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**Xi Jinping's Summer Foreign Policy Tour Displays  
"Great Power Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics"**

*By John Dotson*

**Introduction**

In the month of June, Chinese Communist Party (CCP) General Secretary Xi Jinping kept up an ambitious international travel schedule, spending nearly half the month abroad on four major trips: to Russia, Central Asia, North Korea, and the G20 Summit in Japan. Although diplomatic travel is a normal part of the duties of any national leader, Xi's travel itinerary for June 2019 was unusually heavy. Furthermore, it was

accompanied by a propaganda campaign in the People's Republic of China (PRC) media apparatus that, even by the standards of CCP discourse, was intensive. As described in state media, "Through June, Chairman Xi Jinping made four successive foreign trips, creating a new record in the foreign relations history of New China [that] once more raised up China's international influence, once more perfected the totality of [China's] diplomatic position, and once again expanded space for [China's] strategic plans" ([CCTV](#), June 29).

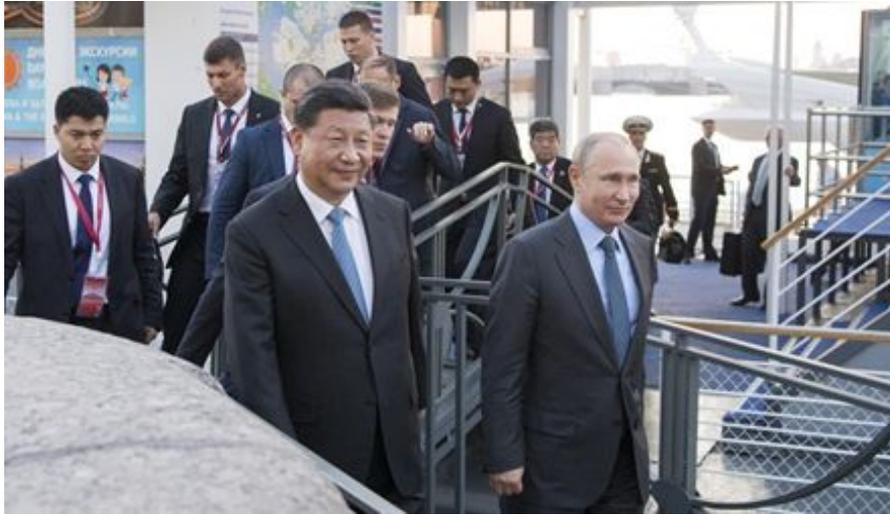
Throughout Xi's diplomatic tour, five narrative propaganda themes were particularly prominent:

- Promotion of a "comprehensive strategic partnership" with Russia;
- Touting the BRI as a "win-win" proposition for both China and participating countries, and as a model for international economic development;
- The promotion of "multilateralism," even while placing China at the center of world affairs;
- The depiction of China as a model of successful governance, and as a bedrock of stability amidst a chaotic global environment caused by the United States;
- And above all, promotion of Xi's own cult of personality, depicting Xi as a brilliant foreign policy thinker and inspiration to leaders in the developing world.

### **Russia: Building a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership"**

Xi's travels commenced with a trip to Russia in the first week of June, where he first conducted meetings in Moscow with President Vladimir Putin on June 5, and then with Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev on June 6. The leading theme stressed in PRC propaganda was that Xi and Russian leaders were working together, in the midst of a world that "is becoming increasingly uncertain and unstable," to forge a "comprehensive strategic partnership" that would contribute to a cooperative multilateral world ([Xinhua](#), June 6). The unnamed but clearly identified villain responsible for this global instability is the United States: "[S]ome individual country, regardless of the consequence, has blatantly violated the international law and the basic norms of international relations, [and] bullied others with sanctions recklessly... which has hindered global economic growth and impaired the growth of global trade" ([Xinhua](#), June 6).

Following the meetings in Moscow, Xi was one of the featured speakers at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) held on June 7. PRC media provided coverage of SPIEF that was sympathetic to Putin as well as Xi, noting that the Russian president called "for more equality in global trade and slammed those who opted for sanctions and trade wars as tools of pressure for imposing their vision onto the world" ([CGTN](#), June 7). Xi's own speech before the forum stressed one of Xi's favorite themes: the building of a "community of common destiny for mankind" (*renlei mingyun gongtongti*, 人类命运共同体) ([Xinhua](#), June 7). Xi also introduced a new slogan, stating that "sustainable development is the 'golden key' for solving global problems" (*kechixu fazhan shi pojie quanqiu xing wenti de jin yaoshi*, 可持续发展是破解全球性问题的"金钥匙") ([Qingnian Wang](#), June 10).



*Image: CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping accompanies Russian President Vladimir Putin for a cruise on the Neva River in St. Petersburg (June 6, 2019). Xi traveled to Russia for meetings with Russian officials, and to present a speech at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum. (Source: [Xinhua](#))*

### **Central Asia: Promoting China's Economic and Security Role in Eurasia**

Xi's next stop was a mid-month trip to Central Asia. On June 12, Xi traveled to Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, where he held meetings with Kyrgyz President Sooronbay Jeenbekov and Afghan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani. PRC press coverage of these meetings stressed similar themes: China's positive role in promoting stability and security in Central Asia; the opportunities offered by the BRI; and that regional governments firmly supported the PRC's measures aimed at "safeguarding peace and stability in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and cracking down on extremism" ([Xinhua](#), June 12; [Xinhua](#), June 13). This coverage also depicted regional leaders as eagerly looking to Xi for guidance: Kyrgyz President Jeenbekov was cited as calling the Kyrgyz edition of the first volume of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* "a book of great significance...to learn from China's experience and promote [Kyrgyzstan's] own reform and development" ([Xinhua](#), June 12).

On June 13, Xi also held his first face-to-face meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi since Modi's re-election to a second term in May 2019. PRC coverage of the meeting predictably emphasized themes of economic cooperation ([Xinhua](#), June 14); Indian press coverage was also generally positive, but made mention of recent issues connected to China's influence with Pakistan, and the controversy surrounding the U.N. designation of Jaish-e-Mohammed leader Masood Azhar as a terrorist ([India Today](#), June 14; [China Brief](#), April 9).

The centerpiece of Xi's visit was an address presented on June 14 at the 19th annual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the quasi-alliance of China, Russia, and Central Asian states (and later, India and Pakistan) first formed in 2001. Xi's speech stressed the need for SCO member states to uphold the "Shanghai Spirit"—defined in official commentary as consisting of "mutual trust, mutual benefit,

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equality, consultation, respect for cultural diversity and pursuit of common development as the core values essential to promoting peace, development and cooperation” ([Xinhua](#), June 14; [Xinhua](#), June 16).

On June 15-16, Xi was in Dushanbe, Tajikistan for further meetings with other national leaders, and for attendance at the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), a parallel diplomatic forum to the SCO that includes membership by 27 Asian and Middle Eastern states ([CICA](#), undated). Prior to the conference, Xi held meetings with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Tajik President Emomali Rahmon; once again, PRC state media hit upon familiar themes about the regional benefits of the BRI, and the need for “anti-terrorism cooperation” ([Xinhua](#), June 15; [Xinhua](#), June 16).



*Image: Xi Jinping (fifth from left) stands alongside Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon (center) and Russian President Vladimir Putin (fifth from right) in the center of the front row among officials representing member states of the CICA summit, held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan in mid-June. (Source: [China Daily](#))*

At the CICA conference, Xi presented a speech titled “Working Together for a New Progress of Security and Development in Asia,” which once more stressed the themes of building a “community of common destiny,” and a “new model of international relations” (*xin xing guoji guanxi*, 新型国际关系) focused on multilateral cooperation. Within this construct, the “platform of Belt and Road cooperation” would be a central means “to secure a sustained driver for our common development.” Xi’s speech also took the opportunity to make thinly-veiled jabs at U.S. trade policy, and to assert the PRC’s morally superior position: “With regard to any problem that occurs on the economic and trade front, all sides [should act] in accordance with norms in international relations and multilateral trading rules, rather than resort to protectionism and unilateralism... By taking such a position, China is upholding the legitimate development rights and interests of all countries and...fairness and justice in the world” ([PRC Foreign Ministry](#), June 15).

### **North Korea: Asserting China's Role in the Korean Peninsula**

On the heels of the trip to Central Asia, Xi Jinping then conducted a visit to North Korea on June 20-21. Although it included standard photo-ops of Xi posing for handshakes with Kim Jong Un, this trip was focused more on closed door meetings rather than on public speeches or events. PRC propaganda themes surrounding the visit were more subdued, and largely focused on bland statements such as the “need to continue to stick to peace talks so as to make even greater contributions to peace, stability and prosperity in the region” ([Xinhua](#), June 21); and the assertion of “both sides' determination to push for a political solution to the nuclear issue in the Korean Peninsula and to promote lasting peace and security in the region” ([Xinhua](#), June 20; [Xinhua](#), June 21).

Xi likely made the visit to consult with Kim prior to the G20 summit (*see below*), and to assert the PRC's central role in negotiations related to North Korea's nuclear weapons programs, as well as to any potential longer-term political settlement on the Korean Peninsula. Unpredictable moves made by the Trump Administration regarding Korea may have reinforced Beijing's interest in consulting with Kim about any future diplomatic efforts—as well as sending a public reminder to audiences in China, Pyongyang, and Washington that the PRC remains North Korea's primary patron and only significant ally.

### **The G-20 Summit in Japan: Hailing an “Osaka Truce” in the Trade War**

The capstone of Xi's June travels was his trip at the end of the month for attendance at the Group of Twenty (G20) Summit in Japan. This summit, held on 28-29 June in Osaka, represented the world's largest economies, bringing together national leaders and central bank directors from 19 countries and the European Union. During the visit, Xi conducted a meeting of leaders from the “BRICS” (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) countries ([Xinhua](#), June 28); and also held a side meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron to once again urge greater international “multilateralism” ([Xinhua](#), June 29). Xi took the opportunity of his G20 speech to once more tout the BRI ([Xinhua](#), June 29), part of a continuing renewed propaganda push for the BRI that continued past the trip ([China Daily](#), July 3).

As depicted in PRC media, however, the centerpiece of Xi's trip was a triumphant side meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump, which brought about an “Osaka Truce” in U.S.-China trade disputes ([China Daily](#), July 2)—a truce that would allow the two countries “to restart economic and trade consultations between their countries on the basis of equality and mutual respect, injecting much-needed confidence into the global economy and markets” ([Xinhua](#), June 29). [1] PRC media was effusive in its praise, with the English-language *China Daily* proclaiming that Xi “brought hope to the world economy” amid “challenges and uncertainties thanks to the rise of trade protectionism and unilateralism in some economies since 2017;” and that the summit “witnessed President Xi Jinping achieving diplomatic success in terms of upholding multilateralism, partnerships, mutually beneficial cooperation and providing directions for global growth and global governance” ([China Daily](#), July 3).



*Image: A political cartoon from PRC state media that accompanied coverage of the Trump-Xi meeting in Osaka, and the resulting “trade truce.” As depicted in the cartoon, China has consistently offered an open hand of cooperation, while the United States has pursued confrontation—until Uncle Sam at last comes around to China’s wiser and morally superior position. (Source: [China Daily](#), July 2)*

It was in domestically-oriented Chinese-language media, however, that coverage of the G20 Summit ramped up Xi’s personality cult to a new level ([China Media Project](#), July 2). In an official commentary under the name of PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi (王毅), Wang stated that the G20 meeting was held “at a historical juncture interwoven with a chaotic international situation” (*guoji jushi bianluan jiaozhi de lishi guankou*, 国际局势变乱交织的历史关口). In such a critical time, Xi Jinping stands ready to show the way—not only for China, but for the whole world:

*Chairman Xi Jinping stood amidst these historical tides, not allowing clouds to cover his eyes, and from a new model of international relations and from the heights of a community of common destiny for mankind, and with clear direction for the world economy and global governance... displayed the foresight and sagacity of Chinese leaders, assuming and bringing into play the functions of a responsible great power... The present chaotic world situation still persists, and various unstable and uncertain factors are still spreading; we should take Xi Jinping foreign relations thought as our guide... and do our utmost to initiate the new achievements of great power diplomacy with Chinese characteristics (Zhongguo tese daguo waijiao, 中国特色大国外交) ([CCTV](#), June 29).*

## Conclusions

Xi Jinping's June 2019 summer foreign policy tour represented an unusual level of foreign travel for a paramount Chinese leader. Part of the explanation for Xi's ambitious travels is likely found simply in the vagaries of scheduling for major international conferences. [2] However, the content of the accompanying CCP propaganda campaign suggests other possible motives, as well. The first three trips offered opportunities for speeches, meetings, and photo ops in reliably friendly, controlled media environments. All four trips allowed Xi to bolster a domestic image as a lynchpin world leader—with the PRC's state-controlled press providing effusive praise of Xi's accomplishments as an international statesman, and his status as a model for leaders of developing countries to emulate.

Xi's international travels in June—and the attendant propaganda campaign—may serve in part to bolster Xi's position amid internal Party concerns simmering over the U.S.-China “trade war,” and the resulting economic slowdown ([China Brief](#), August 1, 2018; [China Brief](#), March 22). The early summer international trips may also represent part of an effort to boost Xi's prestige prior to the annual CCP senior leadership meetings in Beidaihe (on the coast of the Bohai Sea), traditionally held in early August. In this sense, the very intensity of the propaganda surrounding Xi's cult of personality may hint at efforts to drown out his internal critics—and swaggering pride displayed overseas may cover up anxieties at home.

Xi's summer 2019 diplomatic tour also represented one of the clearest displays yet seen during Xi's tenure of “great power diplomacy with Chinese characteristics”—characterized by unabashed assertion of international leadership, wrapped in the language of benevolence and international cooperation. If the foreign policy themes on display throughout the past month are any indication, the world is likely to see an even more assertive PRC position on the world stage in times to come.

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## Notes

[1] The tentative agreement between Xi and Trump did not remove existing tariffs, but involved a U.S. pledge to refrain from imposing further tariffs in the immediate term ([Forbes](#), July 5).

[2] SCO annual summits over the past decade have been held most frequently in the month of June, and the 2019 G20 meeting happened to fall during the same month.

[3] Xi Jinping has conducted early/mid-summer trips in both of the past two years: In 2017, Xi Jinping travelled to Kazakhstan 07-10 June for the annual SCO summit; and then visited Russia and Germany from July 03-08 ([China Vitae](#), 2017). In 2018, Xi Jinping travelled to the United Arab Emirates, followed by a multi-nation trip to Africa (Senegal, Rwanda, South Africa, and Mauritius) from July 20-28 ([China Vitae](#), 2018).

## **The Prospects for Sino-Indian Relations During Modi's Second Term**

*By Sudha Ramachandran*

### **Introduction**

On May 30, Narendra Modi was sworn in for a second term as India's Prime Minister. Conspicuous by their absence at the inauguration ceremony were Imran Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan; Lobsang Sangay, President of the Central Tibetan Authority (CTA), more commonly known as the Tibetan government-in-exile; and Tien Chung-Kwang, Taiwan's trade representative to India. While Khan was not invited on account of the serious deterioration in India-Pakistan relations since early this year, the absence of Sangay and Tien can be attributed to the Modi government adopting a more cautious approach to China in its second term. Modi's administration seems keen to avoid needling the People's Republic of China (PRC), especially at a time when Sino-Indian relations are improving ([Deccan Herald](#), May 29). This caution on the part of India notwithstanding, Sino-Indian relations during Modi's second term (scheduled to run through May 2024) are unlikely to be tension-free.

### **The "Tibet Card" in Sino-Indian Relations**

When Modi began his first term as prime minister in May 2014, both New Delhi and Beijing were optimistic about the prospects for improved bilateral relations. The PRC's good relations with Modi when he served as chief minister of the western Indian state of Gujarat were expected to give it a head-start over other countries in establishing ties with Modi's new national government ([Business Standard](#), May 30, 2014). Chinese analysts predicted that Modi's economic policies would not only bring a "myriad of opportunities for Chinese enterprises," but that they would also "further propel the China-India relationship" ([Global Times](#), May 19, 2014).

While Sino-Indian economic co-operation did indeed expand during Modi's first term, relations in general were rather uneven. It got off to a bad start at Modi's inaugural. Not only were Sangay and Tien special invitees to the event, but the CTA President was treated almost on par with the visiting South Asian heads of state. This drew a sharp reaction from Beijing. Moreover, the Modi government persisted in playing the "Tibet card" over the next three years in a bid to exert leverage over China ([China Brief](#), May 31, 2018).

In December 2014, for instance, the Dalai Lama was a guest along with other Nobel Laureates at the Presidential Palace in New Delhi; and in March 2017, he visited Tawang, an important site of contention in the Sino-Indian border dispute and a place of religious, historical and political significance for Tibetan Buddhists. Although such visits by the Dalai Lama had happened in the past as well, India under Modi was using the "Tibet card" more frequently and systematically as part of a strategy in its relations with China ([China Brief](#), May 31, 2018).

### **Chinese Pressure Levied Against Indian Security Interests**

As for China, its insensitivity—if not outright hostility—to India’s security concerns has riled New Delhi. Beijing refrained from supporting India in international forums, especially on issues involving Pakistan. It long blocked India’s efforts to get the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to list the Pakistan-backed, anti-India, Jaish-e-Mohammed leader Masood Azhar as a global terrorist ([China Brief](#), April 9). It also stood in the way of India’s entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) ([Deccan Herald](#), August 13, 2016).

The PRC has also applied military pressure to gain leverage over India. Soldiers of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) have crossed the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the de facto border between the two countries, frequently during Modi’s first term. Such intrusions across the LAC rose from 271 in 2016, to 416 in 2017 ([Indian Express](#), January 19, 2018). In mid-2017, China intensified pressure on India by constructing a road into the Doklam Plateau in western Bhutan, which had serious implications for India’s security. This was the worst crisis in Sino-Indian relations since the 1962 war: it culminated in India and China amassing their troops in the area for 73 days, vitiating a relationship that was already strained and putting the two countries on the brink of war.



*Image: An Indian delegation led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi (right) meets with the Chinese delegation led by PRC President Xi Jinping (left) in a side meeting held prior to the annual meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, June 13, 2019. (Source: [Xinhua](#))*

### **Improving Relations Since Early 2018**

After the crisis of 2017, Sino-Indian relations began improving in early 2018. With Modi and Xi needing to focus on, respectively, approaching elections and a trade war with the United States, another Sino-Indian military stand-off needed to be averted ([The Wire](#), June 15). Several high-level visits were exchanged

culminating in the April 27-28 “informal summit” between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Modi at Wuhan in China. The two leaders agreed at this meeting to provide “strategic guidance” to their respective militaries to improve communication, implement various confidence building measures, and strengthen existing institutional mechanisms to prevent tensions escalating in the border areas ([MEA](#), April 28, 2018).

In the run-up to the Wuhan summit, the two sides also began acting on issues of sensitivity to the other. Thus, India stopped needling China on the Tibet issue: it clamped down on the Tibetan exile community’s plans to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Dalai Lama’s exile in India through a series of high-profile public events, and even informed the Chinese government of the steps it had taken in this regard. Simultaneously, China lifted its objections to Pakistan’s inclusion in a “grey list” of the Financial Action Task Force, an intergovernmental money laundering and terror funding watchdog ([China Brief](#), May 31, 2018). On May 1, the PRC lifted its “technical hold” on the UNSC’s inclusion of Azhar in its sanctions list ([Hindustan Times](#), May 2).

### **Opportunities Await for Closer Sino-Indian Relations**

It is likely that the Modi government’s experience of the past five years of dealing with the PRC prompted it to not invite Tibetan or Taiwanese officials to the inaugural of its second term. Thus, its diplomacy towards China has begun on a positive note; whether this lasts, or is reciprocated by China on issues of concern to India, remains to be seen. There are opportunities for India and China to work together. U.S. President Donald Trump’s all-out trade war with China and tariff disputes with India could prompt Beijing and New Delhi to collaborate more closely on trade policy ([Economic Times](#), January 10).

India and China are also currently in a situation that bodes well for settlement of their border dispute. A growing number of analysts in both countries hold the view that it is time to settle the border dispute. Furthermore, with Sino-American relations under severe strain, China’s leaders are reportedly waking up to the importance of stable and cordial relations with India. They recognize that this will not be possible without resolving the border dispute ([Sunday Guardian](#), May 18, 2019). Importantly, the “broad contours” of a Sino-Indian border agreement have reportedly “been worked out” in the course of 21 rounds of talks between special representatives of the two countries. An agreement is possible but requires the political leadership in the two countries to make the final call ([The Hindu](#), April 30, 2018).

Both countries have powerful leaders at the helm. With the two two-term restriction on the Chinese presidency (and the parallel customary limit on terms for the general secretary post of the Chinese Communist Party) removed in 2017, Xi could be in office for life as the most powerful Chinese leader since Chairman Mao. As for Modi, he has returned to power with a larger mandate. Both leaders are in a position to make bold moves on the foreign policy front. They are at the height of their power and do not have to fear serious domestic repercussions. They have the political space to sign a final border settlement agreement,

and the prospects for resolution of the decades-old border dispute have therefore never been more promising.

### **The Likelihood of the Status Quo Regarding the Border Dispute**

However, a border agreement will require compromise, and both countries will need to give up some territory to which they lay claim. Giving up territory to China is unlikely to go down well with hardliners among Modi's support base of fervent nationalists: Will Modi be willing to take on the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the ideological fount of his Bharatiya Janata Party, which takes uncompromising and hawkish positions on issues related to China and Pakistan? [1]

A Sino-Indian border agreement will reduce the chances of a war between the two countries. It would ease Chinese military pressure on India, which at present needs to plan and prepare for a two-front war in the event of a confrontation with either Pakistan or China, given that the latter two countries are allies. China has often stepped up military pressure on India along the disputed border when New Delhi plays the "Tibet card," and an unsettled border keeps India vulnerable to such pressure. Is China ready to give up that capacity to pressure India, especially when Tibet remains a sensitive issue for Beijing?

India did not ruffle Beijing's feathers by inviting the CTA President to Modi's second inauguration, but it could still use the "Tibet card" in the future—especially in the event of the 84-year old Dalai Lama's passing. Post-Dalai Lama, the exile community in India could turn militant, and unrest in ethnic Tibetan regions is likely. At a time when China is apprehensive over the Dalai Lama's succession, and concerned about how the 100,000-strong Tibetan exile community in India would respond to its appointee, China is unlikely to give up its capacity to pressure India along the disputed border. It is therefore likely that the status quo will be maintained in regards to the Sino-Indian border dispute.

### **Persistent Differences**

Given Beijing's unease with India's growing stature in the global arena, it can be expected to continue opposing India's entry into the NSG, and its ambitions of becoming a veto-wielding member of the Security Council. Indeed, just weeks after India—in deference to Chinese sensitivities on Tibet—avoided inviting the CTA President to Modi's swearing-in, Beijing blocked India's entry into the NSG once again ([The Wire](#), June 22). The PRC can also be expected to step up its role in India's neighborhood. Bhutan, in particular, will come under Chinese pressure to establish official diplomatic and economic relations ([China Brief](#), April 20, 2017). China's challenge to India's regional dominance will grow as the Belt and Road Initiative makes deeper inroads to the region, and India will continue to resist this growing Chinese influence.

Sino-Indian relations can be expected to fray further over China's mounting strategic cooperation with Pakistan, and India's growing proximity to the United States. India's response to U.S. pressure to ban

Chinese company Huawei's 5G network is being closely watched by Beijing. To address India's security concerns, Huawei has offered India a "no back door" pact ([The Mint](#), June 25). Rejection of Huawei's 5G network would almost certainly negatively impact India's relations with Beijing.

## Conclusions

Sino-Indian relations during Modi's second term as prime minister have begun well, with the Modi government deciding to avoid riling Beijing on the Tibet issue. With strong leaders at the helm in India and China, prospects for an agreement on the decades-old Sino-Indian border dispute have opened up. However, old contentious issues and challenges continue to litter the road ahead. China's insecurities over Tibet and the succession of the Dalai Lama are mounting—and will peak in the event of the current Dalai Lama's demise, which will likely spark unrest in Tibet and among the exile community in India. These factors, and reservations over India's ultimate intentions in its growing closeness to the United States, could deepen China's suspicions of India. Relations between the two states appear to be improving, but many points of contention could still roil Sino-Indian relations as Modi's second term in office unfolds.

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## Notes

[1] Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is a mass-membership, Hindu identity and Indian nationalist civic organization. PM Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party grew out of the RSS movement.

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## **A Preliminary Survey of CCP Influence Operations in Singapore** *By Russell Hsiao*

*Editor's note:* Our previous issue contained an article by Russell Hsiao that profiled institutions and methods employed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to cultivate influence in Japan ([A Preliminary Survey of CCP Influence Operations in Japan](#), June 26, 2019). In this issue, Mr. Hsiao continues this series by leveraging recent local research in Singapore, and presenting an analysis of the means by which the CCP seeks to gain influence over public discourse and government policy in that Southeast Asian nation.

## Introduction

As China rises on the world stage, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is increasingly utilizing all levers of influence to achieve and secure its national objectives along its periphery and globally. To achieve and

secure those objectives, the CCP is employing political warfare. [1] Political warfare is a set of overt and covert tools used by governments to influence the perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors of other governments and societies in order to achieve national objectives. [2] Set within a broader discussion about how CCP engages in influence operations in Asia, Singapore presents a valuable case study for understanding the means by which the CCP engages in influence operations that target a majority ethnic-Chinese state.

As noted by Singaporean diplomat Bilahari Kausikan, in terms of state-to-state relations, the Chinese government essentially engages in influence operations in a fashion similar to other governments ([Straits Times](#), June 28). However, the CCP is a Leninist party, and its use of united front tactics and organizations represents a holistic approach to influence operations wholly unlike other countries ([China Brief](#), May 9). Singapore has long been a target of CCP united front attention, and the city authorities have a history of combating CCP propaganda that dates back to the 1950s and 1960s, when People's Republic of China (PRC) leaders sought to export communist revolution to Southeast Asia ([National Archives of Singapore](#), undated). [3]

The primary avenues for CCP influence operations in Singapore are found in business associations, clan associations, and grassroots organizations. CCP propaganda efforts in Singapore that flow through these organizations aim to promote the narrative of a “greater China”—one that includes all people of Chinese descent, irrespective of nationality—and therefore, one in which ethnic Chinese persons of all nationalities should show affinity and loyalty towards the Chinese state represented by the PRC. The CCP's fundamental purpose, therefore, is to impose a Chinese identity on Singapore so that it will align more closely with the PRC's expanding interests.

### **Overseas Chinese Relations and Civic Organizations in Singapore**

Identity politics (and the use of overseas Chinese) as a tool of PRC foreign policy was documented in a 2018 U.S. Congressional study ([USCC](#), August 2018), and this practice was institutionally reflected by the integration of overseas Chinese affairs into the CCP's United Front Work Department (UFWD) in early 2018 ([China Brief](#), May 9). The strategy of outreach to Chinese and Asian identity was recently further reinforced by the PRC's first “Conference of Dialogue on Asian Civilizations,” held in Beijing in May 2019 ([CDAC](#), May 2019).

Singapore has a total population of 5.8 million, 76.2% of whom are ethnic Chinese. Despite this, Singapore is a multiracial and multicultural nation with a complex identity, and since the nation's founding identity has been closely managed as an existential issue by Singapore's ruling elites. [4] Because of the city-state's large ethnic Chinese population, the PRC seeks to leverage ethnic ties to Singapore for purposes of building influence, and a statement commonly heard by Singaporeans from citizens of the PRC is: “Singapore is a Chinese country that must cleave to Chinese interests” ([Straits Times](#), October 16, 2016).

Although there is a sizeable Chinese community, this community is well-assimilated into Singaporean society. While ethnic enclaves still exist, particularly among new immigrants, these ethnic-geographical enclaves are not influential as collective political interest groups. Older generations of Singaporean-Chinese tend to have a stronger affinity for China; among these older generations, CCP appeals are frequently directed towards supporting ethnic pride and Chinese nationalism. Older Singaporean-Chinese also tend to have higher levels of membership in clan associations and similar civic organizations based on ethnic Chinese identity (see below).



*Image: The PRC-sponsored Singapore China Cultural Center located at No. 217 Queen Street in the city center, which opened in 2015. (Source: [PRC CCC in Singapore](#), November 2015)*

### *Clan Associations*

Clan associations have a long history in Singapore and in other countries with Chinese immigrant communities. Clan associations were started in the early 1800s in Singapore to foster unity and kinship among Chinese people when they arrived from other countries. Based on locality or kinship (surname), more than 300 locality and surname clan associations have been officially registered in Singapore, and serve as key institutions for preserving a sense of Chinese identity and kinship ([Singapore Federation of Clan Associations](#), undated). Clan and surname associations are important links through which the PRC conducts outreach: through cultural exchanges to revolutionary history sites in China, concerts for singing communist songs, “birthright” village/home visits, and so forth. These exchanges are endorsed by local offices operated by CCP united front organizations. [5]

### *Cultural Associations*

The younger generation of Chinese-Singaporeans generally feels less identification with the PRC, and has less interest in joining clan associations, temple associations, and similar civic organizations. The CCP therefore needs different strategies for dealing with the younger generation of Singaporeans, and the most common appeals are to economic opportunities and cultural affinity with China. One institution for promoting the latter is the PRC's China Cultural Center (*Zhongguo Wenhua Zhongxin*, 中国文化中心), or CCC, which was established in Singapore in 2012. The Singapore CCC is one of 20 such centers established around the world to conduct cultural activities, exchanges for youth, and teaching and training ([PRC CCC in Singapore](#), undated). The CCC functions as part of a broader effort to create a common identity between Chinese China and Chinese Singapore.

Of note, a parallel Singapore Chinese Cultural Center was established by Singapore's government in 2017. The vision of the this organization is "a vibrant Singapore Chinese culture, rooted in a cohesive, multi-racial society" ([Singapore CCC](#), undated). At the opening of the center, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Long made a speech emphasizing how Chinese in Singapore are very different from the Chinese in China, in terms of both history and identity ([Singapore PM Office](#), May 19, 2017).

### **Influence Levied Through Business Associations**

Business associations in Singapore (as is often true in other countries) act as the most powerful lobby for Chinese interests. In Singapore, these organizations include the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the Singapore Business Federation. The PRC exerts leverage over Singapore businessmen by making it harder for them to get contracts, licenses, permits, loans, etc.—especially in the real estate sector, where Singaporeans hold significant investments in China. [6]

Two incidents from recent years demonstrate how business associations have lobbied the Singapore government on behalf of pro-PRC positions. In 2004, the Singaporean business community exerted immense pressure on the Singaporean government when Prime Minister-elect Lee Hsien Loong made a "private and unofficial" visit to Taiwan in July that year before he was officially sworn in in August. At the time, PRC officials threatened to delay talks on a free-trade agreement with Singapore as a result of Lee's Taiwan visit ([AFP](#), August 26, 2004).

A second example was seen in 2016-2017, in which nine Singaporean military armored vehicles used for training in Taiwan were impounded during passage through Hong Kong. Singapore-PRC relations were strained by the incident, but Singaporean Chinese businessmen, who held ties with government officials through grassroots associations and other channels, reportedly provided "feedback" to the government to avoid stirring up trouble with China by continuing to train in Taiwan ([SCMP](#), December 3, 2016; [SCMP](#), January 24, 2017).

## **Media Influence**

Singapore is a multilingual country that includes Chinese (along with English, Malay, and Tamil) among its officially-recognized languages, and Mandarin is widely spoken and used. The daily circulation of Singapore's largest Chinese-language newspaper, *Lianhe Zaobao* (早报), is about 200,000 copies, and the number of readers in Singapore is estimated to be about 620,000. The newspaper's website, *Zaobao.com*, is also read in the PRC, where it attracts more than 5 million daily page views. The local *Zaobao.sg*, which is mainly for readers in Singapore and readers from outside mainland China, enjoys 500,000 page views per day and 1.4 million unique visitors per month ([Zaobao](#), undated).

Chinese-language programming in Singapore has become subject to PRC influence through intermediaries in Taiwan, as Singapore purchases content from broadcasting companies (such as TVBS, CTI, and EBC) that are considered to be pro-PRC among Taiwan media outlets. However, Chinese programming is still not very popular in Singapore, and anecdotal evidence based on local interviews suggest that younger generations do not appear to be as interested as their elders in Chinese programming. [7]

The Singaporean government exerts tight controls over the media, which limits PRC influence. Most print and broadcast media outlets in Singapore are not necessarily state-owned, but they are heavily state-controlled. Yet, given the economic dependency between local Chinese-language media companies and the PRC market, this raises questions as to whether local outlets (such as *Zaobao*) are selling news to Singapore, or selling news to markets in the PRC—and whether they might self-censor as a result.

## **Conclusions**

The fundamental purpose of Chinese propaganda and influence operations in Singapore is to impose a Chinese identity on Singapore. Towards that end, China is using cultural organizations, clan associations, business associations, and youth programs to engage in influence operations in Singapore. Beijing's vehement reaction to Singapore's response in support of the South China Sea ruling by the Hague-based Permanent Court of Arbitration ([Today](#), July 12, 2016; [Straits Times](#), August 6, 2016) reflect its broader and innate belief that, as a majority ethnic-Chinese country, Singapore should understand and support the Chinese position. CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping's policies of blurring the line between "Chinese people" (*huaren*, 华人) and "overseas Chinese" (*huaqiao*, 华侨), intensified propaganda, and new laws related to overseas Chinese have all caused heightened concern in Singapore. Singapore's government views identity as an existential issue, and is likely to resist CCP efforts to make inroads in this area.

While policy experts in Singapore appear to be keenly aware of and are taking precautions to resist CCP influence operations, there are some contradictions in Singapore policies, and natural alignments of interest between Singapore's government and the PRC: for example, mutual concerns that the West's calls for universal values could weaken their political authority. However, this does not mean that Singapore is

necessarily pro-Beijing, or that its policies result from CCP influence operations. In fact, Singapore's resilience to foreign influences may be attributed in part to the government's tight media controls, which restrict access to Singapore's information environment. Similar factors of social management also restrict channels for foreign interference through either political parties or civil society organizations.

Growing strategic competition between the United States and China in the region presents complications for Singapore's foreign policy and defense policy. Security experts in Singapore assess that their options are narrowing as both countries are putting more pressure than ever before on Singapore to pick sides. As U.S.-China competition takes center stage in global politics, the country's delicate balancing act, and its internal questions of identity, will come increasingly under strain.

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#### **Notes**

[1] Defense Intelligence Agency, *China Military Power 2019: Modernizing a Force to Fight and Win*, p.99. [https://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/China\\_Military\\_Power\\_FINAL\\_5MB\\_20190103.pdf](https://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/China_Military_Power_FINAL_5MB_20190103.pdf).

[2] George Kennan defined political warfare as "the employment of all the means at a nation's command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives. Such operations are both overt and covert. They range from such overt actions as political alliances, economic measures ..., and 'white' propaganda, to such covert operations as clandestine support of 'friendly' foreign elements, 'black' psychological warfare and even encouragement of underground resistance in hostile states." See: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945-50Intel/d269>.

[3] *Chinese Influence and American Interests: Promoting Constructive Vigilance* (Hoover Institution, 2018), p. 174. [https://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/research/docs/chineseinfluence\\_americaninterests\\_fullreport\\_web.pdf](https://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/research/docs/chineseinfluence_americaninterests_fullreport_web.pdf).

[4] Eugene K. B. Tan, "Re-Engaging Chineseness: Political, Economic and Cultural Imperatives of Nation-Building in Singapore," *The China Quarterly*, No. 175 (Sep. 2003).

[5] Author's interviews in Singapore.

[6] Author's interviews in Singapore.

[7] Author's interviews in Singapore.

**It Isn't All About Europe: The Impacts of China's Missile Forces  
on Russian Threat Perceptions and the INF Architecture**

*By Martin Andrew*

**Background**

The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, signed in December 1987 between the United States and the Soviet Union, bound the signatories to eliminate “ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of between 500 and 5,500 kilometers, their launchers and associated support structures and support equipment” ([Text of INF Treaty](#), December 1987). The agreement resulted in the two sides removing broad categories of ground-launched, nuclear-armed, short-, medium-, and intermediate-range ballistic and cruise missiles from their military inventories. [1]

In the years since, Russia and the United States have exchanged multiple accusations of INF violations. A critical move came in February 2018 with Russian deployment of the *Iskander-M* missile system into Kaliningrad—thereby outflanking NATO's defenses, giving Russia a rapid first strike option, and throwing the INF framework into disarray ([RIA Novosti](#), February 5, 2018). In response to the Kaliningrad deployment, in December 2018 the U.S. Government announced it would withdraw from the INF Treaty in response to Russian violations ([Washington Post](#), February 4, 2018). In late April 2019, U.S. President Donald Trump reportedly ordered his administration to push for a new arms control agreement with the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China (PRC). Moscow responded that Russia was open to the possibility of new arms control deals, but that there were no ongoing talks ([Reuters](#), April 29).

Discussions of the INF architecture usually focus narrowly on either Russia and the United States, or on the United States and the PRC. Furthermore, significant discussion has taken place regarding how Chinese missile forces might impact the military calculations of the United States, Australia, Japan, and other Pacific nations. However, little attention has generally been given to how developments in the People's Liberation Army Rocket Force (PLARF) affect Russia. Chinese missile forces, which are steadily expanding in terms of both numbers and capability, are a major factor affecting Russian strategic calculations ([The Diplomat](#), October 24, 2018). This article examines the ways that China's build-up of short, medium, and intermediate range ballistic missiles and cruise missiles has affected Russian threat perceptions—and therefore the broader INF architecture as a whole.

**China's Theater Ballistic and Cruise Missiles**

*The DF-21 Series*

The emergence of more modern and accurate Chinese intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) is one of the primary reasons that the Russians threatened to pull out of the INF treaty as far back as 2007 ([Arms](#)

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[Control Wonk](#), February 14, 2007). In this, the *Dongfeng* (“East Wind,” 东风), or DF series, has played a prominent role. In 2010, the author postulated that the PLA would gradually replace its earlier models of 300km range DF-11 and 600km range DF-15 short range ballistic missiles (SRBMs). As self-propelled multiple rocket systems, these SRBMs had created more survivable and easily deployed systems that could overwhelm air defenses within their range ([China Brief](#), January 7, 2010).

Nine years on, new short-, medium-, and intermediate-range missiles have been introduced. The DF-15B has been updated with a guided warhead and an extended range of more than 600km. Newer missiles in the DF series—the DF-12 SRBM, the DF-16 medium-range ballistic missile (MRBM) and DF-26 intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM)—have increased throw weight and range, and more accurate warheads. They therefore increase the threat, both nuclear and conventional, to potential regional adversaries. The DF-16, first revealed publicly in September 2015, has a range of over 1000km and a warhead of over 500kg, employing the same transporter-erector-launcher (TEL) as the DF-11 with a new prime mover. It is likely a replacement for the DF-11, and may employ the same warhead as the DF-15B. [2]

The PRC has also been modernizing its theater ballistic missile forces by introducing the DF-21 (CSS-5) mobile solid fuel IRBM, which was developed from China’s JL-1 submarine launched ballistic missile (SLBM). With a range of over 2,000km, the road mobile DF-21 placed large parts of Russia under nuclear threat from mobile launchers deep inside China. The DF-21D (a variant of the DF-21) and the new DF-26 further increase these capabilities. The DF-21D, introduced in 2006, may possess a maneuverable warhead and considerably increased accuracy compared to earlier systems. The DF-26 is a new missile, larger than the DF-21, and has a quoted range of between 3,000 and 4,000km. [3]



*Image: A DF-21D transporter-erector-launcher (TEL) of the PLA Rocket Force.*

*The CJ-10*

Another Chinese missile system with implications for the INF architecture is the *Chang Jian* (“Long Sword,” 长剑)-10, or CJ-10, ground launched cruise missile (GLCM). The PLARF version of the CJ-10 is identified by three long launch canisters mounted on the rear of the Chinese WS 2400 8x8 TEL, and has a reported range of between 1,500km and 2,000km. The PLA Navy (PLAN) also employs a land attack variant of the missile—the latter mounted in vertical launchers on Type 52D and Type 55 destroyers, with canister launchers employed on the Type 52C destroyers. The CJ-10 system poses a serious challenge to Russian air defense planners. The missile uses both GLONASS and GPS satellite systems for guidance, with four different types of warheads available: a heavy variant weighing 500 kg, and three 350 kg variants (high explosive blast, submunition, and earth penetrator). The CJ-10A, an updated version unveiled in 2015, possesses a 500kg warhead and a range of up to 2,500km. [4]

**Russian Views on China and the Role of Missile Forces in National Defense**

In the late Cold War period when the INF Treaty was signed in 1987, the Soviet Union oriented the bulk of its strategic missile and bomber forces against targets in the United States and NATO nations—with a large proportion of its theater ballistic missiles deployed to threaten targets in China. The strategic environment for Russia has clearly changed dramatically over the past three decades. However, despite warming relations with China—and even talk of a Sino-Russian “comprehensive strategic partnership” ([Xinhua](#), June 6)—the PRC remains a source of concern for Russian defense planners.

Russian forces have been limited in their ability to respond to a ballistic missile strike with a counter strike, short of using their strategic bomber forces or inter-continental ballistic missile systems (ICBMs). Going back as far as 2007, the lack of a credible intermediate-range strike system against China has been one of the motivating reasons behind Russian threats to withdraw from the 1987 INF Treaty ([Sputnik News](#), November 14, 2007).

The road-mobile *9K270 Iskander-M* missile system, first unveiled in 2006 and possessing a range of 400 km, has been adopted as one of the primary SRBMs employed by Russian forces. The missile has a reported range of 400km, but Russian officials have claimed that this range could be increased in excess of 500km by using a lighter weight nuclear warhead ([Sputnik News](#), November 14, 2007). Four *Iskander-M* brigades are based in Russia’s Eastern Military District (MD) bordering China, which is double the number in any other Russian MD ([The Diplomat](#), October 24, 2018).

Many of the Russian military’s other options were limited by the INF architecture: for example, the road-mobile RS-26 *Rubezh* was declared by the United States to be a breach of the treaty. (The flight tests were conducted with a light or no payload, so they breached the INF treaty as the rocket system reached

over 5,500km.) Deployment of the RS-26 has been suspended until 2027; only then will a decision be made about its deployment ([TASS](#), March 22, 2018).

In the event that Russia were to come under the threat of a Chinese missile attack, the Russians have learned from Western military experience that hunting down the TELs before they launched their missiles would be almost impossible. The Russian military does not have anywhere the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets that the Allies possessed in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, in which “The Great Scud Hunt” achieved very little tactically in an open desert environment. [5] In over 3,000 sorties conducted over Kosovo during *Operation Allied Force*, NATO aircraft succeeded in only destroying 26 tanks out of 440 in a very small geographic area. [6]

Furthermore, it is open to serious question as to whether or not the Russian military currently possesses enough deployed anti-missile systems (along with associated radars) in its order-of-battle to protect Russian air space against the plethora of Chinese theater ballistic and cruise missile systems, which are becoming both more numerous and more advanced. Current Russian ground-based defenses against ballistic and cruise missiles are centered on the in-service S-300VM, S-300PMU-1, and S-300PMU-2 *Favorit*, and the recently introduced S-400 *Triumf* surface-to-air missiles systems, all of which have an anti-ballistic missile capability. [7]

The S-300VM is reportedly capable of intercepting ballistic missiles with a range of 2,500km and re-entry speeds of 4.5km/second; whereas the S-400 is claimed to be capable of intercepting ballistic missiles with a range of 3,500 km and re-entry speeds of 4.8 to 5km/second. A system designed to intercept warheads at 5km/second has the ability to act as a point system against simple ICBM warheads, which have a typical re-entry speed of 7km/second. [8] This means the S-300VM has the potential capability to intercept the later versions of the DF-21, but in a much reduced area.

## **Conclusions**

Completely aside from Russian threat perceptions regarding the United States and NATO, concerns about China have provided Russian defense planners with reasons to doubt the INF architecture as established in 1987. China’s development and deployment of sophisticated ground-launched cruise and short-, medium-, and intermediate-range ballistic missiles has presented a potential threat to Russian territory that Moscow cannot ignore, even if Sino-Russian relations appear to be warm.

Additionally, demographic factors are also pressing the Russians to deploy nuclear-armed SRBMs and MRBMs on the border with China. The Russian side of the border is sparsely populated, with many Russians moving away and infrastructure crumbling ([Belfer Center](#), undated; [Russia Business Today](#), July 4, 2018). With Russia’s male (and primary military) population in decline, nuclear weapons offer an effective means of stopping a large-scale invasion of Siberia by Chinese forces, without the need to stage large-scale military forces along the border areas.

Based on U.S. and Russian actions taken in early 2018, the old INF architecture is a thing of the past. However, these two countries are not the only military powers with a stake in any potential future agreements regarding short-, medium-, and intermediate-range missile systems. China will have to be included in any future negotiations for a potential successor treaty to the former INF architecture. As to whether the Chinese government is prepared to become involved in any such agreement, only time will tell.

*Martin Andrew retired from the Australian Defense Force after 28 years of service and holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Bond University. His book, How the PLA Fights: Weapons and Tactics of the People's Liberation Army, is in its 5th edition.*

### Notes

[1] A ballistic missile with a maximum range less than 1,000km is classed as a short-range ballistic missile (SRBM); a medium-range ballistic missile (MRBM) has a range between 1,000km to 2,500km; and an intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) possesses a range between 2,500km to 5,500km.

[2] 'Jinian Keng Ri Zhanzheng sn hengli 70 zhounian yebing (ti) dui jianji lujun wuqi zhuangbeide ruibian'. *Tanke zhuangjia cheliang*, 2015 Niandi, 10 Qi, Zhongdi 437, p 31.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] 'Jinian Keng Ri Zhanzheng sn hengli 70 zhounian yebing (ti) dui jianji lujun wuqi zhuangbeide ruibian' *Tanke zhuangjia cheliang, op. cit.*, p. 34.

[5] Rosenau, William. *Special Operations Forces and Elusive Enemy Ground Targets: Lessons from Vietnam and the Persian Gulf War* (RAND, 2002), pp. 40 – 43.

[6] Mann, P. "NATO Arraigned For 'Strategic Miscalculation'," *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, Vol. 150, No. 8 (May 3, 1999).

[7] The NATO reporting names for these systems are: S-300 PMU-1 is SA-10D Grumble; the S-300PMU-1 is SA-20 Gargoyle; the S-400 is SA-21 Growler; and the S-300VM is SA-23 Giant/Gladiator. Performance figures for the S-300 series are from taken from 'S300VM (Antey-2500)', S-300PMU-1 Air Defence Systems and Favorit Long Range Air Defence System' in 'Air Defence Systems', *Rosobornexport Catalogue*, Rosobornexport, Moscow, 2003, pp. 10-13.

[8] Gronlund, Lisbeth; Lewis; Georhe; Postol Theodore and Wright, David. "Highly Capable Theater Missile Defenses and the ABM Treaty," *Arms Control Today*, April 1994, pp. 3 – 8.

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**Chinese Nuclear Weapons Strategy—Leaning Towards a More Proactive Posture?  
Part II: External Drivers of Potential Change—Technical-Military Developments and  
Perceptions of Credibility**

*By Toshi Yoshihara and Jack Bianchi*

*Authors' Note: This is the second part of a two-part article addressing the evolving character of Chinese strategy and policy regarding the role and potential use of nuclear weapons. The first article ([Chinese Nuclear Weapons Strategy—Leaning Towards a More Proactive Posture? Part I: Legacy Policy and Strategy, and the Drivers of Potential Change](#), June 26, 2019) used authoritative Chinese texts to identify key features of China's approach to nuclear affairs that have been resistant to radical change; it then examined some of the internal drivers that could lead to departures from well-established Chinese nuclear strategy and policy. This second part draws from Chinese open sources to assess the various external stimuli that could compel Beijing to adopt changes to its nuclear posture.*



*Image: Transporter-erector-launcher (TEL) vehicles of the PLA Rocket Force on parade in Tiananmen Square. (Source: Getty Images)*

## **Introduction**

A diverse range of external stimuli, including technological trends and geopolitical shifts, is leading the strategic community of the People's Republic of China (PRC) to reconsider existing nuclear policy, strategy, and operations. According to Chinese open sources, U.S. global conventional precision strike systems, U.S. missile defenses, and India's nuclear weapons modernization, among other threats, could shake the PRC's faith in longstanding nuclear doctrine and posture. The 2013 *Science of Military Strategy* confirms that "the

nuclear security circumstances facing China in overall terms are trending toward complexity.” [1] In response to such challenges, some Chinese analysts have proposed loosening the no-first-use policy and undertaking quantitative and qualitative improvements to China’s nuclear forces.

A departure from enduring nuclear policy and strategy may also reflect China’s growing power and sense of purpose as it seeks to reshape its surroundings and accelerate the erosion of the U.S. position in the Western Pacific. Indeed, Chinese analysts are exploring Cold War history in Europe, from which they may be drawing lessons about the vulnerabilities of U.S. extended deterrence in Asia. While it remains unclear how and to what extent Chinese nuclear strategy will advance Beijing’s expanding ambitions, the internal debates suggest that China may be increasingly inclined to adopt a more coercive nuclear strategy. [2]

### **U.S. Conventional Prompt Global Strike**

A major external driver that has shaped Chinese discourse is the pace and scale of technological change and innovation by the world’s leading military power, the United States. Chinese analysts have expressed concerns about the U.S. development of prompt global strike—a family of strike systems designed to quickly and precisely deliver conventional firepower over long ranges—for at least a decade. [3] As the National Defense University’s 2015 *Science of Military Strategy* forecasts, “Equipping conventional strategic missiles with prompt global precision-strike capabilities will become an important constituent of the strategic missile forces of major military powers.” [4] Such missiles would enable the U.S. military to rapidly destroy mobile, hardened, or deeply-buried targets, including enemy ballistic missiles, ground-based radars and sensors, anti-satellite missiles, mobile missile launchers, ships at pier-side, and parked aircraft. [5]

The most worrisome danger is that prompt global strike weaponry, including hypersonic systems, would furnish the United States the conventional means to conduct a disarming first strike against Chinese nuclear forces. The 2013 *Science of Military Strategy* warns, “Once the [prompt global strike] program becomes an actual combat capability to be used conventionally to strike our nuclear missile forces, it would place us in a reactive position, greatly influence our nuclear counterstrike capabilities, and weaken the effectiveness of our nuclear deterrence.” [6]

To deter a conventional strike against China’s nuclear forces and to mitigate the risks of such a strike, Chinese analysts have called for expanding China’s nuclear arsenal; [7] enhancing the survivability of its retaliatory forces; embarking on its own prompt global strike development; loosening the constraints of the no first use policy; [8] and even adopting a warfighting nuclear strategy. [9] All of these choices would clearly have implications for the size, composition, and readiness of current nuclear forces.

## **U.S. Missile Defense Systems**

Chinese analysts have also voiced alarm about U.S. advances in missile defense since at least the late 1980s. Their objections reached fever pitch when the U.S. military deployed the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) System on South Korean soil in mid-2017. Chinese observers believe THAAD's X-band AN/TPY-2 long-range, high-altitude radar system can peer deep into China's interior from the Korean Peninsula and potentially monitor Chinese ballistic missile launches fired from locations in North China [10] or beneath the waves of China's offshore waters. [11] Moreover, the forward positions of these sensors would enable them to track the critical stage of a missile's flight when it releases its warheads and decoys, [12] thereby undermining the penetration capabilities of Chinese nuclear forces—and more importantly, the credibility of China's second-strike deterrent. [13]

In response to the operational and strategic advantages that THAAD purportedly confers to the United States, Chinese commentators have called for responses similar to those designed to counter U.S. prompt global strike systems. One Chinese scholar urges the PLA to field “a certain numerical scale” of the DF-41 inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) armed with multiple warheads, modernize China's nuclear triad, and build up the size and striking power of its undersea nuclear forces. [14] Others have pressed for the development of hypersonic delivery vehicles to defeat U.S. missile defense systems. [15] Still others have hinted at a broader reconsideration of China's no first use policy, in addition to increasing the size and penetration capabilities of the existing ICBM force. [16]

## **India's Modernizing Nuclear Deterrent**

The PRC confronts an increasingly complex geometry of deterrence in the second nuclear age due to nuclear proliferation among rising regional powers. Chinese analysts cite India's emergence as a nuclear power as a prospective dilemma for Beijing. New Delhi's entry into the nuclear club opened up a new front along China's southern flank. [17] Moreover, India sees China, rather than Pakistan, as its primary threat and has designed its deterrent posture accordingly. [18] One Chinese study observes that the capabilities of India's long-range strategic missiles, particularly the Agni IRBM and ICBM series, far exceed the requirements of a contingency involving Pakistan and are clearly directed at China. [19] These missiles would allow India to hold at risk China's major political, economic, and industrial centers, including Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou.

To what extent India's deterrent posture will influence Chinese nuclear force modernization remains uncertain, not least because of sharp asymmetries in threat perceptions between the two antagonists. Indian strategists tend to overinflate the Chinese danger while their counterparts in China are inclined to hold a sanguine, if not condescending, attitude toward their southern neighbor. Nevertheless, given India's strategic depth, large numbers of population and industrial centers, increasingly competitive economic and technological base, and growing nuclear arsenal that the Chinese acknowledge is directed at them, Beijing will almost certainly adapt its nuclear posture in accord with developments in South Asia.

## **Chinese Research on U.S. Extended Deterrence**

Recent Chinese interest in studying extended deterrence (*yanshen weishe*, 延伸威慑) suggests that analysts are paying more attention to U.S. security guarantees in the region. Chinese analysts do not directly address Beijing's official views concerning U.S. extended deterrence; rather, they have explored Cold War history, the evolution of U.S.-NATO relations, and U.S. regional strategy. Chinese analysts have looked to the past for lessons. For example, an in-depth history of U.S. nuclear strategy in the early 1970s—written in support of a larger Chinese government-sponsored research effort on U.S. deployment of nuclear weapons in the Far East during the Cold War—examines the influence of the “Schlesinger Doctrine.” The author attributes the U.S. shift toward a limited nuclear option in part to deepening American concerns that extended deterrence to European allies under existing policies lacked credibility. [20]

Chinese commentators have explored the transatlantic debates following the Soviet introduction of SS-20 intermediate-range ballistic missiles in the late 1970s, noting the danger of decoupling that animated Western fears at the time. [21] Decoupling was premised on the idea that an exclusive nuclear threat against Europe might disincline the United States—whose territory would be spared from the Soviet theater missiles—to intervene and retaliate on behalf of its allies across the Atlantic.

Scholars have also assessed the U.S. nuclear umbrella over Europe since the end of the Cold War. [22] Still others have sought to measure the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence. [23] Notably, Sun Xun and Han Lue find that U.S. credibility is strongest in Europe when compared against American extended deterrence in Asia and the Middle East, owing to the forward presence of non-strategic nuclear weapons and formal institutional mechanisms that involve U.S. allies in decisions over the employment of nuclear weapons. Analysts have even applied game theory to examine three-way interactions between a defender, a challenger, and the challenger's third-party security guarantor—which has obvious analogies to China's present security environment. [24]

These Chinese writings implicitly illustrate the growing gap between U.S. commitments and resources in the context of extended deterrence. The literature frequently recounts the sharp reductions in U.S. forward-deployed nuclear forces during the post-Cold War period, including deep cuts in Europe, the unilateral withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons, including those in South Korea, in 1991, and the decision to retire nuclear-armed Tomahawk land-attack cruise missiles in 2010. Chinese analysts also highlight the contentious debates about the declining utility of nuclear weapons that have sown division within the United States and among its allies since the 1990s drawdown. Yet, as the Chinese point out, regional aggression and proliferation over the past decade have made deterrence and reassurance ever more urgent and problematic. [25]

Chinese open sources to date are silent on how Beijing might exploit the dilemmas of U.S. extended deterrence, but they demonstrate a keen recognition that Cold War-era concerns may become ever more relevant as China's own theater-range capabilities grow in size and capability. Since China may be seeking to undermine extended deterrence in Asia and perhaps use decoupling as the tool with which to break the chains of the U.S. alliance structure, Beijing's views of extended deterrence may be an area worthy of closer attention in the coming years

### **Conclusions: Leaning Toward Change**

The degree to which China's nuclear policy and strategy will stay the course or depart from established practices rests on a complex mix of external and internal sources of competition. Trends in the security environment, including technological breakthroughs by leading military powers, can impel change and encourage decision-makers to test the limits of their self-imposed constraints. Strong evidence exists that advocates for nuclear modernization have seized on such external developments to justify their own agendas, highlighting the interplay between external events and domestic actors that could spur a reassessment of existing procedures and thinking.

Indeed, while worries about U.S. and Indian intentions and capabilities expressed in the literature are undoubtedly real, other institutional, bureaucratic, and elite motivations less visible to outside observers may also be at work. For example, Chinese leaders may be more inclined to adopt changes in nuclear strategy in order to shape the external environment in ways that better reflect Beijing's perceived newfound status and that accommodate China's growing power and ambitions. The combined full weight of these domestic and external factors strongly indicates that the decades-old limits that have characterized Chinese nuclear thinking are likely to give way to a more proactive nuclear policy and strategy with a more flexible posture and capability.

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