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In a Fortnight: Xi's Other Amendments

By Matt Schrader

A terse February 25 article by Xinhua News Agency sent shockwaves around the world with its announcement that the Communist Party of China's (CPC) Central Committee had proposed amending the PRC Constitution to remove term limits for the country's president and vice-president ([Xinhua](#), February 25). The proposed amendment would remove the only remaining legal impediment to PRC President and Xi Jinping remaining in office beyond the end of his term in 2022, and seems to presage a return to one-man rule of the kind not seen in China since the heyday of Mao Zedong (a theme explored in greater depth by Dr. Willy Wo-Lap Lam in the second article of this issue of *China Brief*).

But mostly lost in the uproar over the end of collective rule was the fact that the proposed amendment is but one of a larger package of amendments proposed by the Central Committee—21 in total—that, as a whole, comprise the largest rewriting of the PRC Constitution since its whole-

sale revision in 1982. Although the PRC Constitution nominally functions as the country's foundational legal text, the relative ease with which it is revised to reflect changing political priorities—and the inability of China's Supreme People's Court to exercise proper judicial review—means that, in practice, revisions can be also understood as declarative statements of political authority and intent. Thus, together with the end of term limits, the proposed revisions both signal the extent to which Xi Jinping has consolidated power, and trace the outlines of the policy program he intends to pursue, at home and abroad. [1]

A New Era

The most symbolically notable of the proposed changes is the first, which would add "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era", the unwieldy name given to Xi Jinping's policy agenda, to the list of political concepts enshrined in the Constitution. This move reflects a similar revision of the CPC Constitution adopted at the CPC's 19th National Congress in October of last year ([China Brief](#), November 10, 2017), and makes Xi Jinping only the third Chinese leader mentioned by name in the PRC Constitution—"Mao Zedong Thought" and "Deng

Xiaoping Theory” are also similarly honored. None of Xi’s four immediate predecessors—Hu Yaobang, Zhao Ziyang, Jiang Zemin or Hu Jintao—achieved this feat, although the proposed amendment also would write into the Constitution “scientific development”, the name for Hu Jintao’s body of political thought. This is perhaps a conciliatory sop to the former president and his political allies, who have seen their power severely curtailed under Xi ([China Brief](#), May 11, 2016).

The fifth of the proposed amendments also confirms the importance of the Communist Party as the instrument by which Xi Jinping Thought is to be enacted; it changes the second line of the Constitution’s first article from “the socialist system is the basic system of the People’s Republic of China” to “the leadership of the Communist Party of China is the most essential feature of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics”. [2]

The National Supervisory Committee

By far the most extensive proposed changes to the PRC Constitution are those that elaborate the structure and functions of the National Supervisory Committee (NSC), a new government body meant to institutionalize and expand Xi Jinping’s ongoing anticorruption campaign ([SCMP](#), November 17, 2017). Fully half of the proposed amendments concern the NSC in one form or another, among them one that specifies that the NSC will report to and be supervised by the National People’s Congress (NPC), China’s highest legislature. The distinction is significant because it places the NSC on an equal footing with the State Council, which, although it is singled out in the Constitution as “the highest organ of State administration”, also reports to the NPC.

Since the State Council runs China’s government ministries, the proposed amendment confirms previous reports that the new NSC will be empowered to supervise government workers in addition to Communist Party members, a dramatic expansion in the scope of Xi’s anticorruption campaign, which had, until now, targeted only Party members. It is also noteworthy that one of the amendments specifically strips the State Council of the supervisory function the NSC will now exercise.

China Looks Abroad

Two of the proposed amendments are relevant to how China frames its role in the world, and seek to leverage overseas Chinese communities in support of a program of national renewal and restoration. One would write into the

constitution the term “community of common destiny”, also sometimes referred to as the “community of shared future” (命运共同体), an amorphous concept that places China at the center of a harmonious global community of peace and prosperity, in implicit contrast with the United States’ hegemonic, self-interested control of the present international system ([China Brief](#), February 26, 2018). The community of common destiny is also tightly linked with the Belt and Road Initiative, Xi’s premier international initiative.

The other proposed amendment adds the phrase “patriots devoted to the great renewal of the Chinese race” to the list of groups to be consolidated in a “united front” under the “leadership of the Communist Party of China”. The “great renewal of the Chinese race” is the phrase that, along with “the Chinese Dream”, Xi Jinping has used most frequently to encapsulate his political agenda. This revision refers to the duty of overseas Chinese communities, among them Chinese students studying in foreign universities, to ensure their work contributes to Xi’s restoration of Chinese greatness. Accordingly, the phrase “great renewal of the Chinese race” has been used with increasing frequency in propaganda work targeting these communities, including events at which Chinese students in American colleges study and discuss Xi Jinping’s speeches with PRC embassy staff ([people.cn](#), January 2).

Loyalty to the Core

The central, overriding message of the amendments is one of loyalty to Xi Jinping as the core of the Communist Party, and to his agenda. This is underscored by the ninth proposed amendment, which would require all “state workers” to swear allegiance to the constitution. As the purpose of the other 20 amendments is to underscore the centrality and importance of Xi Jinping to the Chinese system, this new requirement would, in effect, force the whole of China’s enormous bureaucratic apparatus to swear personal loyalty to Xi Jinping. Although this form of one-man domination differs from that of Mao Zedong in important ways, it is little wonder that well informed observers have been quick to draw the historical parallel between the two men.

“In A Fortnight” is a bi-weekly column by Matt Schrader, the editor of the Jamestown China Brief. Follow him on Twitter at @tombschrader.

Notes

[1] The author wishes to thank Thomas Kellog, Executive Director of Georgetown Law Asia, and Professor Tiancheng Wang, President of the Institute for China's Democratic Transition, for their insights in the preparation of this article.

[2] Translation is the author's, and should not be considered authoritative. An official English translation of the proposed amendments has yet to be released.

Xi Jinping Steers China back to the Days of Mao Zedong

By Willy Lam

Chinese politics has undergone a stunning retrogression in the wake of a terse announcement by Xinhua News Agency on February 25 that an impending revision of the state constitution would abrogate term limits for the posts of President and Vice-President. The party leadership, said Xinhua, wanted to “remove the expression that the President and Vice-President ... ‘shall serve no more than two consecutive terms’ from the country’s Constitution” (Xinhua, February 25). This constitutional amendment, which seems meant to render President Xi Jinping leader for life, means that China could return to the era of Chairman Mao, when the Great Helmsman, who had no term limits, ruled by diktat. Political intrigue and factional infighting became the order of the day as economic and social development ground to a halt (Radio Free Asia, December 29, 2016).

Since Xi became party General Secretary at the 18th Party Congress in November 2012, one of his prime concerns has the accrual of personal power. Xi has disregarded instructions by Deng Xiaoping that no leader should pursue a cult of personality, and that China should be ruled by a collective leadership, namely the Politburo Standing Committee. The success of Xi's relentless self-aggrandizement became apparent at the 19th Party Congress last October, where Xi's faction, consisting mostly of his protégés from Fujian and Zhejiang, were elevated to senior positions in the party, government and army. Xi became “core of the party leadership” and its *zuigaotongshuai* (highest commander), while “Xi Jinping Thought” was inserted in the CCP Constitution as the guiding principle of the party and

nation. Xi Thought is also slated for enshrinement in the PRC Constitution, an amended version of which is due for approval by the plenary session of the National People's Congress (NPC) scheduled for early March. (HK01.com, October 25, 2017; Apple Daily [Hong Kong], October 24, 2017).

So what exactly does the removal of term limits for the post of President mean? In an editorial, the conservative *Global Times* noted that the constitutional amendment did not necessarily mean “that the Chinese president will have a lifelong tenure.” But the *Times* cited party ideologues as saying that that China needs “stable, strong and consistent leadership”, particularly from 2020 to 2035 (Global Times, February 26). According to a commentary by the *People's Daily Online*, the tradition of *sanweiyiti* (three positions in one person), a reference to the three positions of Party General Secretary, State President and Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) being held by the same person, has proven “beneficial to upholding and safeguarding the authority of the central authorities and concentrating unified leadership.” The party mouthpiece said the constitutional revision would facilitate the continuation of the *sanweiyiti* tradition (People's Daily Online, February 26).

Assuming that Xi's health holds up, it is now almost certain that he will remain president until 2028, and possibly 2033, when he will be 80 years of age. The 53-year-old Shaanxi native will also hold his two post powerful posts—CCP General Secretary and CMC Chairman—until 2027, or possibly 2032. The CCP Constitution has no restriction on the age or terms of office of its General Secretary or commander-in-chief. Respected party historian Zhang Lifan went so far as to say that “Xi Jinping may even maintain a decisive role [in governance] until 2049, the centenary of the establishment of the People's Republic, when he will be 96 years old” (Duowei News, February 26). Apart from Xi's apparently megalomaniacal proclivities, the best indication that he aspires to become “Mao Zedong of the 21st century” is his lack of interest in picking a successor. According to political reforms that Deng initiated in the early 1980s, the party must establish a bloodless and institutionalized succession protocol. Despite periodic hiccups, power was peacefully and orderly transferred from Deng to Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao (Ming Pao [Hong Kong], November 8, 2017).

If Xi were following the well-established party norm of staying for just two terms as General Secretary and State President, he would already have groomed young talent to succeed him and Premier Li Keqiang. This would have necessitated the induction of at least one or two of the so-called “Sixth-Generation leaders” (those born from the late 1950s to the late 1960s) into the Politburo Standing Committee during the 19th Party Congress. Instead, only a few Sixth Generation members were appointed to the ordinary Politburo (See [China Brief](#), February 13). After all, if Xi is bent on holding onto power until 2027/2028 or 2032/2033, there is no reason for him to pick a successor so early in the game.

In tandem with boosting his own powers, Xi has pulled out all the stops to ensure the CCP’s tight control over all aspects of Chinese life. The propaganda machinery has gone into overdrive stressing the near-omnipotence of the party—and its total dominance over all sectors of the polity. The recently ended Third Plenum of the 19th Central Committee deliberated over the key issue of the “reform of the systems of the party and state.” The Plenum Communiqué said the leadership hoped that the reforms—details of which have not been announced—would ensure that party and government units would have “well-equipped institutions, scientific regulations and paradigms, and high-efficiency operations.” At the same time, however, the Communiqué stressed that the ultimate goal of the reform of party and state institutions was “improving and upholding the institution of the party’s comprehensive leadership... strengthening the party’s leadership over the work of all sectors [of the polity] and ensuring that party leadership will be stronger and more forceful” ([People’s Daily](#), February 28; [Phoenix Television \[Beijing\]](#), February 28).

Indeed, one focus of the upcoming constitutional change is to insert into its first article the clause that “the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party is the most fundamental characteristic of socialism with Chinese characteristics.” Given the repeated exhortation by senior cadres that all party members must “be in utmost unison with ‘core’ Xi Jinping in thoughts and deeds,” supporting the party means, in essence, professing fealty to Xi ([Cable News Hong Kong](#), February 28; [People’s Daily](#), October 28, 2017).

That Xi and his advisers were nervous about a negative reception to his bid for life leadership can be gleaned from the fact that after the February 25 announcement of the

constitutional revision, the CCP’s formidable propaganda and IT control apparatus immediately swung into action. All sensitive words including “emperor,” “coronation,” “Mao Zedong,” “life-long tenure,” “dynasty,” “retrogression” and “immigration” (a reference to Chinese who want to leave the country) were algorithmically erased from social media chat platforms. Even the phrase “I disagree” was banned. Another taboo word was Yuan Shikai, the feudalistic warlord general who tried to crown himself emperor after the 1911 revolution led by Dr Sun Yat-sen that put an end to the Qing Dynasty ([Voice of America](#), February 27; [China Digital Times](#), February 25).

Yet in spite of media censorship, several liberal intellectuals were bold enough to voice their opposition to the apparent reinstatement of Maoist dictatorial rule. One example was the appeal made by public intellectual and former *China Youth Daily* editor Li Datong to NPC members not to approve the constitutional amendment. Li noted that Deng Xiaoping’s decision on term limits—enshrined in the current constitution—represented an attempt to learn from the bitter lessons of Mao’s tyranny and rule of personality. “Abolition of the term limits of state leaders will become the laughingstock of civilized countries around the world,” Li said. “This historical retrogression carries with it the seeds of China again lapsing into turmoil” ([Radio French International](#), February 27; [BBC Chinese Service](#), February 26).

On a practical level, a number of Chinese and foreign-based analysts have cited the danger of the near-total absence of checks and balances. With his status elevated to that of demi-god Mao, even his most trusted aides would not dare challenge Xi’s decisions ([United Daily News \[Taipei\]](#), February 26; [New York Times Chinese Edition](#), February 25). According to New-York based exiled dissident Hu Ping, Xi’s aspiration to become another Mao Zedong and Stalin could result in the “leader for life” making one mistake after another. Hu noted that in the Chinese political context, a paramount leader by definition stands for the correct party and policy lines—and he is incapable of making mistakes. “To avoid being pushed out of office, a paramount leader will never admit to making errors ... and he will commit even bigger blunders to cover up past mistakes,” said Li ([Radio Free Asia](#), February 26).

Xi’s stunning one-upmanship—coupled with his insistence on the Maoist principle that the party is in charge of everything—could also have serious implications for society and

the economy. Wu Qiang, a former politics lecturer at Tsinghua University, said the party's proposals for "the reform of party and state institutions" could result in the party spreading its power to every corner of society. "The party will exercise control over enterprises, social organizations, foreign companies ... [including] all sectors that used to be under the jurisdiction of the market economy," he told the Hong Kong media. Wu said party cells will be built even in Chinese enterprises as well as student organizations overseas to manifest "the institutional management by the party" (Cable News Hong Kong, March 1).

That Xi is determined to run China in his own mold—and to banish all voices of opposition—was further confirmed by a series of personnel changes in the past fortnight. Members of the Xi Jinping faction have continued to be promoted to top slots in the security apparatus. Affiliates of the rival Communist Youth League (CYL) Faction once headed by former president Hu Jintao have been further marginalized. And fellow princelings—the offspring of erstwhile party elders—who do not see eye to eye with Xi have been penalized. Take for example, Vice-Minister of Public Police Wang Xiaohong, who first worked with Xi when they were serving in Fuzhou, Fujian Province in the 1990s. Wang, who doubled as police chief in the Beijing municipality, was at the end of February promoted Minister of State Security, in charge of the PRC intelligence apparatus. State Councillor Yang Jing, who was Secretary-General of the State Council and a stalwart member of the CYL Faction, was demoted to ordinary ministerial status owing to unnamed "disciplinary infractions". And companies backed by princelings who have apparently failed to convince Xi of their loyalty have been subjected to regulatory strictures. Anbang Insurance, for example, which enjoys the backing of at least two of the party's most prominent families, was last week taken over by the China Insurance Regulatory Commission (Apple Daily, February 29; Ta Kung Pao [Hong Kong], February 25).

According to Zhang Lifan, there can be no dispute that "the CCP is going down the road of the rule of men, and that the authority of the top leader will be strengthened." Zhang is worried that the party and its senior cadres may fall victim to corruption because of "the lack of supervision by other political forces, by the media and by the public" (Ming Pao, March 1). In his *Political Report* to the 19th Party Congress four months ago, Xi asked the world to consider adopting elements of "Chinese wisdom and the Chinese

agenda," which, he claimed would usher in "a great modern socialist country... that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious and beautiful" (Xinhua, October 27, 2017). The president's lust for power and his apparent determination to bring back the much-maligned norms of Chairman Mao, however, have caused some to question whether this lofty goal could ever be accomplished under the watch of China's new "emperor for life."

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China's Domestic Security Spending: An Analysis of Available Data

By Adrian Zenz

On February 1, 2018, China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) revealed a stunning 92.8 percent increase in its domestic security spending: from 30.05 billion RMB in 2016 to 57.95 billion RMB in 2017 (Xinjiang Net, 3 February). Within a decade, this figure has increased nearly ten-fold, up from 5.45 billion RMB in 2007.

This most recent increase is arguably a direct result of the extreme securitization measures implemented by the region's Party Secretary Chen Quanguo, who unleashed unprecedented police recruitment and police station construction drives (China Brief, 14 March 2017; China Brief, 21 September 2017). However, what is the context of these seemingly staggering figures? How does Xinjiang's domestic security spending compare to per capita counts in other provinces, to China's national average, or to other nations? Do XUAR spending increases reflect the built-up of a massive police state, or are they merely reflective of a necessary process of catching up, since China in general and its west in particular featured an under-resourced security apparatus in the early 2000s (China Policy Institute Analysis, February 14 2018)?

China's Domestic Security and External Defense Spending

It is widely believed that China's national domestic security budget ceased to be publically available after 2013 (e.g. Reuters, 5 March 2014; The China Quarterly, December 2017; The China Journal, 30 October 2017). However, while full national figures are indeed no longer included in the Ministry of Finance annual spending and budget reports, they have been provided by the National Bureau of Statistics database (NBS, 1999-2016). The 2017 figure was then clandestinely hinted at in the Ministry of Finance budget report for the 13th National People's Congress (NPC) (MoF NPC budget report, 5 March). It was not cited in full, but only shown as a percentage figure of total spending in a chart label. The accuracy of the resulting absolute number can be verified through comparison with 2016 spending, as well as the author's 2017 estimate based on budget data from 18 provinces and regions. [1]

National domestic security spending (国家财政公共安全支出) can be broken down into central government spending (中央财政公共安全支出) and regional level spending (地方财政公共安全支出), with the latter representing to the sum of domestic security expenditures for all provinces and autonomous regions. [2] Reports on China's domestic security budgets typically only cite the central government spending figure because it features in Ministry of Finance reports. This figure was also the one cited in the MoF NPC, while the full national spending figure was only shown as a share of total spending. The motivation for this is evident: central level spending is only a fraction (about one fifth) of the national figure.

The Chinese media has been exploiting Western uncertainties about the true extent of the nation's domestic security spending. A recent CGTN news article criticizing an unnamed Western report that estimated the 2016 spending

figure at US\$26 billion as a speculative and "vague estimate" (CGTN, 8 February 2018). CGTN's critique is deeply ironic. The full 2016 figure stood at US\$175 billion, six times higher than the cited estimate. It then increased to US\$197 billion in 2017. Even these numbers exclude billions of dollars spent on security-related urban management and surveillance technology initiatives. In addition, lower costs and wages render Chinese security capabilities much higher per dollar spent. On a Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) basis, China's domestic security spending in 2017 was equivalent to about US\$349 billion, more than double the United States' estimated US\$165 billion. [3]

In 2010, China's national domestic security spending for the first time exceeded its spending on external defense by a small margin. By 2014, domestic security spending was only 0.8 percent higher than defense-related expenses. However, in 2016 this gap reached a record of 13 percent. Domestic security spending that year increased by 17.6 percent, the highest growth rate since 2008, and exceeded 1 trillion RMB for the first time. In contrast, the 7.5 percent increase in external defense spending was the lowest since 2008.

At the time of writing, full national spending figures on external defense were only available until 2016, while central level budget figures are available up to 2017 (Ministry of Finance, 24 March 2017). Consequently, the 2017 external defense figures have to be estimated. This is quite straightforward since nearly all spending occurs at the central government level (e.g. 97.7 percent in 2016). The 2017 central external defense budget planned for a 7.1 increase to 1,022,581 million RMB (Ministry of Finance, 24 March 2017). When applying this increase to the total 2016 external defense spending we can estimate the 2017 figure at approximately 1,046,000 million RMB. This means that in 2017, the margin between domestic security and external defense expenditures reached a record 18.6 percent.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
External defense	355,491	417,876	495,110	533,337	602,791	669,192	741,062	828,950	908,784	976,584	1,046,000 (est.)
Domestic security	348,616	405,976	474,409	551,770	630,427	711,159	778,593	835,723	937,996	1,103,198	1,240,000
Dom. security as share of ext. defense	98.1%	97.2%	95.8%	103.5%	104.6%	106.3%	105.1%	100.8%	103.2%	113.0%	118.6% (est.)

Table 1. Spending in million RMB. Source (2007 to 2016): National Bureau of Statistics, National General Public Budget Expenditure. Source 2017 figure: MoF NPC budget report.

Regional Per Capita Spending Comparisons

China's provinces and regions also do not consistently report the full extent of their domestic security budgets. As at the national level, provincial budgets and expenditures can be reported as full regional spending (全省或全区), or else as only provincial (省本级) or autonomous regional (自治区本级) level spending. The latter only includes

spending that occurs at the central administrative level of a region or province, and excludes sub-provincial levels such as prefectures or "areas" (州或地区), or prefecture-level cities (地级市). The implication is that numerous regions only report current budget figures for a fraction of their total budget (Figure 1).

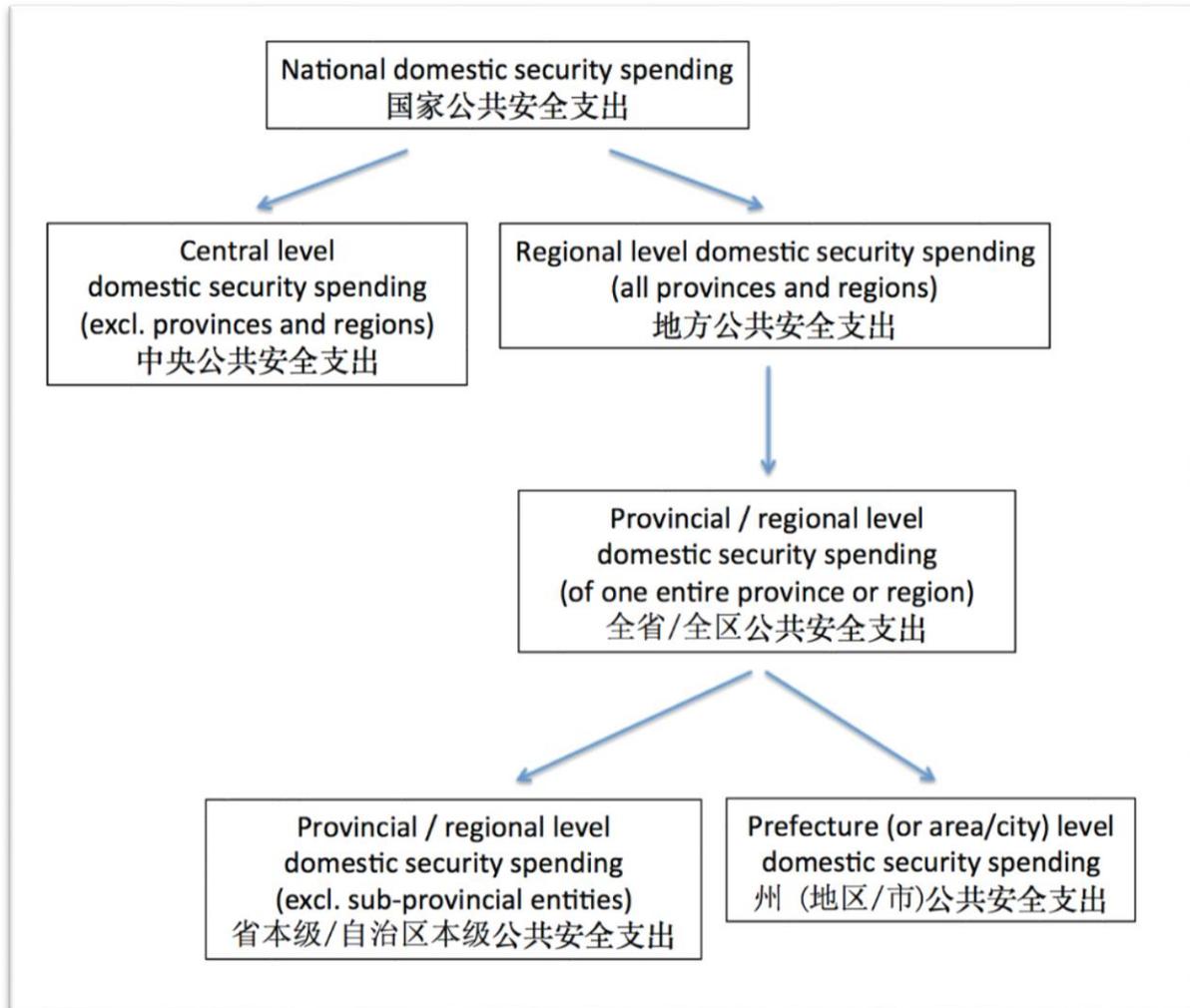


Figure 1. China's budget structure by regional divisions

For example, the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) stopped reporting its full regional domestic security budget beginning with its 2016/17 spending and budget report. It now only provides the much lower budget figure for its regional level (自治区本级) spending (TAR government, 26 January 2017). Its 2017 figure was therefore estimated based on both budgeted and actual spending figures on the regional level together with five of its seven prefecture-level cities and regions. [4] Unfortunately, TAR prefectures and prefecture-level cities also do not consistently report domestic security figures.

Per capita domestic security spending between varies greatly. Figure 2 shows that the TAR spends around three to five times more on domestic security than the average of all provinces and regions. Likewise, Xinjiang's spending between 2014 and 2016 has been double that of the national regional average, and over triple in 2017.

Generally, increases in sensitive minority regions have been much greater (Figure 2). While domestic security

spending across all provinces and regions rose by 215 percent between 2007 and 2016, Xinjiang's grew by 411 percent, the TAR's by 404 percent, and Qinghai Province's by 316 percent (Qinghai's population is 25 percent Tibetan). Spending in Sichuan Province increased by 234 percent,

but spending in Sichuan's two Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures, Ganzi and Aba, which have seen numerous self-immolations since 2008, grew by 295 percent. Since 2008, the TAR has had the highest per capita domestic security expenditure of all provinces and regions. It took top place from Beijing, which competed for second-highest per capita figure with Sichuan's Tibetan regions.

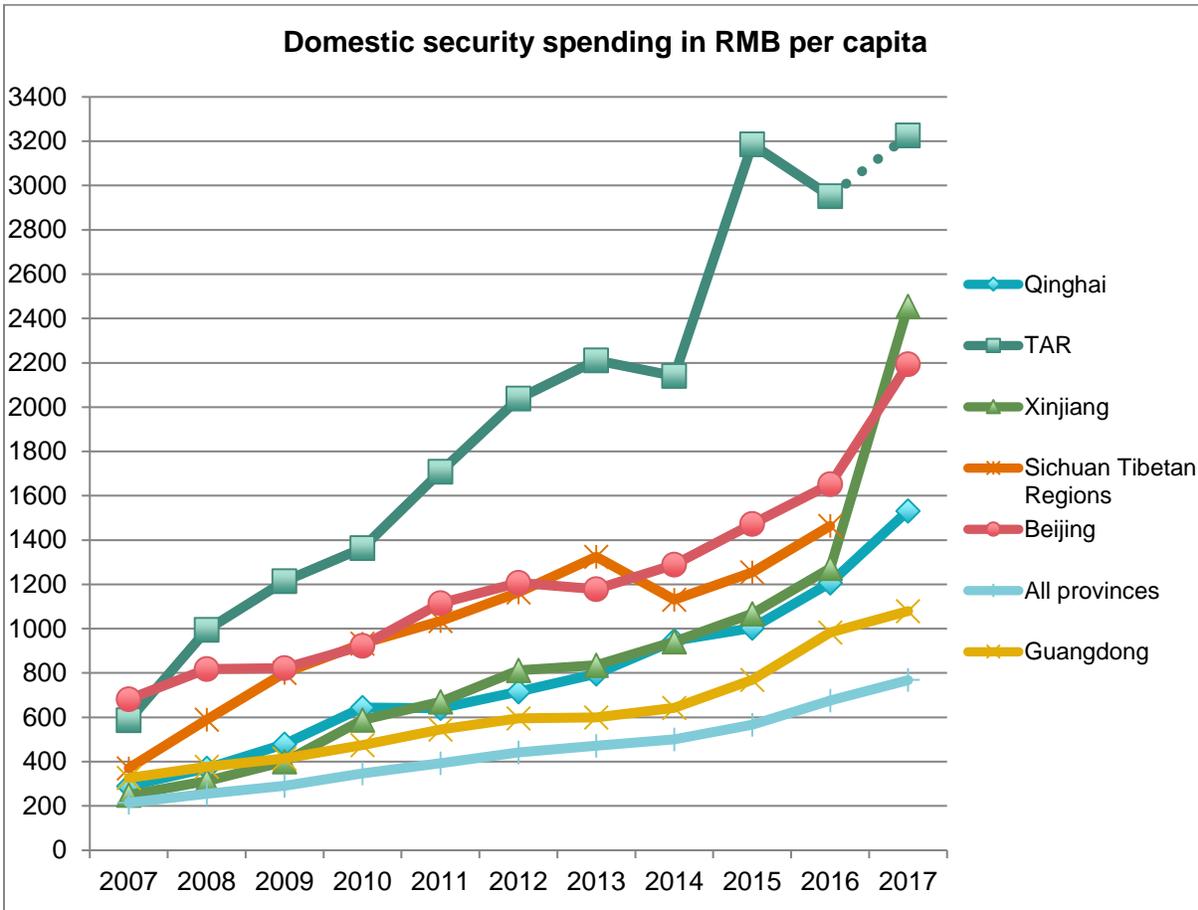


Figure 2. Dotted lines pertain to estimates. Sichuan Tibetan Regions are Aba and Ganzi prefectures. Sources see [5].

Before 2009, Xinjiang's per capita spending was just barely above the national average. However, by 2017, it had surpassed Beijing despite the latter's 33 percent spending increase that year. In 2016, per capita domestic security expenses in Sichuan's Tibetan regions were nearly three times higher than for Sichuan province as a whole. Notably, all four restive minority regions shown in Figure 2 have higher per capita domestic security spending figures than large and much wealthier cities such as Shanghai or Tianjin. Also of interest is that Guangdong has the highest per capita expenditures of all Chinese non-city regions besides the TAR and the XUAR, nearly three times above the rural and populous province of Henan.

Regional Per Capita Comparisons Based on Purchasing Power Parity

Incredibly, the TAR and Xinjiang are beginning to rival the per capita domestic security expenditures of the United States. [7] This is despite the fact that Chinese human resource and local security technology costs are far lower than in the West. This can be factored into the comparison by converting figures into their Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) equivalents. [8] PPP calculations have several limitations. They are not specifically designed for security expenditures, and they fail to reflect inter-provincial price differentials (e.g. Beijing being much more expensive than

poorer provinces). We can compensate for this to some extent by adjusting Chinese regional figures using average wage levels. [9] Direct comparisons between countries, regions and cities are also difficult, since security expenses in strategic locations like Beijing or New York City typically

exceed national per capita averages. Even so, they can provide general indications. With these caveats in mind, the results show that per capita domestic security spending in restive Chinese minority regions is now higher than in the United States or Russia (Figure 3) by a fair margin.

Region	2016	2017	Increase
United States	3,160 (est.)	3,220 (est.)	2.0% (est.)
TAR	2,890	3,137 (est.)	9.3% (est.)
Xinjiang	1,255	2,417	92.8%
Beijing	1,651	2,191	32.7%
Russia	2,170 (est.)	2,060 (est.)	-4.8% (est.)
Sichuan Tibetan Regions	1,450		
Qinghai	1,197	1,519	26.9%
Shanghai	1,393	1,471	5.6%
Tianjin	1,136		
Guangdong	969	1,065	9.9%
Zhejiang and Hainan	928		
Inner Mongolia	882		
Chongqing	742		
Guizhou	703	753	7.0%
Average of all provinces and regions	672	763	13.5%
Yunnan	615	721	17.1%
Gansu	600	651	8.6%
Sichuan	520		
Jiangxi	499	560	12.2%
Hebei	451	497	10.4%
Henan	376		

Table 2. Domestic security spending in RMB per capita for select regions. The average of all provinces and regions excludes central level spending. Sources and calculations see [6].

PPP-adjusted per capita spending in the TAR exceeded that of the United States by 37 percent in 2017; for Xinjiang, the figure was 32 percent.

Conclusions

During Hu Jintao's second term as general party secretary (2007 to 2012), total national expenditures increased 51 percent faster than domestic security spending. During Xi Jinping's current term (2013 to 2017), China's domestic security spending grew 34 percent faster than total spending. In particular, security-related expenditures in sensitive regions such as Xinjiang and Tibet have risen so rapidly that they now exceed the United States average on a per capita

PPP basis. As China continues to invest heavily in developing ever more advanced security technologies, every dollar spent on domestic security will experience further leverage.

These figures begin to reveal the cost of maintaining stability especially in restive minority regions. However, the full amount of such expenditures is likely higher than official domestic security budget figures, in some regions perhaps significantly higher. Between 2007-2008, China spent a higher percentage of its total budget on domestic security than in 2016-2017. But overall budget increases might perhaps be concealing other investments that are security-re-

lated in one way or another. A subsequent article will therefore investigate the true cost of stability maintenance in regions such as Xinjiang in more detail.

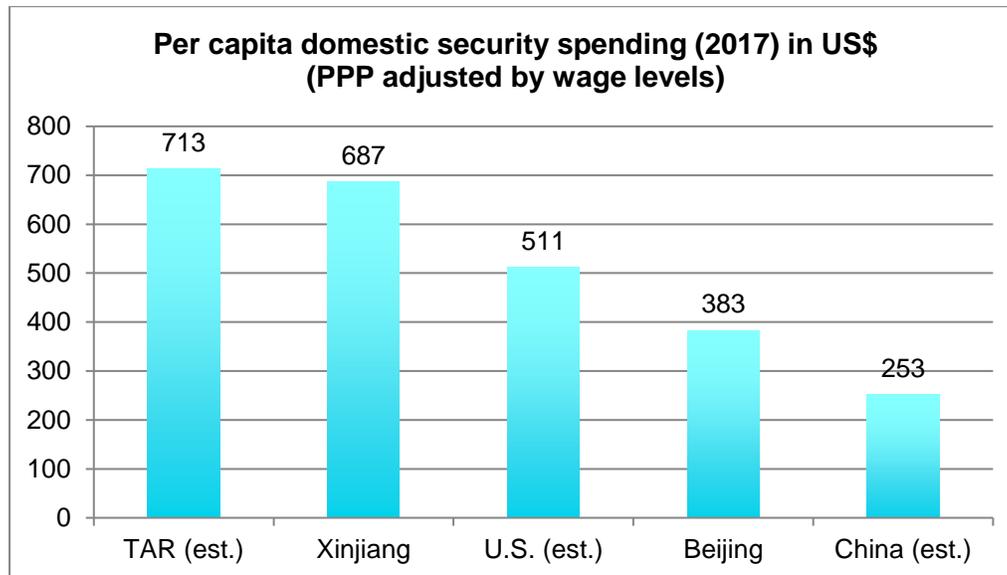


Figure 3. For sources and calculations see [8] and [9].

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Notes

[1] A sample of 18 provinces and regions with available domestic spending (or in some instances budgeted) figures for 2017 posted an average increase of 11.9 percent compared to the previous year. The domestic security spending of these provinces and regions constituted 60 percent of all regional domestic security spending in 2016. In five instances, data were for budgeted figures, and in the other cases for actual spending. For a conservative estimate, Beijing and Xinjiang were only weighted at 50 percent of their spending figures, because their increases were likely exceptionally high (Xinjiang due to Chen Quanguo, Beijing as a result of hosting the 19th Communist Party Congress and the Belt and Road Summit). The central government budgeted a 5.5 percent rise in domestic security expenditures for 2017 ([Ministry of Finance](#), 24 March 2017). Both central and regional spending figure resulted in a weighted average of 10.9

percent to approx. 1,223,000 million RMB. The actual reported figure stood at 1,240,000 million RMB.

[2] This fact was verified by the author for domestic security spending data from 2016 by adding up regional figures.

[3] For exchange rates and PPP calculations see [8]. For source and calculation of the U.S. figure see [6] and [7].

[4] The five cities/regions are Lhasa, Shannan, Shigatse, Chamdo and Ngari. Ngari's figure pertains only to the prefecture-level (地区本级) figure. The estimated domestic spending increase rate of 9.3 percent was calculated by weighing prefectural growth rates by total prefectural budget/spending figures.

[5] Source (2007 to 2016): National Bureau of Statistics, General Public Budget Expenditure tables for the provinces and regions shown. Source for 2017 figures are regional department of finance budget reports (final accounts). Source for population figures here: National Bureau of Statistics. In figure 2: per capita figures for 2007 to 2012 were calculated based on 2010 population figures, those for 2013 to 2017 based on 2015 population figures. In table 2, per capita figures are based on 2016 population figures.

[6] Sources for 2016 figures: National Bureau of Statistics, Provincial Public Budget Expenditure on domestic security. Sources for 2017 figures: regional department of finance budget reports (final accounts or 2017 budget estimates). Population figures are from 2016, source: National Bureau of Statistics, year-end long-term resident population. Source for figures for the U.S. and Russia: Greitens, S. (2017), 'Rethinking China's Coercive Capacity', *The China Quarterly*, pp.1-24. Greitens estimated the U.S. and Russia per capita figures for 2013 at US\$489 and \$393 respectively. U.S. 2016/17 figures were calculated based on an increase of 4 percent between 2013 and 2016, and a further 2 percent increase in 2017. This estimate is based on the Department of Homeland Security adjusted net discretionary budget authority figures (DHS [2013](#), [2017](#)), and Department of Justice discretionary budget authority (DOJ [2013](#), [2017](#)), and should be considered a rough approximation of total U.S. domestic security spending increases. Russia's domestic security spending actually decreased between 2013 and 2017 ([BOFIT](#), 25 August 2017). Source for population figures here: National Bureau of Statistics (2016 figures).

[7] Chinese domestic security figures People's Armed Police (PAP), public security organs, court system, judicial system, prosecutorial system and national security. U.S. figures (based on Greitens) include several federal departments, including the Department of Homeland Security and parts of the Department of Justice such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Federal Bureau of Prisons, together with state and local spending on police, courts and prisons. Since China's figures include the PAP, the National Guard budget was added to the U.S. figures. Even though the PAP plays a much more active policing role in e.g. Tibet and Xinjiang than the National Guard in the U.S., the latter is also responsible for ensuring domestic security.

[8] China: RMB to US\$ exchange rate of 6.3, 2017 PPP factor of 3.55 (2016 factor of 3.47). Russia: Ruble to US\$ exchange rate of 56.4, PPP factor 24.5. Source: [OECD PPP](#), 2000-2017. Source for population figures here: National Bureau of Statistics (2016 figures).

[9] Adjustments are based on average wages (在岗职工年平均工资, 2016 figures). As a result, PPP factors were adjusted by 0.99 (Xinjiang), 1.24 (TAR) and 1.61 (Beijing). The author is grateful to Andrew Fischer for his helpful

comments in regards to PPP estimates and various other sections of this article.

Chinese Views on the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review, and Their Implications

By Michael S. Chase

The 2018 U.S. Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), released in February, appears to be focused mainly on the challenges presented by Russian nuclear weapons and strategy. Nonetheless, the document also has some potentially important implications for China, where analysts continue to discuss and debate China's approach to strategic deterrence generally as well as Chinese nuclear policy and strategy and nuclear force modernization in particular ([China Brief](#), January 12). Unsurprisingly, China's reaction to the latest U.S. NPR has been critical. The PRC Ministry of National Defense spokesperson stated: "We hope the U.S. side will discard its 'cold-war mentality,' shoulder its own special and primary responsibility for nuclear disarmament, understand correctly China's strategic intentions and take a fair view on China's national defense and military development" ([Xinhua](#), February 5). Similarly, an article in *Global Times* criticized the NPR, stating that its focus on "defining China as a threat...is an excuse to develop even more nuclear weapons when Washington already possesses the world's strongest deterrent" ([Global Times](#), Feb 5).

More specifically, Chinese experts assessing the NPR's implications for China appear to be focusing on its proposals to develop new nuclear capabilities and its listing of several types of non-nuclear strategic attacks that could result in nuclear escalation. For example, Professor Li Bin, a well-known Chinese nuclear policy expert at Tsinghua University, states that the United States "could prepare more nuclear tools and could threaten to use nuclear weapons on more occasions." [1] Moreover, Li argues that the strategy reflects a renewed attempt to use U.S. advantages in nuclear weapons to pursue "regional and global hegemony." As for how China should respond, a late January *PLA Daily* article called for China to strengthen and expand its nuclear deterrence capabilities ([SCMP](#), January 30), but such moves were already well underway in response to Chinese concerns about advances in U.S. intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), precision strike, and missile defense capabilities. Indeed, the

2013 edition of the *Science of Military Strategy*, an influential volume published by the PLA's Academy of Military Science (AMS), assessed that China's faces an increasingly complex nuclear security environment and underscored the importance of responding by strengthening China's nuclear deterrent capabilities. On the whole, therefore, Chinese strategists are likely to view the NPR as validating China's existing approach to nuclear force modernization, which has been largely congruent with its stated nuclear policy and strategy.

Implications for Chinese Nuclear Policy and Force Modernization

Initial indications are that China will view the NPR as underscoring the need to continue moving ahead with a nuclear force modernization program that is increasing the quality and quantity of Chinese nuclear forces, albeit in ways that appear to be largely consistent with China's longstanding no first use (NFU) policy, and an approach to nuclear strategy that focuses on providing China with a modern and secure nuclear retaliatory capability.

As for China's NFU policy, even if Chinese strategists are concerned about aspects of the NPR, it provides little impetus for China to officially change its longstanding nuclear policy. Indeed, Fu Ying, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the PRC's National People's Congress (NPC), reaffirmed China's adherence to NFU in her remarks at the Munich Security Conference in February ([Xinhua](#), February 18). Some Chinese critics of NFU have suggested that it diminishes the ability of the nuclear force to deter conventional strategic attacks against China; however, NFU proponents can and have argued that this potential shortcoming has already been addressed by a number of PLA publications, as well as a large body of unofficial statements indicating that there are circumstances under which China's NFU policy might not apply. This approach seems to allow China to continue to enjoy what it perceives as the benefits of the NFU policy, while generating additional deterrence effects through strategic ambiguity. Indeed, the 2013 edition of the *Science of Military Strategy* appears to endorse such an approach, at least implicitly, when it notes that different voices expressing views on such subjects might help create better deterrence effects. [2]

Chinese nuclear force modernization appears designed to support China's nuclear policy and strategy. China describes its desired nuclear force structure as a "lean and

effective" nuclear deterrent, one that is capable of ensuring retaliation following an enemy attack against China.[3] China's focus on the effectiveness of its nuclear missile force can be traced to concerns expressed in PLA publications dating to the late 1980s, which outlined plans to improve China's nuclear counterattack capability by moving toward mobile launchers, improving survivability, increasing the ability to penetrate missile defenses, increasing the numbers of missiles and launch units, and improving command and control and support systems. As China continues to implement its plans to deploy a more modern, mobile, and increasingly credible nuclear deterrent, it continues to focus on making progress in all of these areas.

China's focus in terms of modernizing its ICBM force appears to be consistent with a longstanding approach that emphasizes survivability and countering current or possible future developments in U.S. missile defense capabilities ([DNI Worldwide Threat Assessment](#), February 13). According to the U.S. Department of Defense, China currently has about 75–100 ICBMs. [4] This includes the silo-based DF-5A; the silo-based DF-5B, which is equipped with multiple independent re-entry vehicles (MIRVs); the road-mobile DF-31 and DF-31A; and the older, shorter-range DF-4. China's decision to MIRV some of its silo-based ICBMs was likely intended to increase warhead numbers and presumably add additional countermeasures to ensure China's ability to overwhelm or penetrate missile defenses. Another important development was the unveiling of the DF-31AG ICBM, which China revealed at the military parade last year. The DF-31AG has an improved launcher, underscoring China's desire for greater mobility and more survivability ([The Straits Times](#), Aug 17, 2017; [Wall Street Journal](#), July 30, 2017). At the theater level, however, there appear to be signs that the PLA Rocket Force may be giving China some more flexible options. The most notable development in this regard appears to be the DF-26 IRBM [5], which China has indicated is available in accurate nuclear, conventional, and anti-ship ballistic missile versions. [6]

China has also been using the official media to highlight the role of underground facilities in missile force operations. In particular, official media reports emphasize how these facilities contribute to PLA Rocket Force (PLARF) efforts to conceal its operations and enhance its survivability. For example, in June 2017, a Chinese media report highlighted an ICBM brigade's participation in a "month-long underground survival exercise in an unidentified facility 'beneath

mountains.” (China Daily, June 21, 2017). In addition, PLA publications and official media reports have highlighted improvements in training and readiness. PLARF training is reportedly becoming more realistic and complex, in line with PLA-wide directives aimed at improving the quality of military training. Finally, the Rocket Force appears to be focused on improving the readiness of its missile launch units. As a result, according to one recent official media report, “on-duty cells are ready to fire missiles immediately when ordered” (China Daily, June 21, 2017).

Looking ahead, the PLARF has a number of new capabilities under development. The DF-41 ICBMs currently under development are expected to feature MIRVs and will likely be designed to ensure they will be able to penetrate missile defense systems, as China has tried to communicate through recent official media reports. Moreover, some reports indicate that China might also deploy a rail-mobile version of the DF-41 ICBM (People’s Daily Online, November 28, 2017). In addition, China has conducted hypersonic glide vehicle (HGV) tests, which are probably intended to provide new options for countering missile defenses. [7]

The PLA Navy (PLAN) and PLA Air Force (PLAAF) also appear to be emerging as important actors in nuclear deterrence, an area long dominated by the Rocket Force. The PLA Navy’s current Type 094 SSBNs and JL-2 SLBMs, as well as SSBNs and SLBMs under development, all appear aimed at enhancing the diversification and survivability of Chinese nuclear forces. The PLA Air Force (PLAAF) also appears to be pursuing nuclear-capable bombers, which would give China a credible nuclear triad for the first time. The bombers could add more survivability, and likely will also offer some more flexible theater nuclear options along with the Rocket Force’s new missiles. The nuclear role may also offer benefits in terms of status and prestige for both the PLAN and PLAAF.

Conclusion

The 2018 NPR is unlikely to dramatically alter the trajectory of China’s ongoing nuclear force modernization or result in major changes to its nuclear policy. Beijing will likely view it as confirmation of an approach that is already well underway, one that is aimed at realizing improvements both in terms of the quality and quantity of its nuclear forces. Indeed, China seems likely to follow a course consistent with a recent recommendation by Li Bin, who suggests that in response to the NPR, China should not only “continue to

focus on raising the survivability of its nuclear weapons...and their penetration capability against missile defense systems,” but also “reaffirm that its nuclear weapons are only for deterring a nuclear attack” (Global Times, January 25). The NPR, however, is not China’s only concern. Indeed, Chinese analysts are undoubtedly awaiting the new US missile defense review that is scheduled to be released following the NPR. If the review includes an increase in US missile defense capabilities in response to North Korea, as is widely expected, Chinese strategists may conclude that further increases in force size or additional missile defense countermeasures are needed to ensure that China’s nuclear deterrent will continue to meet its national security requirements.

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Notes

[1] At the same time, however, Li Bin notes that the NPR offers “positive comments” about US-China dialogue on nuclear issues and he suggests that the dialogue can “play an important role in stabilizing the China-US nuclear relationship.” See Li Bin, “Will US Nuclear Posture Review see a Return to Hegemony?” *Global Times*, January 25, 2018, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1086434.shtml>.

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

[3] See Fiona S. Cunningham and M. Taylor Fravel, “Assuring Assured Retaliation: China’s Nuclear Posture and U.S.-China Strategic Stability,” *International Security*, Fall 2015, pp. 7–50; Jeffrey Lewis, “China’s Nuclear Modernization: Surprise, Restraint, and Uncertainty,” in Ashley J. Tellis, Abraham M. Denmark, and Travis Tanner, eds., *Strategic Asia 2013–14*, Seattle, Wash.: National Bureau of Asian Research, October 2013, pp. 67–96; Michael S. Chase, “China’s Transition to a More Credible Nuclear Deterrent: Implications and Challenges for the United States,” *Asia Policy*, July 2013, pp. 69–101; and M. Tay-

lor Fravel and Evan S. Medeiros, "China's Search for Assured Retaliation," *International Security*, Fall 2010, pp. 48–87.

[4] Office of the Secretary of Defense, Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2017.

[5] Eric Heginbotham, Michael S. Chase, Jacob Heim, Bonny Lin, Mark R. Cozad, Lyle J. Morris, Christopher P. Twomey, Forrest E. Morgan, Michael Nixon, Cristina L. Garafola, and Samuel K. Berkowitz, *China's Evolving Nuclear Deterrent: Major Drivers and Issues for the United States*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1628-AF, 2017, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1628.html.

[6] Andrew S. Erickson, "Academy of Military Science Researchers: 'Why We Had to Develop the Dongfeng-26 Ballistic Missile' – Bilingual Text, Analysis and Related Links," AndrewErickson.com, December 5, 2016, <http://www.andrewerickson.com/2015/12/academy-of-military-science-researchers-why-we-had-to-develop-the-dongfeng-26-ballistic-missile-bilingual-text-analysis-links/>.

[7] Lora Saalman, "China's Calculus on Hypersonic Glide," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, August 15, 2017, <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-background/2017/chinas-calculus-hypersonic-glide>; Joshua H. Pollack, "Boost-Glide Weapons and U.S.-China Strategic Stability," *Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 22, No. 2, February 2016, pp. 155–164.

China in Greenland: Mines, Science, and Nods to Independence

By Miguel Martin

Editor's Note: Miguel Martin has previously published on Arctic affairs under the penname Jichang Lulu.

Although China's recent Arctic white paper ([SCIO](#), January 2017), a document primarily intended for foreign consumption, avoids direct mention of Greenland, the island plays an important role in the PRC's Arctic strategy, due to its abundant natural resources, importance as a scientific research base, and possible emergence as an independent state that could give China more influence in Arctic affairs.

Little actual Chinese investment has taken place in Greenland to date, but Chinese companies are expected to be involved in two of the island's largest planned mining projects (including one of the world's largest rare-earth mines), while plans to build research facilities have also been announced, among them a year-round research base and a satellite ground station. Meanwhile, while Chinese diplomats have avoided any actions that could be construed as support for immediate Greenlandic independence, the possibility is now openly discussed among Chinese academics specializing in the Arctic.

The Long Road to Independence

Greenland enjoys a high level of autonomy as a constituent country of the Danish Kingdom. Most of Greenland's political class is committed to leaving the Kingdom, although economic independence remains unfeasible in the medium term. Denmark's annual block grant provides for more than half of Greenland's state budget. Seafood accounts for more than 94% of exports, creating vulnerability to price variations ([Grønlands Statistik](#), 2017). The country lacks a qualified workforce. Roughly half the population has only completed lower secondary education ([Grønlands Økonomiske Råd](#), August 2017).

The government sees developing transportation infrastructure as a way of expanding other industries, in particular tourism ([Naalakkersuisut](#), December 2015). Possible Chinese involvement in infrastructure development has been under discussion for years. In 2015, then-minister Vittus Qujaukitsoq talked about airport, port, hydroelectric and mining infrastructure development to representatives of companies including Sinohydro (中国水电), China State Construction Engineering (CSCEC, 中建) and China Harbour Engineering (CHEC, 中国港湾) ([MOFCOM](#), October 2015). Infrastructure projects were also discussed during the premier's November 2017 visit to China ([Naalakkersuisut](#), [Huanqiu](#), November 2017), although no Chinese company is known to have shown interest so far. At least some of the infrastructure plans advocated by the local government will not be profitable ([Danmarks Nationalbank](#), [Grønlands Økonomiske Råd](#), August 2017), requiring long-term state support. It remains less than clear whether the Greenlandic state will be able to maintain such funding. The plans are controversial in Greenland, and have generated friction with Denmark ([Folketinget](#), January 2018). The uncertainty and lack of clarity surrounding these projects seems to be keeping Chinese companies away.

Given the generally favorable attitudes toward China in the Greenlandic government, however, its independence could be geopolitically advantageous to the PRC. China has consistently avoided showing any form of support for such ambitions, and has taken care to treat Greenland as a sub-national entity, but despite this caution, the issue of independence is now openly discussed in Chinese academia. An article published last year with Guo Peiqing (郭培清), a leading polar politics scholar, as lead author, states that "the Danish government recognizes the objective inevitability of Greenland's independence". The piece notes that Greenland cannot cope on its own with the challenges it faces, so that "getting help from outside forces will be an unavoidable option", making Greenland's development "both an internal affair of Greenland and the responsibility and duty of the international community". [1] Coming from Guo, who has argued for the strategic importance of Arctic resources ([Quanzhou wanbao](#), December 2014), this can be read as a call for China to become involved, couched in the palatably 'internationalist' language of polar affairs.

Mining for Cooperation

Greenland has abundant mineral reserves, but low commodity prices and high development costs have hindered development. Only one mine is currently active, and another one is expected to come online in summer of 2018. Four sites in Greenland have attracted serious interest from Chinese companies; two have a realistic chance of coming online in the short term. Once in operation, they would make Chinese SOEs the top foreign investors in Greenland's natural resources.

The most important mining project in Greenland is also the most controversial: the uranium and rare-earth site at Kuannersuisut (Kvanefjeld), one of the world's largest rare-earth deposits. The license owner, ASX-listed Greenland Minerals and Energy (GME), had signed non-binding agreements with China Nonferrous to develop the mine, but in 2016 rare-earths processor Shenghe Resources (盛和资源) bought an eighth of GME and stated its interest in increasing its stake to a controlling one once the project enters production ([Shenghe](#), September 2016; [Sermitsiaq](#), [Jichang Lulu](#), June 2017). Although listed on the Shanghai Stock Exchange, Shenghe is ultimately controlled by the PRC Ministry of Land and Resources (MLR), through the

Chengdu Institute of Multipurpose Utilization of Mineral Resources (IMUMR, 中国地调局成都综合所), its controlling shareholder ([Shenghe](#), IMUMR). Shenghe's chairman is also the director of the IMUMR ([Shenghe](#), IMUMR).

Shenghe's investment, one of a number of rare-earth investments globally, including at the Mountain Pass mine in the United States, is consistent with PRC government calls for the rare-earth industry to build up strategic reserves ([NDRC](#)), and its encouraging companies to "develop mining resources abroad" ([MIIT](#), October 2016). The IMUMR has referred to the acquisition of the stake in Kvanefjeld as "implementing the vision on mining cooperation" reached between its minister and Greenland officials ([IMUMR](#), December 2016), and cited the Greenland investment in talks on plans to acquire rare-earth resources abroad in the context of the China Geological Survey's implementation of the 13th Five-Year Plan ([IMUMR](#), December 2016). The Kvanefjeld project is controversial in Greenland, as many (including the current minister responsible for natural resources) oppose uranium mining ([KNR](#), November 2016). The project has not yet obtained an exploitation license.

The mining project with PRC involvement closest to production is the world's northernmost: the Citronen Fjord iron and zinc mine at 83 degrees north latitude. Ironbark, its Australian owner, intends to work with state-owned China Nonferrous Metal Mining Group (中国有色矿业集团) to finance and build the project, initially using foreign (likely Chinese) labor, then gradually transitioning to local workers ([Naalakkersuisut](#), September 2016). The project has a production permit ([Naalakkersuisut](#), December 2016), but is having trouble finding investors ([Sermitsiaq](#), September 2017), although China Nonferrous remains interested, and sent a deputy general manager to visit the site last August ([mining.com](#), August 2017; [Jichang Lulu](#), October 2017).

Dual-use Research

As in Antarctica, mineral prospecting is the main goal of China's scientific activities in the Arctic; many of Greenland's major mineral sites have been visited and studied by Chinese scientists. The Chinese Geological Survey (CGS, 中国地质调查局), under the MLR, has played an active role in researching and promoting mineral sites of potential interest to China. In 2011, the CGS started a two-year research project to identify the mineral resource potential of deposits in Canada and Greenland ([CGS](#), June 2014). At

the height of interest in Greenland mining projects, multiple sites were described in Chinese-language scientific publications. For example, a 2013 issue of *Geological Science and Technology Information* (地质科技情报) carried eight articles on Greenland mining, totaling 58 pages. In 2012, a CGS publication advocated exploring and developing mineral resources in Greenland "as soon as possible", contrasting nascent China-Greenland exchanges with well-developed Western interest in Greenland's resources and strategic location. [2] The MLR actively promotes its research findings to the mining industry, and both the MLR and (to a lesser extent) provincial-level organs have a central role in identifying and promoting projects of interest. [3]

Plans for a permanent research station in Greenland were discussed as a priority by Chinese polar program leaders in 2015 (China Arctic and Antarctic Administration (CAA), January 2016). In May 2016, the State Oceanic Administration (SOA, 国家海洋局) signed an agreement with a Greenlandic ministry that included the construction of a station (SOA, [China Ocean News](#) (中国海洋报), May 2016). Two possible locations have been hinted at ([Twitter](#), [Sermitsiaq](#), [Jichang Lulu](#), October 2017): one seemingly near Kangaamiut or Maniitsoq in the island's southwest, and another near the Citronen Fjord zinc project of interest to China Nonferrous. Its location could provide a unique vantage point, being farther north than Denmark's Station Nord and the US Thule Air Base (Pituffik).

Last May, a ceremony was held in Kangerlussuaq, Greenland's airport hub, to launch a process intended to lead to the establishment of a satellite ground station to be used for climate change research, which could also be used for the dual-use Beidou navigational system. The ceremony was led by Professor Cheng Xiao of Beijing Normal University, a leading polar scientist, specializing in remote sensing, and featured Zhao Yaosheng, a Beidou pioneer with a military background. They traveled to Greenland as part of a contingent of 100 'elite' tourists, including Rear Admiral Chen Yan (陈俨), former political commissar of the South China Sea fleet, who served as an audience for the ceremony ([sciencenet.com](#), June 2017; [AG](#), November 2017; [Jichang Lulu](#), December 2017). The ground station project was reported on Chinese media ([sciencenet](#), June 2017), but was not known to Greenland's authorities, whose authorization would be required, until it was reported on by the author and local media ([Jichang Lulu](#), October 2017; [AG](#), November 2017). It's unclear if and when construction will start.

Conclusion

The Greenlandic government is enthusiastic about China as a key investor in mining and infrastructure projects, as well as a source of tourism and a customer for seafood, with a foreseeable central role in reducing economic dependence from Denmark. Such enthusiasm has not been reciprocated through major investments, although that might be about to change. Chinese companies remain cautious, as the development of the mining industry is hindered by high costs, low commodity prices, a lack of infrastructure and financial uncertainty. In political contacts, China avoids any signs of support for Greenland's independence, but the topic is now open for academic discussion. Although it remains unstated, an independent Greenland with China as a key trade and investment partner and good political relations would be a valuable geopolitical asset in the context of China's long-term Arctic strategy.

Miguel Martin, who frequently writes under the penname Jichang Lulu, is an independent researcher with an interest in China's activities in the Arctic and focus on Greenland. Martin's blog has frequently been the first Western-language outlet to report on news related to China's interests in Greenland.

Notes

[1] See *Contemporary International Relations* (现代国际关系), August 2017.

[2] See *Geological Work Strategic Research Reference* (地质工作战略研究参考) 99, Oct 2012.

[3] For example, information on Greenland was included in materials offered by the CGS at a MLR-organized forum on overseas mineral exploration in Beijing, attended by government departments, mining companies, banks and academics (CGS, *Overseas Mining Exploration and Development Newsletter* (境外矿产资源勘查开发简讯), 50, Oct 2013)

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