including Uyghurs) have been able to secure a large proportion of these new security positions. Whereas formal government (or corporate private sector) employment mandates that applicants must hold a university degree, assistant police positions usually require only a middle or high school education. For the large number of lesser-educated and socially disadvantaged rural minorities, especially the Uyghurs, an informal policing job that pays 3,000-6,000 RMB per month is an attractive offer, especially when it comes with a level of social status and authority. At the same time, this marginalized population is precisely the one that poses the greatest security risk. Chen's strategy of paying generous salaries to thousands of impoverished Uyghurs to get them to monitor their own people, therefore, kills two birds with the same stone. **[14]**

Conclusion: Will Chen Quanguo's Securitization Approach be Successful?

Despite its short-term successes, Chen Quanguo's policing strategy bears at least three major risks:

The first risk is economic. The intense securitization of Xinjiang society has placed major burdens on its economy. Chen introduced measures that severely restrict the free flow of labor. Uyghurs across Xinjiang are being forced to return to their home regions, typically rural areas with very few viable sources of employment. In Urumqi, itinerant Uyghur shops and businesses are systematically being shut down. In southern Xinjiang, people cannot even visit a relative in a nearby village without obtaining a written permit. Mushrooming numbers of checkpoints have nearly doubled travel times, increasing the cost of doing business. Businesses are additionally burdened by heavy security requirements, such as installing metal detectors or even airport-style X-ray scanners at entrances, procuring monitoring equipment, alarms, riot-proof doors, or having to hire private security guards. Meanwhile, the state's massive top-down investments, facilitated through the "pairing assistance" (援疆) program, likewise lack customers, both stemming from intense security measures and a failure to cater for what people actually need ([South China Morning Post](#), September 4). **[15]**

The second risk is that heavy-handed securitization exacerbates ethnic tensions. Despite the absence of major incidents, hatred and resentment continues to simmer below the surface. Extreme measures such as restricting the sale of sugar per household to prevent bomb making or placing traceable serial numbers on knives and sharp metal tools cannot possibly replace a genuine long-term solution for sustainable ethnic relations. Inter-ethnic trust and cohesion are in short supply in Xinjiang.

The third, and most easily overlooked risk is the alienation of the local Han population. Those we

interviewed claim that Chen Quanguo is disliked—even hated—by both the Han and Uyghur population. A third-generation ethnic Han interviewee from northern Xinjiang stated that even Han from more developed regions with fewer Uyghurs are so deeply affected by the omnipresent security measures that they are desperate to leave, with many seeking to move their residence status to another province, or even emigrate overseas. In fact, XUAR residential property investment declined sharply in 2016, especially in the Han-dominated cities of Urumqi and Karamay, where it fell by 15 and 22 percent respectively. **[16]** Another source cited a Han friend as saying: "With Chen, the Uyghurs at last have a hero, because he is driving the Han away [from Xinjiang]."

Chen Quanguo may have succeeded in squashing Uyghur resistance for now, but the human and economist costs might prove unsustainable in the long run.

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Notes

1. These and other figures presented in this article are based on our analysis of publicly available recruitment documents, including the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (新疆生产建设兵团). Figures do not include recruitment of the People's Armed Police (人民武装警察) nor of the Ministry of State Security (国家安全部). See [Fischer and Zenz \(2016\)](#) for a detailed account of the methodology, as well as [Zenz and Leibold \(2017\)](#) for an overview of security-related advertised recruitment in Xinjiang between 2006 and 2016. Figures pertain to advertised and not actual recruitment. Adverts with less than 50 positions were excluded for efficiency reasons, and to take account of the fact that not all advertised positions are filled. The availability of actual recruitment outcome documents is limited and inconsistent (see footnote [5] for selected outcome shares). Especially for the scattered local informal police adverts in more recent years, double counting was avoided through careful advert comparison, including a verification of the unique ID numbers that are often assigned to each advertised position. Recruitment notices that directly re-advertised previously advertised positions that had remained unfilled were excluded from the count.
2. 7,300 convenience police stations are mentioned in the article as being upgraded to receive heating and/or cooling equipment, and several hundred more have apparently been established since its publication. Our estimate aims for a conservative number.
3. The second source cited lists convenience police station staffing quotas in Aksu Prefecture as 20–30 staff, depending on whether the station has one, two or three floors. The first source states that six officers are stationed in each of the 1,130 convenience police stations in Hotan Prefecture, with three officers rotating 12-hour shifts.
4. Advertised per capita police recruitment for the entire period from 2006 to August 2017 stood at 591 for the XUAR, higher than the TAR's figure of 492. Per capita figures were calculated based on each region's population in 2012, derived from their respective statistical yearbooks. Figures pertain only to the police force (公安系统和 informal police forces), excluding other security-related positions (e.g. within the prison, justice or court systems).
5. Whereas actual recruitment shares for formal (civil service) police positions are typically higher than 80 percent (e.g. 88 percent in 2015), those for assistant police forces can be much lower, albeit with significant regional and temporal variations. For example, Urumqi's 2016 convenience police station intake (for the public service) achieved a recruitment rate of 90 percent, while similar intakes for 2017 for different regions only filled 38–41 percent of advertised positions. A sample of nine assistant police intakes for 2016 throughout the XUAR achieved a hiring rate of 86 percent, while a similar sample of 12 intakes in 2017 only filled an average of 63 percent of advertised spaces. Hiring shares across both samples stood at 70 percent, lower than typical hiring shares for formal civil service positions.

6. See [Fischer and Zenz \(2016\)](#) for a detailed analysis of Chen's full employment promise and the resulting employment situation in Tibetan regions.
7. Total staff in public management and social organization. Source: National and TAR Statistical Yearbooks (2016).
8. Outcome documents for 2016 list hired applicants, whereas those for other years list applicants who reached the minimum required points for each position in the written exam. Ethnic identification was performed by analyzing applicants' names (all in Chinese). This process used Excel string functions whereby 1025 Tibetan name parts (consisting of two Chinese characters each) were matched against applicant names. While results must be considered approximate, the process achieves a reasonably high level of accuracy. Special thanks to Frank Berger and Jason Cox, who provided their expert advice with this.
9. In 2015, the share of Tibetans among all TAR tertiary graduates amounted to 69 percent ([Zhongguo xizangwang](#), January 26, 2016).
10. Source: Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook (2016).
11. National Bureau of Statistics, Xinjiang Statistical Yearbooks (2010 to 2016), and 2016 Xinjiang Economic and Social Development Report.
12. Excludes public sector jobs. Includes estimates for replacing retired staff, based on an estimated average lifetime work duration of 38 years. The difference between non-state corporate positions without retirement estimate was 9,700 positions. Source: Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook (2016).
13. All salaries are pre-tax and include workers' social security payments. Sources: [Sina News](#), June 2, 2017; Xinjiang and National Statistical Yearbooks (2016).
14. Overall, police recruitment does not consistently target Uyghurs over other ethnic groups, nor does it specifically focus on Uyghur majority regions. That said, some recruitment adverts set aside jobs for minority applicants or award added points for minority applicants when they take written recruitment exams in Chinese. Outcome documents show that thousands of Uyghurs have been recruited into these positions.
15. The statements in this and the next two paragraphs are based on detailed accounts provided by several sources from Xinjiang, both Han and Uyghur.
16. XUAR investment in residential property declined by 14.1 percent in 2016. Urumqi's figures declined despite a special financial incentive for private residential property purchases during the last 9 months of 2016. Sources: 2016 Xinjiang / Urumqi / Karamay Economic and Social Development Reports.

Assessing the Sino-Russian Baltic Sea Drill

By Richard Weitz

From July 21 to July 28, 2017, the Chinese and Russian navies conducted a week of joint drills in the Baltic Sea, the first of their planned two-phase bilateral maritime exercises for 2017. This was the latest iteration of what the Chinese call "Joint Sea" and the Russians their "Maritime Co-

operation” exercises. The Russians and the Chinese have conducted these naval exercises regularly since 2012. The Chinese and Russian contingents in the Baltic maneuvers featured some of their newest warships, as well as several fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters, and marine units. The symbolic aspects of these drills are important for both countries. Moscow wants to underscore its relationship with its most important security partner and counter Western efforts at isolation. Beijing’s status also benefits from a display of global military potential, though China also makes more concrete operational gains since its fleet is less experienced deploying so far from its mainland. While the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) is not going to engage in combat in the Baltic, a theater of secondary importance for China and a location where PLAN warships could hardly survive against NATO, the expanding foreign presence of the Chinese Navy has implications far beyond the Sino-Russian relationship.

The PLAN’s Participation

On June 18, 2017, the three participating Chinese People’s Liberation Army Navy PLAN vessels from the South Sea Fleet departed their home port of Sanya, in the Southern Chinese province of Hainan (*China Daily*, July 24). After a month-long, 10,000-mile voyage through the Indian Ocean, Red Sea, Mediterranean, British Channel, and the Danish Straits, the Chinese destroyer, frigate, and support ship arrived at the Russian harbor of Baltiysk for a welcoming ceremony on July 21. This exercise marked the first occasion that a PLAN flotilla entered the Baltic Sea (*Sputnik*, July 25). After the military maneuvers, the Chinese ships docked at the Lieutenant Schmidt Quay in St. Petersburg, opening the ship to visitors (*New China*, July 28). They also

participated in Russia’s July 30 Navy Day celebrations and maritime parade (*Xinhua*, July 28).

The PLAN contingent of three warships was led by the *Hefei*, a Type 052D *Luyang* III-class guided-missile destroyer, one of China’s most advanced warships. The PLAN flotilla also included a Type 054A *Jiangkai* II-class missile frigate, the FFG-546 *Yuncheng*, which already participated in a multinational anti-piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden (*Sputnik*, July 24). The last ship was the type 903A *Quiandaohu*-class supply replenishment ship, the *Luomahu*. The PLAN vessels brought several ship-borne helicopters and a contingent of marines to the drills. Participating Russian vessels included two newly-launched Project 20380 class corvettes, the *Stereguschy* and *Boiky*, the *Admiral Tributs*, an anti-submarine ship a Project 02980 rescue support tug. Russia’s largest submarine, the Project 941 Akula class (Typhoon) nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine, a contingent of marines, shipborne Kamov Ka-27 multipurpose military helicopters, Antonov An-26 military transport aircraft, and land-based Su-24 tactical bombers also participated (*Eurasia Expert*, June 25).

The forces were commanded by Russian Vice Admiral Alexander Fedotenkov and PLAN Vice Admiral Tian Zhong, who issued guidance through a joint headquarters and binational tactical command post, with Russian as the operational language (*Xinhua*, July 24; and *TASS*, July 21). As in previous bilateral exercises, Joint Sea 2017 had two stages. From July 21-24, they engaged in ceremonial, planning, and tabletop activities inland and on the Kaliningrad coast. From July 24-July 27, they divided into two tactical groups and conducted mixed tactical drills at sea. Their tasks during this “active phase” consisted of inspecting suspicious ships, liberating vessels seized by pirates, defending cargo ships,

maritime search and rescue of sailors, rendering assistance to distressed vessels, and joint air defense, anti-submarine warfare (ASW), and surface maneuvers in which some 1,500 shells were fired ([TASS](#), July 21; and [Sputnik](#), July 26; and [Xinhua](#), July 28).

ASW has been a recurring activity in these joint naval drills. Both China and Russia worry about protecting their littorals from US attack submarines armed with cruise missiles, torpedoes, and other land-attack and anti-ship weaponry. China's developing strategic submarine fleet means that PLA planners increasingly share the concern of their Russian counterparts about how to defend their boomers from US ASW. Russia has readily sold ships and submarines to China optimized for ASW. The two militaries likely find the other a willing exercise partner when it comes to enhancing their ASW skills—the PLAN in particular can benefit from Russia's superior experience in tracking US submarines.

Partnership and Presence

The Chinese Ministry of Defense said that the exercises aim to enhance their "capability to jointly cope with threats to maritime security by ensuring joint rescue and joint protection of maritime economic activities" ([People's Daily Online](#), July 21). China and Russia depend on maritime trade and participated in joint counter-piracy missions in the Gulf of Aden. The two governments routinely insist that their military partnership is not directed against third parties. True to form, the Chinese Ministry of National Defense said that the Baltic drill is not aimed at anyone but was merely the latest routine Russian-Chinese exercise ([TASS](#), June 22). Some Chinese media commentators argued that Western observers were overreacting to these innocent exercises ([People's Daily Online](#), July 21).

Others were less circumspect. Writing in *Global Times*, Cui Heng, a scholar at the Center for Russian Studies at East China Normal University, said that the exercises "demonstrate to the West the determination of China-Russia strategic coordination" and "the determination of their joint efforts to maintain regional balance and strategic stability." He urged that "China should not back down from its current stance in the face of criticism from NATO countries," which he considered "inevitable in the growth of a great power." In his view, "China is enhancing its presence in oceans around the world. An appropriate entry into the NATO countries' 'backyard' like the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the Baltic Sea will reflect China's confidence and strength" ([Global Times](#), July 20). Yang Mian, a scholar at the Chinese Institute of Communications, said that, while the exercises were "not directed against any third country...they act as a strategic deterrent against any potential aggression. The current drills in the Baltic Sea show the world that such drills could be held anywhere when the security interests of the two countries are affected" ([Sputnik](#), July 25). Ma Bin, a professor at Fudan University, perceived Beijing's decision to hold military maneuvers in the Baltic Sea "as China's support of Russia in its confrontation with NATO" ([Sputnik](#), July 25). Ni Lexiong, a military expert at the University of Politics and Law in Shanghai, described Sino-Russian security cooperation as natural since "China and Russia have their backs against each other now...They need to lean on each other for support to deal with hostilities from different fronts" ([Sputnik](#), July 21).

Besides its operational contribution, these drills affirm that Sino-Russian military cooperation constitutes a significant element of their partnership despite their lack of a formal bilateral

military alliance. Navy expert Li Jie observed that "By sending its most advanced guided-missile destroyers, China is expressing its sincerity to Russia" (*Global Times*, June 19). Although this summer's Sino-Russian drill was smaller in size than prior exercises, limiting the two sides' ability to learn skills or enhance operational interoperability, Moscow needed Beijing to dispatch only a few advanced ships to such a critical region to demonstrate the symbolic importance China attaches to cooperation with Russia, as well as provide tangible evidence of the maritime might of both states. Similar to the various Moscow military parades that for decades have shown off Russia's newest military hardware, that Beijing sent a flotilla halfway around the world to some of the globe's most sensitive waters demonstrated how important China sees its defense ties with Moscow.

Furthermore, engaging in military maneuvers in a region so far from the Chinese mainland underscores the developing global reach of the PLAN's new "blue-water" fleet. The PLA Navy has been making a sustained effort to improve its long-range deployment capabilities. In recent years, the Chinese government has been boosting its spending on the Navy and elevating the service's importance in the PRC national security hierarchy traditionally been dominated by the ground force. According to the U.S. Department of Defense, "China's expanding international economic interests are increasing demands for the PLAN to operate in more distant maritime environments to protect Chinese citizens, investments, and critical sea lines of communication (SLOC)." [1] In recent years, the PLAN has been expanding access to foreign ports and logistical networks to sustain longer deployments. In 2015, it took part in joint maneuvers with Russia in the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea. China's recently launched first overseas military

base in Djibouti, a key strategic area in the Horn of Africa proximate to critical international sea routes, further enhances its global maritime capabilities. The establishment of this base and China's participation in joint exercises far from its territorial waters confirms Beijing's quest for a more expeditionary military capable of enhancing China's international power and prestige. Although there are no indications that the PLAN aims to establish a permanent presence in the Baltics, Chinese officials have justified developing a blue-water Navy by citing the need to protect shipping lanes and Chinese trade interests. Beijing's massive One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative, which is building land-based roads, rail lines, and other trade and transportation conduits, complements its growing maritime presence.

Looking Ahead

China's compensation for undertaking exercises in waters contested by Russia adversaries will occur in September, when Phase II of Joint Sea 2017 takes place in the Sea of Japan near territorial waters Beijing disputes with other Pacific states as well as in the Sea of Okhotsk, in northeast Asia near the Korean Peninsula (*People's Daily Online*, July 23). At an August 5 meeting in Vladivostok, Chinese and Russian representatives decided that this second stage would practice joint protection of maritime communications (*Ekonomika Segodna*, August 5).

Sino-Russian military will expand further in coming years. At a meeting on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in June, Defense Minister Chang Wanquan remarked that, "The sphere of our cooperation is constantly expanding, there is a positive trend in the development of military cooperation" (*Sputnik*, June 7). At this session, Russia and China

adopted a new roadmap for bilateral defense cooperation for 2017–2020, with regular bilateral exercises and other defense activities projected throughout the period. China's Defense Ministry spokesperson in a regular press briefing, said that the signed roadmap "shows high-level mutual trust and cooperation" and helps "both sides to face new threats and challenges in the security field and to jointly safeguard regional peace and stability" (China News, June 29).

Although Sino-Russian defense ties are mutually important, both countries engage in important military drills with other countries. A week before Joint Sea 2017, a PLAN flotilla conducted live-fire drills in the Mediterranean in a joint exercise with Italy. At the time of the Baltic drills, another PLAN patrol, led by Changchun, a Type 052C guided-missile destroyer, was also in the Mediterranean Sea, on what the PRC Defense Ministry called "a goodwill voyage to more than 20 countries in Asia, Europe, Africa and Oceania" (PRC MOD, July 12). Both China and Russia had modest military drills with Iran in July. The Chinese and, until recently, Russian navies also engage in bilateral and multilateral exercises with the U.S. Navy. Following Joint Sea 2017, the three PLAN ships visited Helsinki, the capital of Finland, perhaps to reassure the Scandinavians of Beijing's friendly intentions. China and Russia also engage in large unilateral maneuvers and military shows of force that are arguably more significant than their joint drills. For example, shortly after Joint Sea 2017, China conducted naval exercises in the waters between the coast of Qingdao and Lianyungang to highlight its capabilities for Korean contingencies (South China Morning Post, August 8).

Interestingly, that the United States and European navies have regularly operated in waters

near China, despite Beijing's objections. During Joint Sea 2017, the UK government announced it would send its two new carriers on freedom of navigation operations (FONOPS) into the South China Sea when they enter service (The Guardian, July 27). Now the Chinese Navy is developing an enduring international presence, as seen by its recent sending of an "intelligence" ship near Alaska to monitor a concurrent THAAD test (CNBC, July 14). Perhaps the Chinese objections to U.S. FONOPS near China may decline as the PLAN develops the capacity and practice to engage in such blue-water patrols itself.

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Notes

1. Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2017, U.S. Department of Defense, June 6, 2017. p. 5. https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2017_China_Military_Power_Report.PDF?ver=2017-06-06-141328-770

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