



VOLUME 25 • ISSUE 7 • APRIL 12, 2025

IN THIS ISSUE:

The PRC's 'Window of Opportunity' With Europe

By Arran Hope.....pp.2-6

He Weidong's Possible Downfall and Xi's Trust Deficit With the PLA

By K. Tristan Tang.....pp.7-12

'Strait Thunder-2025A' Drill Implies Future Increase in PLA Pressure on Taiwan

By Tai-yuan Yang and K. Tristan Tang.....pp.13-21

PLA Perceptions of and Reactions to U.S. Military Activities in Low Earth Orbit

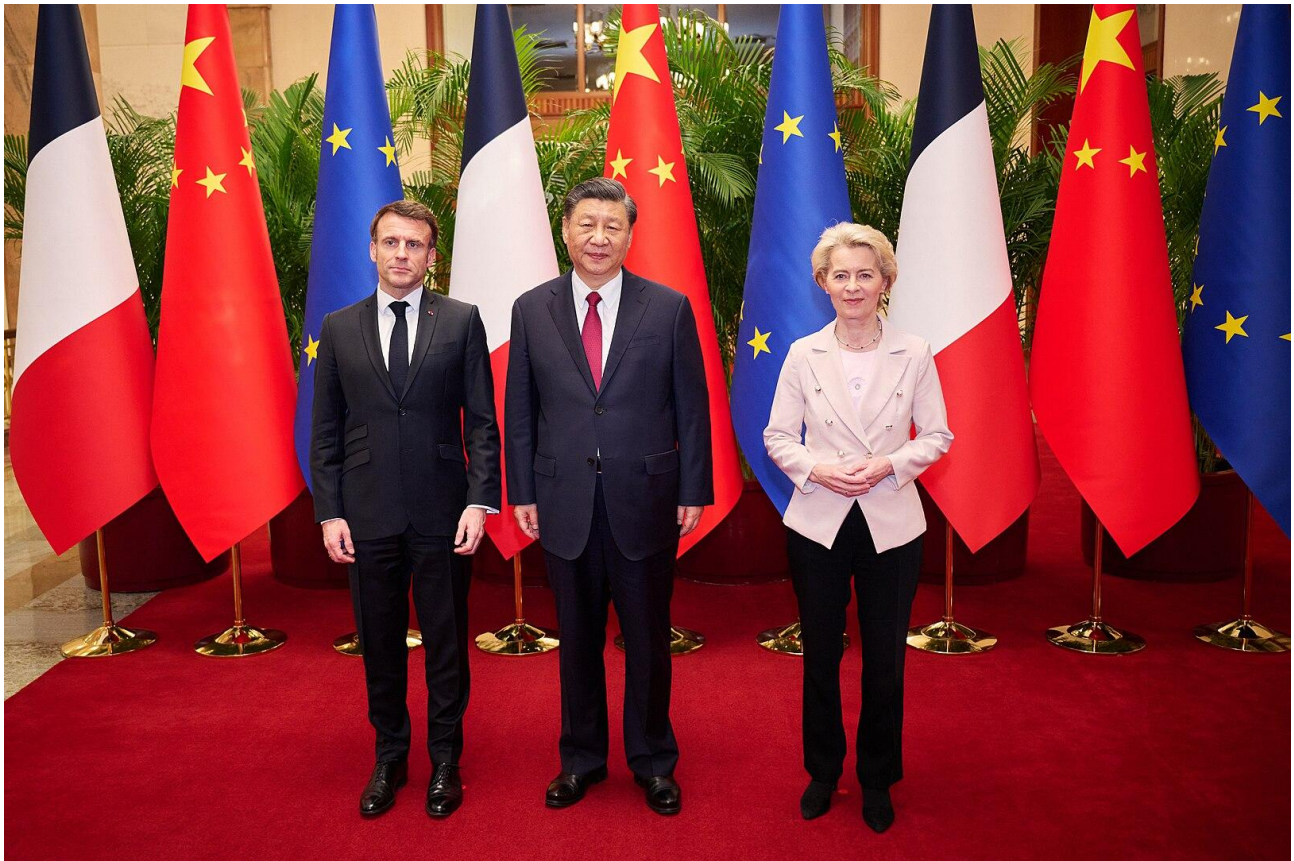
By Jackson Smith and Cristina Garafola.....pp.22-28

Behind the Fleet: The PLAN Reviews Logistics Development in the 13th Five-Year Plan

By Conor Kennedy.....pp.29-35

The PRC Sees 'Window of Opportunity' With Europe

By Arran Hope



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, French President Emmanuel Macron and Chinese leader Xi Jinping in Beijing, China, 6 April 2023. (Source: Wikipedia)

Executive Summary:

- Beijing sees a strategic window of opportunity to drive a wedge between the United States and Europe and improve its economic and trading relationship with the European Union.
- Officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Party's International Department have used a number of bilateral channels in the last two months to encourage European interlocutors to promote Beijing's preferences at the European level.
- Some experts in the People's Republic of China are skeptical that Beijing can successfully persuade Europe to pivot away from the United States but nevertheless view attempting to do so as a worthwhile course of action.
- Certain statements from senior EU officials and other EU member-state politicians indicate a willingness to entertain Beijing's overtures.

“A certain strategic window” (一定的战略窗口期). That is how two scholars describe the opportunity for the People’s Republic of China (PRC) to deepen its ties with Europe amid current tensions with the United States. The argument comes from an article published in the journal *World Affairs* (世界知识) in which the authors—one of whom runs the Centre for European Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai—write that the international system is “undergoing the most profound strategic transformation since the collapse of the bipolar pattern” (正经历着自两极格局瓦解以来最深刻的战略转型). They suggest that the PRC and Europe might be able to get over their “values barrier” (价值观藩篱) and use their economic and trade exchanges as “ballast” (压舱石) to help alleviate Europe’s current crisis ([World Affairs](#), April 1).

This view is one of many currently being debated within the PRC system, but it has traction. Some more measured voices in the PRC’s academic community evince doubts about the Beijing’s ability to capitalize on this perceived opportunity. However, there is little disagreement over whether or not this strategy should be pursued. A survey of high-level statements and bilateral talking points between the PRC and European governments and the European Union (EU) indicate that Beijing has intensified its long-running attempts to divide the continent’s democracies from the United States. From the European side, certain reported statements suggest a degree of receptivity to these overtures.

Beijing Pushes Message to EU via Member States

The tone for Beijing’s approach to Europe was set by President Xi Jinping in a January 15 call with European Council President António Costa—the week before Donald Trump was inaugurated and almost three months prior to the White House’s series of tariff announcements were made. In the readout published by the *People’s Daily*, Xi made three key points. First, that the PRC has always recognized Europe as an important pole in a multipolar world and supports the strategic autonomy of the European Union; second, that the PRC and Europe have no fundamental conflicts of interest or geopolitical contradictions and are partners that can contribute to each other’s successes; and third, that the tougher and more complicated the international situation is, the more the PRC and Europe must “uphold the original spirit of establishing diplomatic relations” (秉持建交初心). The readout adds that Costa agreed the two “should cooperate rather than compete” (应当合作而不是竞争) ([People’s Daily](#), January 15).

This approach to relations with Europe has been echoed by two sets of officials in the weeks and months since the Xi-Costa call: those from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including PRC ambassadors to European countries, and top officials from the International Department of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee in their meetings with European politicians. **[1]**

A common theme that stands out in bilateral communications is Beijing’s attempt to persuade its interlocutors to advocate on the PRC’s behalf at the European level. For instance, in his meeting with France’s ambassador to the PRC Bertrand Lortholary, Liu Jianchao (刘建超), the head of the International Department, said, “France is an important member of the European Union, and we hope that France will play an active role in the EU and promote the development of China-EU relations” (法国是欧盟重要成员国，希望法在欧盟内发挥积极作用，推动中欧关系向好发展) ([International Department \[ID\]](#), March 21). Liu has made a similar argument to the Portuguese Foreign Minister Paulo Rangel (“China is willing to strengthen multilateral

cooperation with the Portuguese side to promote the development of China-EU relations” (中方愿同葡方加强多边协作, 推动中欧关系发展)), to the Finns (“I hope that the Finnish side will play an active role in promoting the healthy and stable development of China-EU relations”), and to the Czech Communist Party (“I hope that the Czech side correctly views and will play a positive role in ... developing China-European relations” (希望捷方正确看待并为推动 ... 中欧关系发展发挥积极作用)) (ID, [February 18](#), [March 25](#); [April 7](#)). Some interlocutors—according to International Department readouts—appear happy to advance the Party’s wishes. Member of the European Parliament Barry Cowen “expressed his willingness to make positive efforts to promote the European Parliament’s understanding of and engagement with China” in a meeting with the PRC ambassador to Ireland; while Rangel told Liu that Portugal is “ready to contribute to the development of ... Europe-China relations” (愿为欧中关系 ... 发展作出努力) ([FMPRC](#), March 8; [ID](#), March 25).

Several ambassadors published op-eds in March to spread this message more widely among European populations. Ambassador to Cyprus Liu Yantao (刘彦涛) wrote an article in *Cyprus Mail* declaring that the PRC is “willing to work with Cyprus and the EU to set an example in upholding multilateralism” ([Embassy of PRC to Cyprus](#), March 20). Feng Biao (冯飏), Beijing’s man in Prague, wrote that the PRC is “willing to join hands with Europe to jointly safeguard the trade and economic order” (愿与欧洲携手共同维护经贸秩序) ([Embassy of PRC in Czech](#), March 24). Other op-eds, such as those from the head of the PRC mission to the EU and the PRC’s Consul General in Belfast, criticize Washington’s actions while promoting Beijing as a reliable and stable partner (FMPRC, [March 25](#), [March 28](#)).

While the PRC is pushing European partners to advocate for its interests at the local level, it is doing the same with the EU’s leadership, as well as pushing the EU to support its efforts at the global level. Some of this involves a degree of diplomatic flattery. When Liu Jianchao received Niclas Kvarnström, Managing Director for Asia and the Pacific for the European External Action Service, in Beijing, he described the PRC and Europe as “two leading global powers” (中欧作为全球两大力量) ([ID](#), February 12). Similarly, Premier Li Qiang (李强), in a call with President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, described the PRC and the EU as “each other’s most important trading partners” (彼此最重要的贸易伙伴) ([People’s Daily](#), April 9). This latter characterization is not true—the United States remains Europe’s largest trading partner ([European Commission](#), accessed April 11). PRC Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Fu Cong (傅聪) has also stated that the PRC has confidence in the EU, hopes that it will become a reliable partner, and is ready to work with the EU and its member states to deepen cooperation in the UN and other multilateral fora ([FMPRC](#), March 11).

EU Appears Open to PRC Trade Demands

PRC academics and experts are undecided about the prospects for success in the PRC’s overtures to Europe. In the *World Affairs* article cited above, the two authors admit that, even if practical and pragmatic cooperation can be expanded to the fields of trade and economics, climate, digital and related economic governance, there is a ceiling to potential cooperation with the EU “due to the ‘de-risking’ mentality of the European side” (囿于欧方“去风险”思维). Moreover, they argue that history has also repeatedly proved that such strategic windows “ultimately fail to change Europe’s strategic dependence on the United States on the core issues” (最

终未能改变欧洲在核心议题上对美的战略依附)。This view is shared by others, such as Chief China Economist at Morgan Stanley Robin Xing (邢自强), who said this week that European concerns about PRC surplus capacity flooding into their markets was “somewhat reasonable” (具有一定合理性) and could lead these countries to roll out more protectionist policies ([WeChat/China Macroeconomic Forum CMF](#), April 10). This still leaves significant space for gains in the PRC’s trade relationship with Europe, however.

As other experts argue, Beijing should still do its best to leverage countries’ negative perceptions of U.S. actions to improve its own terms of trade with Europe. For example, Zhao Hao (赵浩), a professor of management at China Europe International Business School (CEIBS), argues that the PRC “should make good relations with other traditional export markets to let them know the importance of the Chinese market and not to easily side with the United States” (中国应该和其他传统出口市场搞好关系，让它们知道中国市场的重要性，别轻易站到美国一边) ([CEIBS](#), April 7). Peking University Professor Huang Yiping and semiconductor specialist Gu Wenjun (顾文军) have made similar arguments ([WeChat/ICWise Research](#), April 8; [Project Syndicate](#), April 11). Meanwhile, influential blogger Ren Yi (任意; aka Chairman Rabbit (兔主席)) has noted that Beijing is already pursuing such discussions. As he says, “the next step should be to actively and widely ‘launch an attack’” (下一步需要主动的、广泛“出击”) ([WeChat/Chairman Rabbit](#), April 10; [Sinification](#), April 10).

Beijing may already be making headway on trade. Ever since Trump was inaugurated, observers have warned that Europe could be preparing to pivot toward the PRC, citing a softening of von der Leyen’s speech at the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos. Language was added at the last minute on using the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations as “an opportunity to engage and deepen our relationship with China—and where possible even to expand our trade and investment ties”—language that was reiterated the following week by European Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security Maroš Šefčovič ([GME](#), February 4). Since then, Šefčovič has repeated this desire to deepen economic and trade cooperation with the PRC with both Vice Premier He Lifeng (何立峰) and Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao (王文涛) ([People’s Daily](#), March 28; [MOFCOM](#), April 10). In the latter call, Šefčovič even agreed to “immediately ... start negotiations on price commitments for electric vehicles” (双方同意尽快 ... 立即开展电动汽车价格承诺谈判，以及讨论中欧汽车产业投资合作问题), according to the PRC readout.

Conclusion

The PRC’s is seeking to persuade European countries and the EU that it is a reliable partner, offering certainty in an uncertain world. It sees Washington’s current trade policies as providing a strategic opportunity to double down on this narrative, while also depicting itself as a defender of multilateralism and international order. **[2]**

At the same time, indicators of Beijing’s hubris vis-à-vis the EU undermines its careful diplomatic overtures. As Premier Li Qiang admonished von der Leyen in their call, the PRC is “fully capable of hedging against adverse external influences, and it is full of confidence in maintaining the sustained and healthy development of its own economy” (完全能够对冲外部不利影响，对保持自身经济持续健康发展充满信心) ([People’s Daily](#), April 9). This attitude is also clear in Xi’s decision to snub Brussels, declining the EU’s invitation to a 50th anniversary summit in July and breaking with protocol in the process ([Reuters](#), March 16).

ChinaBrief • Volume 25 • Issue 7 • April 12, 2025

Analysts have long advised that it is better to judge Beijing not by its words but by its actions. For an economy seeking to stabilize its own economy by seeking markets to absorb its industrial surplus, the EU is a prime destination, and the likely motivation behind the recent ramping up of diplomatic engagement. The EU may see the United States as source of enormous uncertainty, but it must think critically about the kind of certainty the PRC offers.

The author would like to thank Peace Ajirotutu for her assistance with the research for this article.

Arran Hope is the editor of China Brief.

Notes

[1] The International Department, also known as the International Liaison Department, is a Party organization that advances the CCP's foreign policy and helps to cultivate foreign politicians. It was originally set up to manage relations with overseas communist parties.

[2] This narrative is even reflected in internet memes, such as one shared by a PRC commentator and captioned: "European friends, we got this!" ([X/@robert_baiguan](#), April 7).

He Weidong's Possible Downfall and Xi's Trust Deficit With the PLA

By K. Tristan Tang



Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission He Weidong. (Source: [Ministry of National Defense](#))

Executive Summary:

- Central Military Commission Vice Chairman He Weidong's absence from an important public event, one attended by all Politburo members except him, suggests that he is either seriously ill or under investigation. The latter possibility would suggest that Xi Jinping may have lost confidence in him.
- He Weidong is responsible for overseeing the military's political and disciplinary affairs, but his personnel management and promotion recommendations since the 20th Party Congress in October 2022 have raised significant issues. Many key generals, upon promotion, were found to have corruption problems.
- He Weidong came up through the Nanjing Military Region, as did recently purged senior officials Tang Yong and Miao Hua. Xi Jinping may view their rise as containing elements of factionalism and cronyism, likely contributing to a loss of trust in He Weidong.
- Xi's wider distrust is evident in the removal of Li Ganjie from his role overseeing personnel for the Party and government.
- If He Weidong has been purged, the PLA does not have suitable candidates within its ranks to replace him.

As early as March 13, reports began to suggest that He Weidong (何卫东), a vice chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), had come under investigation following the big annual political gatherings in Beijing known as the “Two Sessions” ([The Epoch Times](#), March 14). The *Financial Times*, citing five people familiar with the matter, reported on April 10 confirming He’s removal ([Financial Times](#), April 10). This reporting followed He’s absence from the Central Conference on Work Related to Neighboring Countries (中央周边工作会议), held from April 8–9. This event was attended by all other members of the Politburo, as well as senior three-star generals on the CMC, including CMC Vice Chairman Zhang Youxia, Secretary of the Discipline Inspection Commission Zhang Shengmin (张升民), Minister of National Defense Dong Jun (董军), Director of the Equipment Development Department Xu Xueqiang (许学强), Deputy Chief of the Joint Staff Department Xu Qiling (徐起零), and Deputy Director of the Political Work Department He Hongjun (何宏军) ([CCTV](#), April 9). (See Figure 1).

He Weidong has not made any public appearances since the Two Sessions and has been absent from key events. Although he still appears in the official list of Politburo members on Xinhua’s website and the government has yet to release any related information, his absence raises the possibility that, barring major illness, he is under investigation. Alternatively, as the *Financial Times* report suggests, He Weidong may have been suspended or removed from his position already ([Xinhua](#), accessed April 10).

Figure 1: Senior Three-Star Generals of the CMC Attend the Central Conference on Work Related to Neighboring Countries



(Source: Compilation by the author based on CCTV video)

Unusual Silence Surrounds Supposedly Loyal He

Two details make the alleged investigation into He Weidong appear unusual. The first is his apparent loyalty to Xi Jinping. The two men have a history of interactions that dates back to Xi’s tenure in Fujian and Zhejiang provinces ([Asia Society](#), October 27, 2022). His loyalty can be inferred from public statements that he has made;

specifically from references to the “CMC Chairperson Responsibility System” (军委主席负责制)—a slogan that underscores Xi’s complete control over the military—in remarks delivered at the Two Sessions. He Weidong has used this phrase consistently since he joined the CMC in 2023 ([State Council Information Office](#), November 10, 2021). [1] A review of statements dating back to 2021 shows that CMC members previously removed from the commission, including Miao Hua (苗华) and Li Shangfu (李尚福), did not always mention the “CMC Chairperson Responsibility System.” This sets He apart from many other senior generals on the CMC and demonstrates a high degree of public loyalty to Xi, loyalty that presumably led Xi to trust him enough to promote him to his current position. (See Table 1).

Table 1: Mentions of the Chairman’s Responsibility System by 20th Party Congress CMC Members in Their Two Sessions Speeches

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Zhang Youxia	X	X	✓	✓	X
He Weidong	Promoted to the CMC at the 20th Party Congress in 2022.		✓	✓	✓
Li Shangfu			X	Announced under investigation on August 31, 2023.	
Liu Zhenli			✓	✓	X
Miao Hua	✓	X	✓	Absent from the 2024 Two Sessions and announced to be under investigation in November 2024.	
Zhang Shengmin	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

(Source: Compilation by the author based on Xinhua news report)

The severity of He Weidong’s suspected investigation, which appears to surpass that of Li Shangfu and Miao Hua, is the second unusual detail. For instance, part of Li Shangfu’s investigation took place publicly, including a public call for leads ([Lianhe Zaobao](#), July 29, 2023; [Xinhua](#), June 27, 2024). Miao Hua, despite missing the Two Sessions, reappeared to participate in an annual tree planting event on April 1, 2024, before being suspended later that year. By contrast, silence surrounds He’s case, and he was absent from this year’s tree planting event (PLA Daily, [April 2, 2024](#), [April 3](#)). This could indicate that the government either is handling his investigation with a high level secrecy or may not be seeking extensive concrete evidence for its case against him. Miao and Li were placed under “suspension for investigation” (停职检查) rather than being “expelled from the military” (开除军籍) or having their rank revoked ([Xinhua](#), November 28, 2024). It is possible He could face the latter, more serious consequence.

Xi May Have Lost Trust in He

A loss of trust in He Weidong’s ability to manage the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) generals is the primary reason Xi may have removed him. He Weidong’s responsibilities likely include managing political affairs and discipline. [2] However, under his management, the number of PLA generals being investigated or removed for disciplinary violations or otherwise breaking the law since the 20th Party Congress has been high—even

after a decade-long anti-corruption campaign within the PLA. Many of the affected generals had been promoted to key positions during He's tenure, raising concerns about the personnel management and promotion system he oversaw. For instance, Li Zhizhong (李志忠), who was removed as a National People's Congress (NPC) representative in February 2024, was previously promoted to lieutenant general as the deputy commander of the Central Theater Command in May 2023 ([Xinhua](#), February 27, 2024; [HKTkww](#), March 4, 2024). Similarly, Li Pengcheng (李鹏程), who lost his position as an NPC representative in December 2024, had been promoted to vice admiral and the commander of the Southern Theater Command Navy in 2024 ([NPC](#), December 25, 2024; [RFI](#), December 25, 2024).

Figure 2: Recent PLA Senior Generals Attending the National Inspection Work Conference



(Source: Compilation by the author based on CCTV video)

The most serious case may be that of Tang Yong (唐勇), as it could suggest that a “He Weidong” faction was gaining momentum within the military’s disciplinary apparatus. Tang, like He Weidong (and also the recently purged Miao Hua), had served in the Nanjing Military Region (now the Eastern Theater Command) from the 1990s to the 2000s, specifically in the military court. In December 2023, Tang was promoted to lieutenant general and became the Deputy Secretary of the CMC Discipline Inspection Commission. His appointment aroused suspicion due to the unusual treatment of his predecessor, Chen Guoqiang (陈国强). Chen, despite appearing publicly in September 2024 as the political commissar of the National University of Defense Technology (NUDT), remains listed as a member of the Standing Committee of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI). His transfer to NUDT could be seen as a demotion, as his role there was

previously held by a major general—a lower rank than Chen’s ([Caixin](#), September 29, 2024). Since Chen has retained his position on the CCDI, he likely has not been found guilty of corruption; however, Chen’s reassignment suggests that his superiors may have sought to undermine or punish him. He Weidong may have been the man behind this reassignment. If so, his subsequent promotion of Tang Yong could be seen as an attempt to place a trusted ally in charge of a key position in the military discipline apparatus. This appearance of factionalism and favoritism—whether valid or not—may have caused Xi Jinping to lose trust in He Weidong. The revocation of Tang’s membership to the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, the PRC’s top political advisory body, could be one indication of this ([Xinhua](#), March 26; [Lianhe Zaobao](#), March 27; [Mingpao](#), March 28). Tang has likely been removed from his position, as another lieutenant general, Zhou Jianxin (周建新), recently attended a National Inspection Work Conference (全国巡视工作会议) that Tang previously attended, as shown in Figure 2 ([CCTV](#), April 8).

Xi’s Quest for Loyalists Managing Personnel

He Weidong’s current situation remains unknown. However, the hypothesis that Xi Jinping lost trust in He and has placed him under investigation is plausible. It also fits with a broader but related phenomenon, namely, Xi’s low level of confidence in his senior military officers, as evidenced by his willingness to pay attention to the opinions of lower-ranking officers during his participation in the PLA delegation at the Two Sessions, a departure from his previous focus on high-ranking officials ([China Brief](#), March 15). This, in turn, is related to Xi’s growing paranoia beyond the military system.

On April 2, reports surfaced that the former head of the Central Organization Department, Li Ganjie (李干杰), and the former head of the United Front Work Department, Shi Taifeng (石泰峰), were publicly reassigned to each other’s positions ([12371](#), April 2; [Xinhua](#), April 2). This occurred in the context of ongoing corruption issues across the Party and government, which suggests the switch may have been prompted by Li Ganjie’s inability to effectively manage personnel. The announcement on April 8 that Li Gang (李刚), the head of the Central Organization Department’s Discipline Inspection and Supervision Group, is under investigation supports this theory—Li Gang has only been in this role since January 2024 ([The Paper](#), January 30, 2024; [People’s Daily](#), April 8). Disciplinary oversight in the Central Organization Department is an enormously sensitive portfolio, yet it was assigned to someone with a corruption problem under Li Ganjie’s watch. The installation of Shi, a politburo member who served as the vice president of the Party School of the Central Committee from 2007–2010 (when Xi Jinping was its president), likely means that Xi now has a trusted ally in this crucial position ([12371](#), May 22, 2013; [Xinhua](#), October 25, 2017).

The overhaul of officials responsible for personnel changes that has occurred since the 20th Party Congress is connected to Xi’s consolidation of power. During the 18th Party Congress, Xi’s control over personnel was limited. After the 19th Party Congress in 2017, his confidants took key roles, including Chen Xi (陈希) as the head of the Organization Department and Zhang Youxia as the vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission in charge of politics. [3] This may have led Xi to treat them with particular favor. For example, even after Chen stepped down from the Politburo, he continued to serve as president of the Party School. At the same time, Zhang Youxia remains on the Politburo despite being past the conventional retirement age. Zhang has also been unaffected by recent investigations into the equipment development department, which he led from 2012–2017 ([Global Times](#), March 2; [SCMP](#), October 23, 2022). However, it was only after the 20th Party Congress that all members of the Politburo Standing Committee came from Xi Jinping’s faction ([China](#)

[Leadership Monitor](#), December 1, 2022). Without non-Xi figures such as Li Keqiang (李克强) among the top leadership, Xi likely believed personnel arrangements could be made without resistance, avoiding any compromise that could lead to lingering issues. Therefore, Xi Jinping may view the ongoing personnel management issues within the Party, government, and military systems after the 20th Party Congress as due to what he perceives as incompetence from He Weidong and Li Ganjie. Additionally, He and Li do not share the same special relationship with Xi Jinping as Chen Xi and Zhang Youxia, so Xi could remove them from their posts without concerns about personal ties.

He Weidong's likely downfall poses a deeper personnel problem for Xi, however. Within the PLA, only Zhang Youxia shares He Weidong's rank; Miao Hua is under investigation; and Zhang Shengmin does not hold a Central Committee position. No one else would likely have the sufficient rank and experience to take on He's role and manage PLA personnel effectively.

K. Tristan Tang is a research associate at the Research Project on China's Defense Affairs and a member of the Pacific Forum's Young Leaders Program. His research focuses on China's defense industry, the People's Liberation Army, and Chinese foreign policy. You can connect with him on X: @KTristanTang.

Notes

[1] This phrase calls for the military to “follow Chairman Xi's command, be accountable to Chairman Xi, and ensure Chairman Xi's peace of mind,” and it was even described in an article by *Qiushi* magazine as a key condition for ensuring the PLA follows the Party's leadership ([Qiushi](#), December 1, 2022; [Xinhua](#), July 20, 2023).

[2] This is indicated by his public schedule. For example, he has attended events such as a seminar for senior military cadres on the spirit of the 20th Party Congress and an expanded meeting of the CMC Discipline Inspection Committee (*Xinhua*, [December 7, 2022](#), [January 10](#)).

[3] Chen was Xi's roommate at Tsinghua University, and Zhang Youxia shares close family ties with Xi—both men's fathers fought together prior to the founding of the PRC ([Brookings](#), September 18, 2017; [CPC News](#), May 26, 2015; [SCMP](#), November 3, 2017).

‘Strait Thunder-2025A’ Drill Implies Future Increase in PLA Pressure on Taiwan

By Tai-yuan Yang and K. Tristan Tang



PLA Navy ship participating in the ‘Strait Thunder-2025A’ drill. (Source: China Military Online)

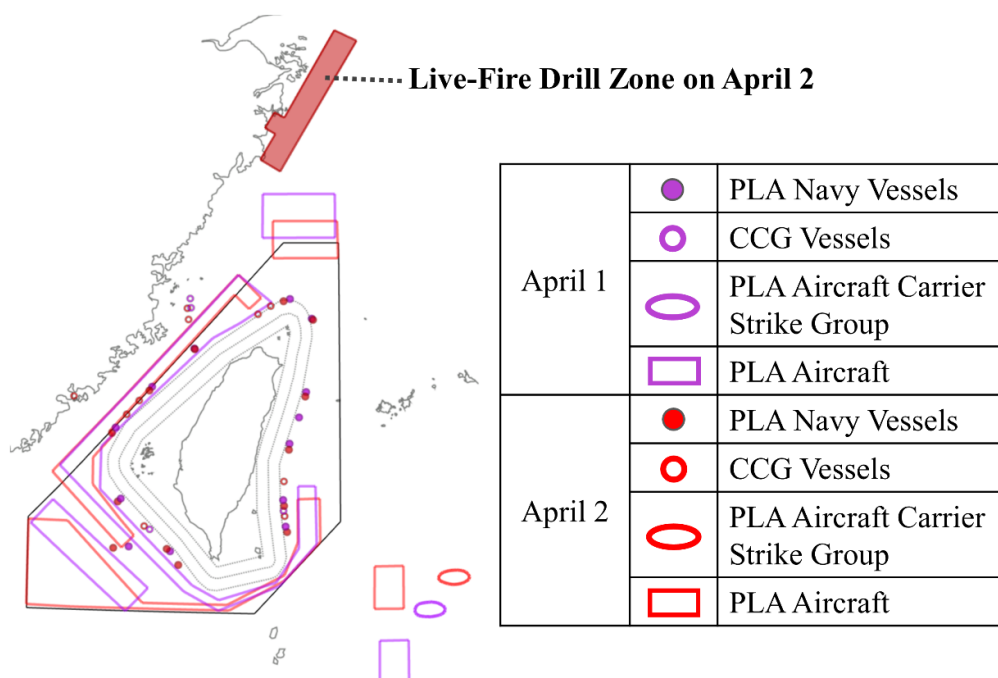
Executive Summary:

- People’s Liberation Army (PLA) operations against Taiwan on April 1–2 consisted of multiple drills that had limited interconnection, distinguishing them from exercises that tend to be more complex and confrontational.
- Recent training reforms have meant that drills now tend to involve more cross-service coordination and are likely to match the scale of military exercises. The “Strait Thunder-2025A” drill is evidence of this trend, as its scale is comparable to past “Joint Sword” exercises.
- “Strait Thunder-2025A” exhibited a new focus on chokepoint control with the emergence of a dual-layer “Cabbage Strategy,” in which an inner circle of maritime militia, coast guard, and naval forces surrounds Taiwan while a separate outer circle harrasses foreign military forces.
- The name of the drill, “Strait Thunder-2025A,” suggests that the PLA is likely to conduct additional such drills this year. It also hints that future exercises could exceed the scale of previous Joint Sword military exercises.

On April 1, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Eastern Theater Command announced a joint training drill (联合演训) around Taiwan. The next day, it declared the initiation of the “Strait Thunder-2025A Drill” (海峡雷霆-2025A 演练) (Xinhua, [April 1](#), [April 2](#)). According to data from Taiwan’s Ministry of National Defense, over the course of these two days, the PLA deployed 135 aircraft, 38 naval vessels, and 12 official vessels in the surrounding area.

Strait Thunder-2025A was a routine large-scale training drill. The PLA has conducted such activities with increasing frequency in recent years and, as indicated by the “A” in the drill’s title, will continue to do so in the near future. The scope of military activities during the recent drill is depicted in Figure 1 (Ministry of National Defense, [April 2](#), [April 3](#); LTN, [April 1](#), [April 2](#)). Numerous reports and analyses have focused on the strategic or political considerations behind the PLA’s military actions, as well as the logic behind the naming of the operations ([CNN](#), April 1; CNA, [April 1](#), [April 2](#); [Global Times](#), April 2; [The Guardian](#), April 2). However, few have examined the military implications of these actions themselves.

Figure 1: PLA Military Activities Around Taiwan From April 1 to April 2



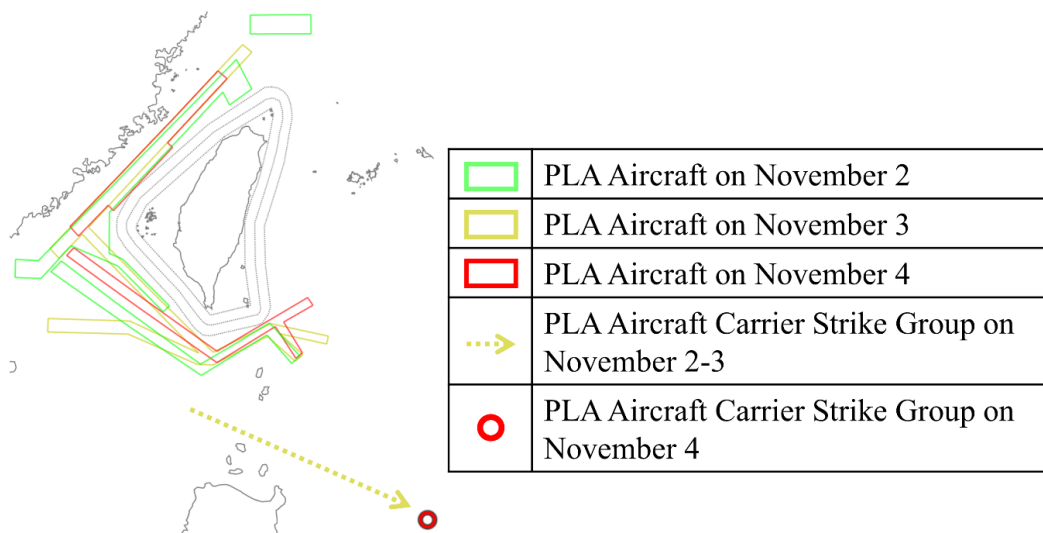
(Source: Compilation by authors based on press releases from ROC MND and PRC Maritime Safety Administration)

Strait Thunder-2025A: A Drill, not an Exercise

The PLA’s Chinese-language press releases described the recent military activities as a “training drill” (演训) and a “drill” (演练). The headline of Xinhua’s first article on April 1 used the term “joint training drill” (联合演训), and the content referred to it as a “drill” ([Xinhua](#), April 1). On April 2, Xinhua’s press release announcing “Strait Thunder-2025A” also used the term “drill” in both the headline and the content ([Xinhua](#), April 2).

There is a clear distinction between a “drill” and an “exercise” in Chinese military terminology. According to the *Chinese People’s Liberation Army Military Terms* (中国人民解放军军语), a “drill” (演练) refers to an activity that simulates the process or specific parts of military operations or other military actions under certain rules and scenario-induced conditions and typically is organized by a small number of directing and coordinating personnel. Drills are usually used for training squad-level (分队) personnel. In contrast, an “exercise” (演习) is an operation or action drill conducted by troops under the organization of an “exercise director department” (导演部) and under scenario-induced conditions (i.e., adjusting scenarios based on the exercise’s progress and real-time developments). [1] As this suggests, the main difference between a drill and an exercise lies in the presence of the latter with an exercise director department and in the number of personnel involved in “directing and coordinating” (导调) the event. The exercise director department is a temporary organization responsible for planning and organizing military exercises. It provides guidance and control over the exercise, including directing, inspecting, adjudicating, evaluating, and collecting data on the participating forces. Under this definition, drills are also typically carried out entirely according to plan; only exercises may involve the introduction of ad hoc scenarios or the presence of an opposing force. This is because the exercise director department is required to provide the directing and coordinating personnel needed to manage such complex activities.

Figure 2: PLA Activities, November 2–4, 2024



(Source: Compilation by authors based on press releases from ROC MND and Japan’s Ministry of Defense Joint Staff)

The PLA’s military actions around Taiwan on April 1–2 do indeed appear to have been a series of drills, as official coverage claimed. They consisted of various discrete training activities with minimal connection between them, thus falling short of the complexity associated with an exercise. For instance, the aircraft activities during this drill did not reflect a realistic combat scenario. PLA aircraft crossed the Bashi Channel into the Western Pacific, including at least one H-6 bomber equipped with an air-launched anti-ship YJ-21 missile, according to footage released by the PLA ([Global Times](#), April 1). Subsonic aircraft like the H-6 would

struggle to safely traverse this route in an actual combat scenario, which likely explains why such patterns did not occur during the three Joint Sword exercises in 2023–2024 ([China Brief](#), November 1, 2024). The April drill also exhibited activities similar to those that occurred during other non-exercise periods. For instance, on November 2–3, 2024, PLA aircraft also crossed the Bashi Channel and flew east into the Western Pacific for drills, while the Shandong Carrier Strike Group also entered the Western Pacific from the waters between Taiwan and the Philippines before returning to the South China Sea after November 4 ([Ministry of Defense](#), November 5, 2024; Ministry of National Defense, [November 3, 2024](#), [November 4, 2024](#), [November 5, 2024](#); [RW News](#), November 1, 2024). (See Figure 2).

The actions of the Shandong Carrier Strike Group during Strait Thunder-2025A also support the assessment that it was a drill, not an exercise. It did not serve as a mock enemy but instead focused on the PLA's own regional control training. According to PRC state media, the carrier group conducted joint ship-aircraft coordination, regional air dominance, and strikes against sea and land targets in the Western Pacific ([Xinhua](#), April 2). The aircraft that flew out of the Bashi Channel did not head toward the carrier group but instead moved north, operating in the waters east of Taiwan, as shown in Figure 1 (Ministry of National Defense, [April 2](#); [April 3](#)). This differs significantly from the activities in early November 2024.

The actions of the artillery element further support this assessment, as demonstrated by the live-fire drills conducted by the Eastern Theater Command's ground forces off the coast of Zhejiang Province. Although PRC state media reported that the live-fire drills were part of the overall operation, they did not take place in the vicinity of Taiwan, reinforcing the notion that the activities were simply an independent drill of its specific objectives, as shown in Figure 1 ([Maritime Safety Administration](#), April 1; [Xinhua](#), April 2). [2]

Drill Focused on Control of Key Areas and Chokepoints

The drill had three observable features that are worthy of analysis. These were its large scale, unusual level of complexity for a drill, and focus on seizing control of key areas and chokepoints.

The scale of this drill rivaled that of past large-scale exercises targeting Taiwan, as is clear from a comparison of the number of aerial sorties and naval vessels involved (see Table 1). This is a departure from earlier drills, which typically involved training for single units or small-scale operations—well below the scope of exercises ([China Aerospace Studies Institute](#), October 25, 2021). The drill primarily involved an aircraft carrier group, a large number of naval and air forces, aircraft flying to the Philippine Sea, and live-fire exercises by the Eastern Theater Command along the PRC coast. Similar activities have occurred at least four times since 2022, specifically in May 2022, July 2024, September 2024, and November 2024 (see Figure 3 and Table 2). The most recent drill was larger in scale than any of these four previous drills.

The unusual scale of this drill is in part a function of its complexity, which involved simultaneous land, sea, and air operations—something that was not the case for the four previous drills. This reflects the PLA's increased emphasis in recent years on cross-unit and multi-service participation in its training. In 2020, General Secretary Xi Jinping highlighted the need to accelerate the development of a new military training system during the Central Military Commission's military training conference (中央军委军事训练会议) ([Xinhua](#), November 25, 2020). In 2023, the PLA held an on-site conference on basic training (全军基础训练现场会) at which it announced plans to accelerate innovations in basic training methods, including instituting intensified training

by breaking down unit boundaries and conducting basic training across units ([Xinhua](#), June 21, 2023; [PLA Daily](#), July 10, 2024). In 2024, the PLA convened an on-site conference on combined training (全军合成训练现场会), declaring its intent to explore new models for combined training with a focus on establishing cross-service and cross-branch training ([People's Daily](#), October 23, 2024; PLA Daily, [December 2, 2024](#), [December 5, 2024](#)). As a result of this shift, training or drills now focus on integration across services and branches. The push for more integration also means that drills can occur on a similar scale to exercises. The crucial difference between the two, however, may remain the distinction over whether a maneuver involves complex scenarios or ad hoc operational directives.

Table 1: Recent Large-Scale PLA Exercises and Drills Targeting Taiwan

Exercise or Drills	Date	Sorties Crossing the Median Line	Detected Sorties Around Taiwan	PLA Naval Vessels	Official Vessels
2022 Drill	August 4	22			
	August 5	49			
	August 6	20	20	14	
	August 7	22	66	14	
2023 Exercise	April 8	45	71	9	
	April 9	35	70	11	
	April 10	54	91	12	
2024A Exercise	May 23	35	49	19	7
	May 24	47	62	27	
2024B Exercise	October 14	111	153	14	12
2025A Drill	April 1	37	76	15	4
	April 2	31	59	23	8

(Source: Compilation by authors based on reporting from Xinhua and press releases from ROC MND)

A primary focus of the drill in April was on “key area and chokepoint control” (要域要道封控). For example, the Bashi Channel between Taiwan and the Philippines is a chokepoint for entry and exit to the South China Sea ([People's Daily](#), August 6, 2022). According to Professor Zhang Chi (张弛) of the PRC’s National Defense University, during the drill, the PLA created a strong maritime barrier through chokepoint control with its aircraft

carrier strike groups, creating external obstruction and internal pressure or isolation aimed at preventing interference from external forces ([Global Times](#), April 2). Troops were deployed to chokepoints around Taiwan and were also dispersed across more distant maritime and airspace areas, as shown in Figure 4. This included an aircraft carrier group operating farther from Taiwan than during the Joint Sword-2024B period, China Coast Guard (CCG) vessel 2302 operating more than 100 nautical miles east of Taiwan, and three Chinese fishing vessels—suspected to be part of the PRC’s maritime militia—conducting activities 140 nautical miles off the coast of Hualien Harbor in eastern Taiwan in coordination with the CCG ([Up Media](#), April 2; [Youth Daily News](#), April 2). These deployments contrasted with those during Joint Sword-2024B, which concentrated on a blockade of important ports and areas (要港要域封控). This highlights the PLA’s focus on practicing control over Taiwan’s surrounding maritime chokepoints.

Table 2: Comparison of the Scale of This Drill With Previous Similar Drills

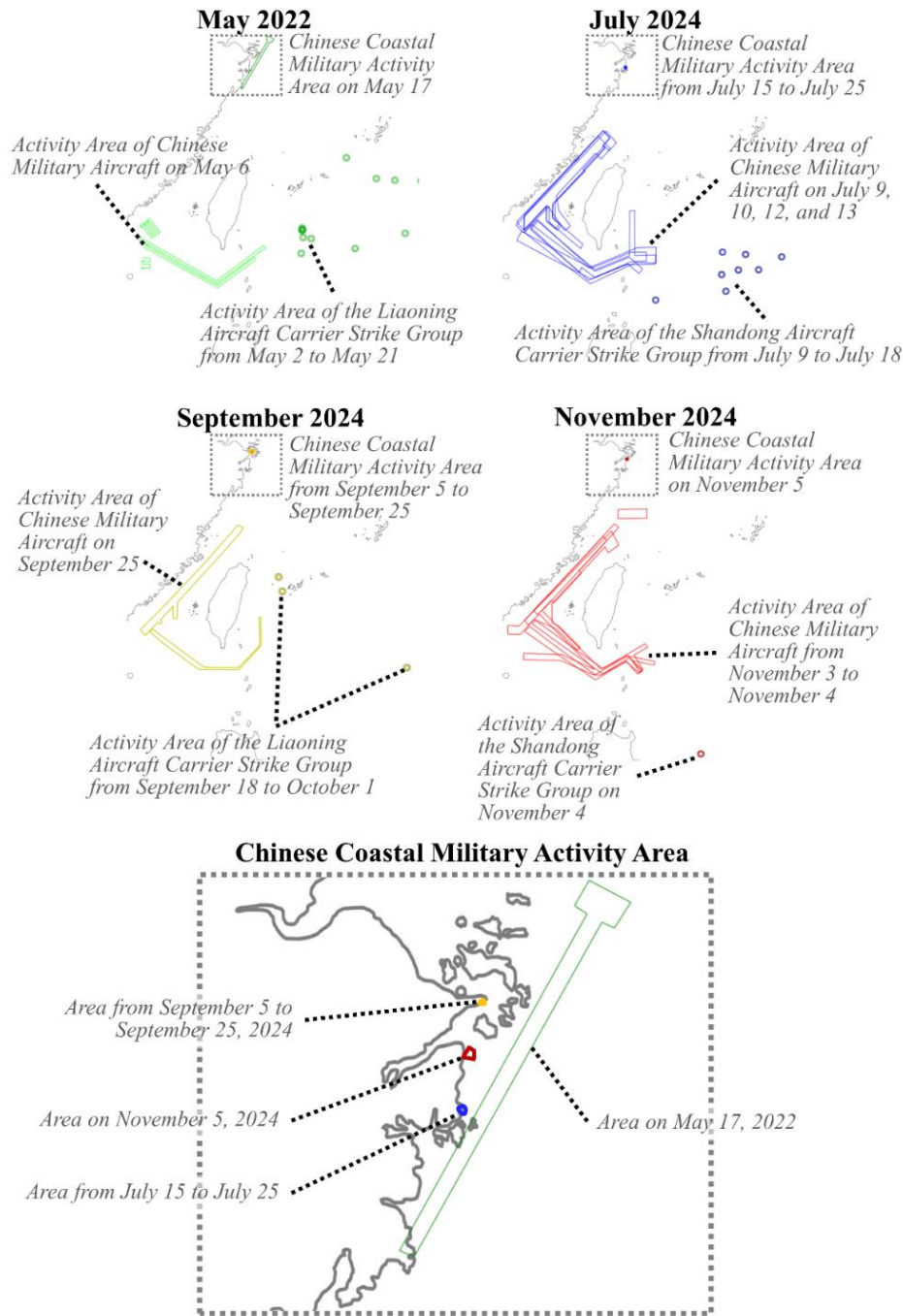
Dates of Aircraft Carrier Operations	Chinese Coastal Military Activity	The Size of the Areas (km ²)	Dates of PLA Aircraft Flying From the Bashi Channel to the Philippine Sea	Sorties Crossing the Median Line	Detected Sorties Around Taiwan	PLA Naval Vessels	Official Vessels
May 2 to May 21, 2022	May 17	3,281	May 6	18			
July 9 to July 18, 2024	July 15 to July 25	17.9	July 9	26	35	8	
			July 10	56	66	7	
			July 12	20	30	7	
			July 13	14	16	9	
September 18 to October 1, 2024	September 5 to September 25	3.62	September 25	34	43	8	
November 4, 2024	November 5	29.6	November 3	37	44	6	1
			November 4	16	20	6	
April 1 to April 2, 2025	April 2	12,708	April 1	37	76	15	4
			April 2	31	59	23	8

(Source: Compilation by authors based on reporting from Xinhua and press releases from ROC MND, PRC Maritime Safety Administration, and Japan’s Ministry of Defense Joint Staff)

Military Implications

Two military implications emerge from the Strait Thunder-2025A drill. First, its scale suggests that future exercises may be even larger and include more maneuver objectives than previous ones. Second, the focus of the drill indicates that the PRC is likely to pursue tactics that involve creating concentric layers of encirclement around an opponent’s ships or islands.

Figure 3: Comparison of the Drill With Previous Similar Drills

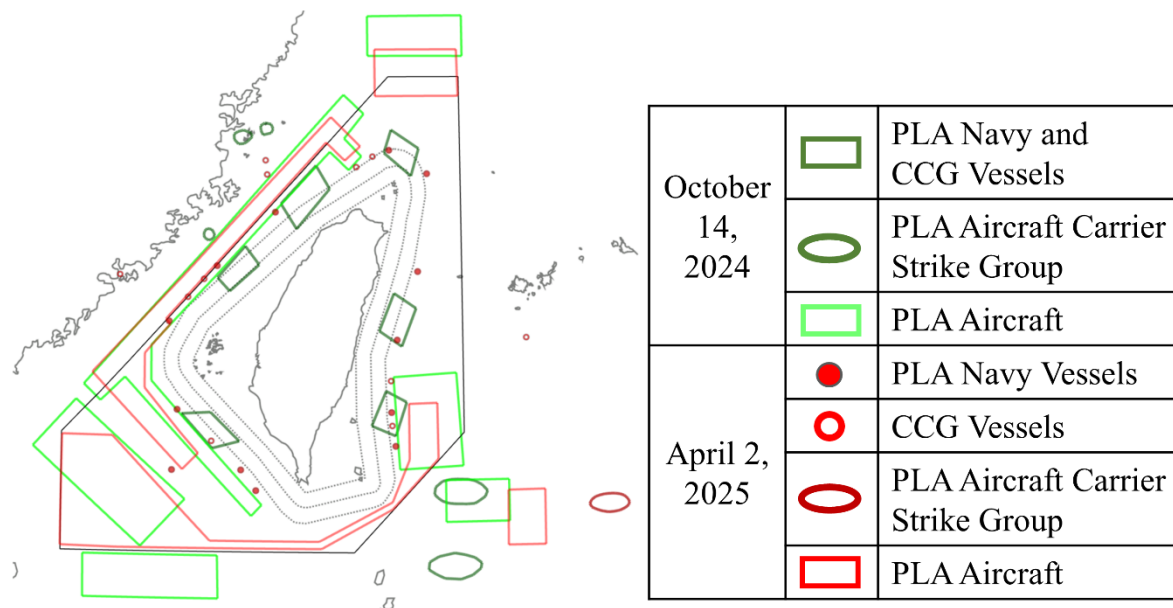


(Source: Compilation by authors based on reporting from Xinhua and press releases from ROC MND, PRC Maritime Safety Administration, and Japan's Ministry of Defense Joint Staff)

The first implication is inferred from the size of April's drill, which was larger than previous drills but comparable to past exercises. As drills tend to be smaller in scope and complexity than exercises, this suggests future exercises could take place on a larger scale. The PLA has shifted in recent years from holding drills to conducting exercises and returning to drills. This may indicate that the PLA's operations toward Taiwan have been validated, leading to simplified drills and preparations for future scenarios. In August 2022, the PRC

referred to the actions it took in response to the visit of then-U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan as a “joint training drill” ([Xinhua](#), August 4, 2022). This was conducted as part of military training and verification around Taiwan and intended to enhance the PLA’s capabilities in certain areas ([Xinhua](#), August 6, 2022). This drill was followed by three “exercises” in 2023 and 2024, which were conducted based on the drills performed in 2022 and labeled “Joint Sword,” followed by a year and alphabetic designation. Subsequent activities have all been described as drills, including large training drills around Taiwan and the First Island Chain in December 2024 and the latest “Strait Thunder-2025A” ([China Brief](#), December 20, 2024). A “Strait Thunder-2025B” is likely to take place in the coming months, but this does not necessarily mean that the PRC will stop conducting military exercises this year. The first installment of this series of drills also marks the normalization of training objectives and signals a systematic approach to using “Strait Thunder” drills to train and validate new military maneuvers or tactics for Taiwan-related operations. This preparation lays the groundwork for future large-scale military exercises and, ultimately, a potential invasion of Taiwan.

Figure 4: Comparison of Joint Sword 2024B Exercise and Strait Thunder-2025A Drill



(Source: Compilation by authors based on reporting from Xinhua and press releases from ROC MND, PRC Maritime Safety Administration, and Japan’s Ministry of Defense Joint Staff)

Second, the PRC has implemented its dual-layer “Cabbage Strategy” (包心菜战略) around Taiwan. The conventional Cabbage Strategy refers to the PRC’s use of maritime militia, official ships, and naval vessels to create multiple layers of encirclement around an opponent’s ships or islands ([China News](#), May 27, 2013; [New York Times](#), October 27, 2013). However, the drills this time demonstrate a new model, which we describe as a dual-layer Cabbage Strategy. On April 1–2, maritime militia forces appeared to join the large number of naval and CCG vessels participating in the drill. These forces consisted of several Chinese fishing vessels, one of which had collided with a Taiwanese naval ship in the Taiwan Strait several days prior, on March 27. On the morning of April 2, the day of the Strait Thunder-2025A drill, that same ship set out again from a port in Fuzhou

to return to the site of the incident. This suggests the vessel is part of the PRC's maritime militia, which includes a large fleet of fishing vessels that have a history of organizing units in Fujian province and, in recent years, of establishing units with the potential to operate as maritime militia near coast guard stations around the island of Kinmen, close to Taiwan (The Diplomat, [September 20, 2024](#), [December 24, 2024](#)). The movements of this fishing vessel, along with those of three similar vessels in the Philippine Sea, strongly suggest that they are part of the PRC's maritime militia. The operation of these ships both near and at a distance from Taiwan indicates that the maritime militia's tasks around Taiwan are likely similar to those of the navy and coast guard, which include harassing Taiwanese and foreign vessels. For opponents within the inner circle, the sequence from inside to outside is militias, coast guard, and navy. For opponents outside the circle, the sequence from outside to inside also includes militias, coast guards, and the navy. This is what is referred to as the dual Cabbage strategy. These activities also add to growing evidence that the role and visibility of the maritime militia in Taiwan-related issues is growing ([China Brief](#), March 15).

Conclusion

The PLA's large-scale "Strait Thunder-2025A" drill on April 1–2 was a routine event. This speaks to the extent to which the PLA has normalized aggressive military behavior around Taiwan in recent years and the growing military threat it poses. The serial designation "A" suggests that the PLA will likely conduct similar large-scale drills around Taiwan again this year. Future joint military exercises, when they occur, will likely be even larger in scale and more complex in their objectives than others to date, further ratcheting up military pressure on Taiwan and contributing to regional instability.

Tai-yuan Yang is Deputy Director at the Research Project on China's Defense Affairs and a retired colonel of the ROC Army and former chief instructor at the Army Command and Staff College, National Defense University.

K. Tristan Tang is a research associate at the Research Project on China's Defense Affairs and a member of the Pacific Forum's Young Leaders Program. His research focuses on China's defense industry, the People's Liberation Army, and Chinese foreign policy. You can connect with him on X: @KTristanTang.

Notes

[1] 全军军事术语管理委员会，军事科学院 [All-Army Military Terminology Committee, AMS], 中国人民解放军军语 [Chinese People's Liberation Army Military Terms], 军事科学出版社出版 [Military Science Publishing House Publication], 2011. This volume is the PLA's authoritative dictionary of military terms, released by the PLA Central Military Commission in 2011. This edition was still the most recent version as of December 2023 ([PLA Daily](#), December 1, 2023). Pages 311–315 focus on drills and exercises.

[2] On April 2, the only no-sailing zone in the coastal area under the Eastern Theater Command was located in Zhejiang. Analyst Joseph Wen has confirmed that the live-fire footage released by Chinese authorities was indeed filmed in Zhejiang ([X/@JosephWen](#), April 2).

PLA Perceptions of and Reactions to U.S. Military Activities in Low Earth Orbit

By Jackson Smith and Cristina L. Garafola



The first batch of satellites of China's SatNet megaconstellation project being launched on the Long March 5. (Source: C114 China Communication Network)

Executive Summary:

- Space industry experts within the People's Liberation Army (PLA) have observed and drawn lessons from the United States's use of space as a warfighting domain since the 1990s. These experts tend to characterize the deployment of proliferated low earth orbit (pLEO) constellations, such as the privately-owned Starlink constellation, as an application of the Department of Defense's resilient space concept.
- The PLA views Starlink as challenging its core operational concept of multi-domain precision warfare due to the decentralized nature of pLEO constellations. It attributes many unconfirmed, hyperbolic capabilities to Starlink, which contributes to the belief that Starlink is creating a strategic imbalance between the United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC) in space.
- The PRC has begun developing its own comparable megaconstellation, Project SatNet, which PLA analysts see as enabling similar capabilities to Starlink and which they also envision as countering Starlink.

In March, the People's Republic of China (PRC) Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) announced the successful launch of a fifth batch of satellites to comprise its broadband G60 megaconstellation, also referred to as the Qianfan (千帆; "Thousand Sails") Constellation. This latest batch was launched on the Long March 8, a new generation rocket designed specifically for placing assets in low earth orbit (LEO) ([MIIT](#), March 12). The PRC's increased efforts to capitalize on dwindling space in LEO have been driven in part by developments in U.S. space capabilities.

Over the past several years, U.S. activities in LEO have attracted great interest within the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). Analysis of professional military education textbooks and journal articles written by PLA scholars and Chinese industry experts indicates that the PLA associates the development of LEO as a warfighting domain with the fielding and expansion of the commercial Starlink constellation, operated by the American firm SpaceX. [1] By linking Starlink with U.S. military activities in LEO, PLA researchers attach specific security implications to Starlink, which in turn has led to a range of countermeasures being proposed, as well as the development of indigenous Chinese LEO systems ([China Brief](#), September 6, 2024).

Perceptions of Starlink Inform PLA Views of pLEO and LEO as a Warfighting Domain

A survey of research from the People's Republic of China (PRC) on the United States' use of space as a military domain since the 1990s reveals that the PLA's shift in focus toward LEO is closely tied to the PLA's assessments of the operational significance of Starlink. Taking a closer look at the evolution of PLA space research, therefore offers a more holistic perspective on the origins of its emphasis on LEO, proliferated LEO (pLEO), and Starlink, as well as PLA analyses' tendency to equate the three. [2]

Emergence of Resilient Space

The emergence of the concept of "resilient space" in U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) policy, which refers to space assets that can effectively function in contested environments, has had an immense impact on the PLA's view of space as a warfighting domain. Traditionally, the PLA has characterized space in terms of function rather than orbit. For example, when evaluating the use of space-based assets in U.S. military operations in the Gulf War, Kosovo, and Afghanistan, PLA researchers focused on the information linkages provided by those assets that strengthened capabilities such as communications, precision guidance, and intelligence collection. They did not note which orbit the assets were placed in ([NDU Press](#), 2021, p.311–337). [3]

Over time, as researchers observed discussions on the need for resilient space architectures appearing in DoD policy documents and wargaming exercises, they began incorporating orbitology into their assessments of space systems and operations. For example, an analysis published by the PRC's National Defense Industry Press on the Schriever Wargames pointed out that resilient space was applied in the "SW-14" game in order to ensure U.S. space assets could continue functioning in contested environments. More broadly, these researchers assessed that U.S. government and military actions (such as changes to space policy and updates to military doctrine on space operations) are coordinated with and supported by launches of commercial satellites to build out pLEO constellations. [4]

Four key characteristics of resilient space are best enabled in LEO, according to the conclusions of a research group at the Academy of Military Science's War Studies Institute. These include ([Space and Network](#), November 8, 2021):

1. dispersed, proliferated, and diversified deployment;
2. the ability to be disintegrated, reorganized, reconstituted, and repaired at any time;
3. comprehensive threat perception and rapid counterattack capabilities; and
4. the ability to support joint operations under high-risk conditions.

Starlink as an Application of Resilient Space

The PLA's emphasis on LEO as an emerging key domain for warfighting was further solidified by PLA analysis that Starlink was developed as an application of resilient space. For example, one PLA Aerospace Engineering University researcher assessed that the U.S. Space Force intends to rely on SpaceX's commercial capabilities to provide U.S. forces with constellations with resilient traits, such as rapid reconstitution ([PLA Daily](#), July 16, 2020). Furthermore, the tendency of PLA researchers to use the terms LEO, pLEO, and Starlink interchangeably, which they have done with increasing frequency since Starlink's use in the Russia-Ukraine war, suggests that the PLA views Starlink as outlining the operational potential of LEO and as an implementation of the concept of pLEO, rather than solely as a discrete system (PLA Daily, [January 9, 2020](#), [December 19, 2023](#); [China Social Science Network](#), June 19, 2023). Notably absent from PLA analyses of LEO surveyed was an emphasis on DoD-operated constellations such as the Space Development Agency's (SDA) Proliferated Warfighter Space Architecture. This reinforces the sense that the PLA derives LEO's current operational significance from the advent of Starlink in particular.

PLA Assessments of U.S. Capabilities' Effects on China's Security Environment in Space

PLA analyses assert that pLEO constellations such as Starlink pose a significant challenge to the PRC's security environment in space in terms of both the PLA's ability to conduct operations and the overall military balance. However, the PLA's perception of the latter seems to be informed by hyperbolic assessments of Starlink that posit the existence of capabilities beyond what is publicly known.

Challenges to Current and Future Operations

First, PLA analysts assert that Starlink's observable technical characteristics present a challenge to one of the PLA's core operational concepts, "multi-domain precision warfare" (多域精确作战). This concept refers to leveraging big data and artificial intelligence to rapidly identify key vulnerabilities in the U.S. operational system and then combine joint forces across domains to launch precision strikes against those vulnerabilities ([DoD](#), October 19, 2023). Specifically, they see pLEO as disrupting the method by which they may conduct operations in the future, namely by disabling key nodes in integrated information systems that underpin joint operations, thus rendering those systems unable to function ([PLA Daily](#), January 20, 2022). In other words, Starlink could significantly challenge the multi-domain precision warfare concept by featuring a decentralized layout that lacks key nodes to strike. One group of researchers at the Beijing Institute of Telecommunications and Tracking Technology who recognized this noted that disrupting Starlink requires "system confrontation" (体系

对抗) rather than “individual confrontation” (个体对抗), i.e., striking multiple key targets through low cost, high efficiency means. However, regarding specific countermeasures, the same group admitted not only that mitigating Starlink would be extremely costly but also that they “do not even know where to begin” (无从下手) to develop such measures ([Modern Defense Technology](#), 2022).

Second, the PLA attributes a range of unconfirmed capabilities to Starlink that contribute to its perception of an imbalance in its space capabilities vis-à-vis the United States. PLA observers perceive Starlink as having three main categories of capabilities, namely, supporting information assurance, defensive missions, and offensive missions. The three capabilities most commonly referenced by PLA researchers are as follows:

1. Highly advanced command, control, computing, communications, cyber, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and targeting (C5ISRT) that achieves a level of speed and integration to the extent that it provides U.S. forces “one-way transparency” (单向透明) on any battlefield ([PLA Daily](#), May 5, 2022; [International Cooperation Center](#), September 24, 2023);
2. Missile defense facilitated by Starlink’s debris evasion and route optimization capabilities ([Aerospace China](#), 2022). [5] ; and
3. Use as a co-orbital kinetic kill vehicle that would also be facilitated by the aforementioned maneuverability functions ([PLA Daily](#), January 9, 2024). [6]

Table 1 provides a more detailed summary of PLA assessments of Starlink missions.

Table 1: PLA Assessments of Starlink Missions

Conduct Defensive Operations	Provide Mission/Information Assurance	Support Offensive Operations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intercept missiles, including hypersonic missiles and ICBMs • Intercept attacks on high-value assets • Facilitate low-cost piggyback launching of small satellites • Conduct ground-launched missile surveillance and interception support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide global large-bandwidth, high-speed, integrated space-ground military communications network • Conduct battlefield data processing and communication to ensure battlefield transparency • Enable aircraft network services for F-35A and C-12 • Facilitate real-time remote sensing and rapid data transmission, early warning • Enable high-precision reconnaissance and navigation • Integrate commercial reconnaissance • Integrate with Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) • Perform tactical relay support for unmanned aerial vehicles and enable swarm operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct target support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ OODA loop closure support ○ Nuclear first-strike information support ○ Position, navigation, and timing (PNT) enhancement for high-precision strikes • Conduct electronic warfare • Serve as kinetic kill vehicle

(Source: [RAND Corporation](#), March 24)

By attributing these capabilities to Starlink, some PLA researchers assess that the United States may be creating a “vulnerability gap” (脆弱性差距) with the PRC insofar as the DoD has decreased the vulnerability of its space assets relative to those of the PLA ([Peace and Development](#), 2018). The theme in these analyses is that resilient space, and the fielding of a system advancing resilience via Starlink, is meant to decrease the likelihood that the United States will be deterred by the threat of first strike in space, thereby enabling it to act in a less restrained manner ([International Cooperation Center](#), September 24, 2023). [7] This assessment has pushed the PLA to consider various countermeasures in response.

Countermeasures

PLA discussions on how to develop countermeasures against Starlink can generally be divided into asymmetric and symmetric responses. In the former category, the PLA and Chinese Communist Party have been executing an international propaganda campaign against Starlink over the past several years, using bilingual articles and international fora such as the United Nations to propagate claims that Starlink puts other space assets at risk and violates international treaties ([Space Debris Research](#), 2021; [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), February 10, 2022; [Breaking Defense](#), February 3, 2023). PLA scholars have discussed other asymmetric means for managing the perceived risks of Starlink, including the development of a “space fence” (太空篱笆) able to simultaneously monitor a large quantity of satellites and deploy soft kill measures such as lasers, microwave weapons, and cyber intrusions ([Command Control & Simulation](#), 2023). However, due to the aforementioned difficulties the PLA would likely encounter in an attempt to disable Starlink, as well as the benefits PLA analysts perceive that Starlink provides to the U.S. military, the PRC is focused on “countering” Starlink by building its own megaconstellation to leverage for military operations.

Project SatNet

The PRC’s interest in developing a LEO megaconstellation dates back to at least 2016, but the state-owned China SatNet Co. (中国星网公司) was established only in 2021. The company is tasked with leading the megaconstellation project known as Project SatNet (星网工程), likely as a national-level priority ([China Mobile Association for Science and Technology](#), September 22, 2023). As of February 2025, the PRC has launched two batches of satellites assumed to be part of the SatNet constellation, the first containing ten and the second carrying an unknown quantity. Analysts expect the PRC to debut its commercially-developed reusable launch rockets later in 2025, which could be used in the launch of subsequent batches ([Space News](#), February 11). As with the push toward a satellite constellation of its own, the PRC’s progress in reusable launch vehicles likely is informed by industry experts’ observations of SpaceX’s innovation in this area ([Xinhua](#), June 8, 2024).

The project will rely heavily on the PRC’s commercial ecosystem, even though Project SatNet will most likely be used as a military asset to counter Starlink. In February 2023, PLA Aerospace Engineering University researchers, one of whom was reported to be leading Project SatNet (at the time codenamed “GW”), suggested using the constellation to compete with Starlink for space in LEO and conduct reconnaissance ([Command Control & Simulation](#), 2023). Whether or not developing a comparable constellation of its own will ease the PLA’s hyperbolic assessments of Starlink’s military utility remains to be seen. [8]

Conclusion

The advent of Starlink has captured the imaginations of PLA scholars. They have subsequently emphasized the importance of pLEO for the United States' efforts to preserve its strategic advantage in space. PLA analysts have inflated Starlink's operational significance to the extent that they primarily refer to LEO as a warfighting domain in the context of Starlink. As militaries around the world become more dependent on space to enable their military operations, staying abreast of PLA perceptions of and reactions to systems and organizations at the forefront of space technology will be of increasing importance, whether they are publicly or privately owned. Key pieces of information to watch for in PLA publications include not only discussions of discrete systems but also evolving operational concepts that may be used to counter such systems.

Jackson Smith is a research assistant at the RAND Corporation, where he focuses on Indo-Pacific security issues, including Chinese influence operations and geopolitical strategic competition.

Cristina L. Garafola is a senior policy researcher at the RAND Corporation, where her research focuses on the ramifications of China's rise for its global status, particularly with respect to defense issues, China's influence on regional actors, and implications for the United States. She is the co-author of the book 70 Years of the People's Liberation Army Air Force (2021), published by the China Aerospace Studies Institute.

Notes

[1] For this analysis, sources were gathered through word searches for key terms including LEO (低地球轨道), microsattelites (微型卫星) and resilient space (弹性太空). See: [RAND Corporation](#), March 24.

[2] pLEO refers to constellations of hundreds or thousands of satellites orbiting at altitudes of less than 2000 kilometers (see [SDA](#), accessed April 7).

[3] Zhou Xiaoqun [周晓群], "Looking at the Kosovo War from the Perspective of NATO Weapons and Armaments," ["从科索沃战争看北约武器装备"], *Shipboard Electronic Countermeasure* [舰船电子对抗], Vol. 4, No. 6, 1999; Wang Xiangjiang [王湘江], "The Role of Military Satellites in the Iraq War" ["军用卫星在伊拉克战争发挥的作用"], *Military Technology* [军事技术], 2004.

[4] Li Xiangyang [李向阳], Sun Long [孙龙], Ci Yuanzhuo [慈元卓], Shi Peixin [石培新], Du Yanchang [杜彦昌], and Cheng Shaochi [程绍驰], eds., *Interpreting the U.S. Military's "Schriever" Space Warfare Exercises* [美军"施用弗"空间战演习解读], *National Defense Industry Press* [国防工业出版社], 2016.

[5] Li Lu [李陆], Guo Lili [郭莉丽], and Wang Ke [王克], "Military Applications of the 'Starlink' Constellation" ["星链'星座'的军事应用分"], *Aerospace China* [中国航天], No. 5, 2021. The most widely cited evidence of this is a 2020 PLA simulation in which Starlink reportedly intercepted 350 ICBMs from orbit with a 100

percent success rate and 5–7 interception opportunities for each missile ([PLA Daily](#), June 11, 2020). Little is known of the baseline assumptions that went into building said simulation, however.

[6] Xu Nengwu [徐能武] and Gaoyang Yuxi [高杨予兮], “International Security Governance in the Development of Low Orbit Small Satellite Constellations” [“低轨小卫星星座发展中的国际安全治理研究”], *Social Science* [社会科学], No. 7, 2020.

[7] Wu Minwen [吴敏文], “Resilient Space Architecture: New Steps in U.S. Space Force Developments” [“弹性太空架构：美太空军发展新步骤”], *Military Digest* [军事文摘], September 2022; Zhang and Du, 2023.

[8] For a dataset examining Chinese as well as U.S. and Russian capabilities in LEO and capabilities that can affect LEO, see: [RAND Corporation](#), March 24.

Behind the Fleet: The PLAN Reviews Logistics Development in the 13th Five-Year Plan

By Conor Kennedy



The People's Liberation Army Navy Command College in Nanjing. (Source: U.S. Department of Defense)

Executive Summary:

- The People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) is currently implementing its 14th Five-Year Plan, which expands in part on major successes seen in the 13th Five-Year Plan.
- Key areas of PLAN improvement in the previous Five-Year Plan include the construction of new vessels and an improved logistical system, expansions in infrastructure, better availability of medical treatment, and more rigorous financial oversight.
- The PLAN views logistics as being particularly susceptible to corruption and has made cracking down on it a key policy goal.
- Collectively, these efforts are expected to promote force readiness and potentially attract better talent to the naval profession.

The People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) implements its development programs in five-year plans, reflecting the approach taken by the People's Republic of China (PRC) government to overall development. It is currently implementing its 14th Five-Year Plan, which was drafted near the conclusion of the 13th. [1] The PLAN's development of major new platforms, such as the rapid pace at which it has launched new warships, has received the most attention from analysts. Less visible is the modernization of logistics that has occurred behind the scenes and that underpins and supports those new capabilities. PLAN logistics have undergone extensive development and continue to receive top-level leadership attention. According to PLAN sources, the 13th Five-Year Plan was a transformative period that reshaped the naval logistics system to better focus on becoming joint, lean, and efficient. [2]

An analysis of achievements made during the period of the 13th Five-Year Plan can shed light on the prospects for successful implementation of the current plan. Official PLAN sources typically offer a summary of such progress, including the major logistics achievements touted by the PLAN in its previous five-year plan. PRC President and Central Military Commission Chairman Xi Jinping has repeatedly emphasized the importance of his military's logistics meeting his development goals, calling on the PLA to “build all the logistics necessary for war” (建设一切为了打仗的后勤) ([China Military Online](#), September 26, 2022).

PLAN Logistics Adapts to a New System and New Requirements in the 13th Five-Year Plan

During the 13th Five-Year Plan, the PLAN continued its efforts to transform naval logistics to elevate combat readiness and modernize logistic support. Perhaps most importantly, the plan required the navy to “ensure a smooth and steady transition from the old system to the new” (确保新旧体制顺利对接、平稳过渡). Like the rest of the PLA, naval logistics has needed to adapt to a new joint operations system, which includes a division of responsibilities between the joint logistics support force, the theater commands, and the services. [3] Naval logistics work during the plan period sought to improve services, clean up management practices, and enhance comprehensive support capabilities, all with the aim of building momentum for combat readiness. The fruits of these efforts were highlighted in an article the PLAN published in *People's Navy* on September 22, 2022 that reviewed progress in the modernization of the logistics system. [4] These achievements are detailed in the remainder of this section.

General Achievements

According to the article in *People's Navy*, the PLAN made progress in several aspects of its logistics system, including the construction of new vessels and the implementation of an improved support system. These have been tested in various drills and exercises.

First, a batch of transport supply ships were built and joined the fleet. In particular, new Type 901 fast combat support ships (also referred to by the U.S. Navy hull classification symbol AOE) were built to meet the requirements of a fleet conducting missions in the far seas and distant oceans. Frontline logistics work also has focused on other large-scale, integrated replenishment platforms that are capable of operating in the far seas. These are intended to enhance long-range, long-endurance, all-element, and efficient far-seas mobile accompanying support capabilities. The PLAN has also used passenger ferries with amphibious capabilities to organize amphibious equipment sea transport exercises, further improving the navy's “ability to conduct force delivery at scale across the sea” (跨海投送规模投送能力). Another advance that has enhanced task forces'

endurance and mobility was a breakthrough in common fuel technology on the naval battlefield, allowing forces to use primarily domestic petroleum products.

The PLAN announced improvements to frontline logistics during the five-year plan period. These included greater use of refrigerated systems for delivering supplies to overseas bases, as well as to islands and reefs. This has enabled direct logistics support for food delivery into units' frozen stores, multiplying the effective replenishment of units by 5–7 times and extending freshness of produce for 45–50 days. The navy claimed that it had “comprehensively improved the standardization, regularization, and refinement of naval unit food management” (全面提高海军部队伙食管理标准化规范化精细化水平).

The PLAN also explored a new support model, starting in the Northern Theater Command Navy in 2021. In this model, “support requests are made while at sea, shore-based support prepositions it, and replenishment is conducted immediately upon berthing” (海上下订单、岸上先预置、靠港即补给). Previous practices in naval support bases were to wait until a vessel was berthed before receiving its support requests. [5] This, among other improvements, have been replicated at support bases in the other theater command navies. [6]

The navy has worked on testing many of these developments on a larger scale. For instance, in June 2021, the naval logistics system held an “integrated study and practice session” (综合研练) called “Sea Service-2021” (海勤-2021). This was the “first campaign-level logistics major exercise activity” (首次组织战役后勤大项演训活动) held under the new leadership and command system and was focused on joint operations and support. In addition, in the course of completing major exercises and drills, the navy has tested and improved its comprehensive support capabilities for diversified military tasks. This includes deeper research into “checking the strong enemy” (制衡强敌), an indirect term for their chief competitor, the U.S. military.

Infrastructure Achievements

The PLAN article noted prominently that construction on islands and reefs in the South China Sea was included in Xi Jinping's report to the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) 19th National Congress in 2017 as the “proactive advancement of South China Sea island reef construction” (南海岛礁建设积极推进) ([Xinhua](#), October 27, 2017). (This report, which the CCP General Secretary delivers every five years, is the most authoritative policy document within the party-state system.) This effort made historic breakthroughs in “strategically managing the ocean” (经略海洋) and “protecting sea power” (维护海权). On April 23, 2018, the navy held a ceremony on Fiery Cross Reef—which is also claimed by Taiwan, the Philippines, and Vietnam—to unveil a monument dedicated to the construction effort.

The PLAN made a number of other broad improvements to infrastructure and facilities. In July 2021, it established its first at-sea replenishment training center, featuring simulators that enable regular training of personnel in underway replenishment procedures without the restriction weather or other ship conditions. A large number of major comprehensive ship bases and core airfields were also constructed and an “excellent support force” (拳头保障力量) was formed on shore, at sea, and at the connection between shore and sea. Each Theater Command Navy also established “comprehensive support bases” (综合保障基地). These have focused on operational needs for future joint combat operations, including support for multiple ship types, large task forces, high-intensity support, and supporting wide-ranging operations ([Qingdao Daily](#), April 19, 2023). [7]

They are frequently hailed as the key bases capable of supporting carrier task forces, in particular those in Qingdao and Sanya ([China News Network](#), April 24, 2023).

Following the major PLA reforms in 2016, construction contractors have played a more prominent role in naval logistics. The navy introduced a new management model in which firms provide “full-process consulting + EPC general contracting” (全过程咨询+EPC 工程总承包). [8] Under this model, firms’ expertise in engineering construction is leveraged to build more advanced infrastructure, allowing the navy to concentrate on their core warfighting mission. In a related development, the *PLA Navy* article notes that an unspecified number of border and coastal defense units were connected to the national electricity grid.

PLAN organs (海军机关) also made progress in personnel housing. In October 2021, the problem of “people waiting for housing” (人等房) shifted to “housing waiting for people” (房等人) for the first time. Earlier that year, an unspecified PLAN command (or possibly commands) completed the renovation of 1,234 housing units that had been considered “unreasonable” (不合理). This reflects the force’s effort to improve its services and the well-being and quality of life of naval personnel, which contributes to enhancing force readiness.

Medical Achievements

The PLAN implemented a number of changes to the availability of medical treatments, coordination with COVID-19 pandemic control, and the management of medical personnel. Regarding the former, the navy promoted the use of traditional Chinese medicine, rehabilitation, and physiotherapy techniques for submarine officers and enlisted personnel, as well as calling for mental health services to be implemented vigorously. On the second point, in January and February 2020, two groups of medical personnel, totaling 485 people, were chosen from various PLAN medical institutions to participate in emergency relief efforts against COVID-19 in Hubei Province.

The PLAN also brought medical personnel under a system of “centralized management and dispatched support” (集中管理、派出保障). This entailed a more centralized approach to controlling personnel through a given area’s hospital system to optimize resource use and support different units within the hospital system’s jurisdiction. This improved the rotation of medical personnel to grassroots-level units, allowing frontline PLA forces to access medical care more efficiently ([Journal of Navy Medicine](#), April 2013). The PLAN played a leading role across the PLA in the exploration and practice of this system.

Additionally, naval personnel have received special training, such as an August 2022 seminar entitled “Sea Service-2022” (海勤-2022) hosted by the PLA Medical University that focused on maritime medical rescue and evacuation.

Financial Achievements

Developments in the management of the navy’s finances over this period included new regulations, an audit of the service’s assets, and improvements to the benefits system for personnel and their dependents. On December 30, 2018, the PLAN announced the suspension of projects across 13 industries that generated revenue for the navy. It also noted that subsequent revenue generating projects would be “disposed of” (处置), likely referring to their cancellation, reassignment, or handing over to the military’s bidding process. The PLAN, according to this description, had completed these important goals—which had been set out by the Central

Military Commission—on schedule. A major effort was made to enhance supervision and accountability of naval assets. For the first time, a comprehensive asset inventory campaign was conducted across all areas and systems of the navy from January to September 2021, forming a “single account” of all navy assets.

In January 2020, the PLAN issued “Measures on Navy Living Expense Management Inspection and Supervision” (海军生活费管理检查监督办法). These are the first financial regulations to be implemented under order by naval command since 2003. These measures were part of a wider push from the navy to “bring financial regulations and laws to the grassroots” (财务送基层), which manifested in regular activities on the topic and the creation of a PLA digital financial regulations database to provide professional guidance for grassroots units on their spending and handling of affairs, thus bridging the “last mile” of policy implementation. In a related move, the handling of support cards for military personnel (军人保障卡) was implemented more widely. These cards are assigned to personnel once they join the army, get married, and have a child, and indicate that they are entitled to certain benefits ([WeChat ID of Military Correspondent Department of PLA Daily](#), March 29, 2018). [9]

Concrete Advances Despite Persistent Corruption

The compounding benefits of minor advances such as those outlined above are significant, even if they may seem mundane compared to the hardcore requirements of combat logistics. While ultimately in service of combat power, the PLAN sees logistics as fundamentally in service of the troops. Meeting the needs of personnel is a key driver of logistics work and resolving major problems for personnel is therefore critical. According to the PLAN, personnel have appreciated the marked improvements to their quality of life brought about by these achievements, such as the ability to use their “support cards” to acquire what they need and their daily experiences of improved mess halls and health care services. [10]

A second major point of emphasis in the 13th Five-Year Plan was cleaning up logistics and preventing corruption. This is a perennial effort across all institutions in the PRC. Foreign observers cannot easily verify the effectiveness of these efforts, but PLAN sources clearly see corruption in logistics as a chronic issue and are pursuing initiatives to address it. For the PLAN, a desire for stronger industry supervision has seen a focus on eight sectors in its annual “rectification and governance” (整肃治理) process. These include finance, supply and energy, construction, medical treatment, scientific research, and asset management, among others. Since logistics work cuts across numerous sectors that may be prone to corruption, implementing stricter discipline is an important focus of party leadership within the PLAN.

The navy views logistics work as 30 percent supply and 70 percent management, according to Wu Xueliang (吴雪良), a deputy head of a bureau within the Southern Theater Command Joint Staff Department. In this view, strict adherence to party governance of the military is the only way for improved management and for logistics to be conducted cleanly. [11] Apart from greater party oversight, other technical measures have included greater reliance on information technology in the supervision of industry support for naval logistics. This has enabled increased online verification and inspections, such as through the use of “military account funds monitoring systems” (军队账户资金监控系统) that can track financial flows within the navy and mitigate corruption. [12]

Many initiatives to promote force readiness and modernize and professionalize PLAN logistics support began before the 13th Five-Year Plan and likely bled into the 14th Five-Year Plan as part of continuous modernization

and improvement efforts. For example, the 13th Five-Year Plan period culminated in the release by the Central Military Commission of the “Military Logistics Regulations” (军队后勤条例) that went into effect on January 1, 2021. This regulation has resolved many issues across PLA logistics, including in the navy, according to reports in PLA media. It also was intended to better integrate logistics into the joint operations system, standardize new logistics command and support relationships, innovate support methods, and regulate the implementation of support activities, as well as accelerate the revision of rules in naval logistics ([Xinhua](#), December 23, 2020). [13]

Conclusion

Advances in PLAN logistics afloat and ashore are proceeding in tandem, improving efficiency and capacity of support for the fleet. The PLAN is steadily becoming more proactive in its support for units, anticipating and fulfilling needs in advance and focusing on rapidly replenishing warships to restore their combat readiness. Improved infrastructure offers greater support capacity and more automated and networked support systems, so that logistics support can scale up when needed and potentially feature some resilience during wartime. The wide implementation of personnel support measures will not only promote force readiness but could also attract better talent to the naval profession.

Xi Jinping has ordered his military to build a logistics system focused on warfighting, but many obstacles such as corruption remain. In a system prone to corruption, there are efforts by the navy to manage its effects that could ensure that it is able to function adequately in demanding times. If progress made during the 13th Five Year Plan is any indicator, the PLAN will likely make substantial advances toward its naval logistics development goals in the 14th Five Year Plan and onward.

This article has sought to examine important writings on naval logistics achievements, as expressed by the PLAN itself. In this light, it is just a snapshot of selected parts from a much larger whole. There are many other specific areas of improvement that are not covered and merit deeper examination. At a minimum, taking a broad look at the force beyond just the hardware can give observers a more complete picture of PLAN development progress.

Conor Kennedy is a China Research Analyst at Exovera, SOSi. He was previously an assistance professor at the Naval War College's China Maritime Studies Institute. His research focuses on the People's Republic of China's maritime and military development. He holds an M.A. in international studies from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (Hopkins - Nanjing Center), and two B.A. degrees in Political Science and Chinese Language from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He was recipient of the National Security Education Program's David L. Boren Fellowship to China from 2013–2014.

Notes

[1] Naval leadership is tasked with completing the planning for the next five-year plan before the conclusion of the current one. See: 虞章才 [Yu Zhangcai], 坚决贯彻习主席改革强军决策指示, 坚决完成军委赋予海军的改革任务 – 苗华吴胜利田中刘毅丁毅王海王登平邱延鹏杨世光魏刚王建国出席 [“Resolutely Implement Chairman Xi’s Decision and Directives on Reforming and Strengthening the Military,

and Resolutely Complete the Reform Tasks Assigned to the Navy by the Central Military Commission—Miao Hua, Wu Shengli, Tian Zhong, Liu Yi, Ding Yi, Wang Hai, Wang Dengping, Qiu Yanpeng, Yang Shiguang, Wei Gang, and Wang Jianguo in Attendance”, 人民海军 [People’s Navy], November 30, 2015, p. 1.

[2] 吴雪良 [Wu Xueliang], 加快推进海军后勤高质量发展 [“Accelerate the High-Quality Development of Naval Logistics”], 人民海军 [People’s Navy], September 22, 2022, p. 3.

[3] People’s Navy, November 30, 2015.

[4] Unless otherwise cited, this section primarily contains information from the September 22, 2022 article. See: 邹志凌 [Zou Zhiling], 王兰稳 [Wang Lanwen], 王铁刚 [Wang Tiegang], and 邬兴羽 [Wu Xingyu], 历兵秣马保打赢 – 党的十九大以来海军后勤保障工作巡礼 [“Preparation for Victory – A Tour of the Navy’s Logistics Support Work Since the 19th CPC National Congress”], 人民海军 [People’s Navy], September 22, 2022, p. 3.

[5] Ibid.; 李银川 [Li Yinchuan], 王克 [Wang Ke], and 刘勇坊 [Liu Yongfang], 保障力量如何打赢“突围战”? – 来自北部战区海军某综合保障基地为战抓建的探索与实践 [“How Can the Support Force Win the ‘Battle to Breakout?’ – Exploration and Practice of Building for War from a Comprehensive Support Base of the Northern Theater Command Navy”], 人民海军 [People’s Navy], January 11, 2021, p. 3.

[6] 王冠宇 [Wang Guanyu], 李浩 [Li Hao], and 汪天玄 [Wang Tianxuan], 科技赋能助力保障能力跃升 – 东部战区海军某岸勤部运用信息技术打造“智慧军港” [“Technology Empowerment Helps Improve Support Capabilities – A Shore Service Department of the Eastern Theater Command Navy Uses Information Technology to Build a ‘Smart Military Port’”], 人民海军 [People’s Navy], May 10, 2022, p. 1.

[7] These bases existed previously but are continuing a long period of development and upscaling to better support large-scale joint operations. In particular, the Qingdao Support Base has been touted as the first base to support aircraft carriers since 2013.

[8] EPC stands for engineering, procurement, and construction; which is where a contractor is responsible for the entire lifecycle of a project up until its handover.

[9] The “military support card” is used for many purposes, including salary issuance, obtaining materials and other items from one’s quartermaster, receiving medical treatment, housing, and online banking, including making payments. The card contains personal information to verify personnel identity and prevent fraud and abuse.

[10] People’s Navy, September 22, 2022.

[11] People’s Navy, September 22, 2022

[12] People’s Navy, September 22, 2022.

[13] Ibid.