

Chapter 4

China: Toward a Less Cooperative, More Assertive Posture

The year 2010 may be remembered as a turning point for China's external behavior. Buoyed by expanding national power and growing confidence, China in 2010 began to take an assertive approach in pursuit of its own national interests, disregarding friction with the United States and neighboring countries. On the ocean—the East China Sea, the South China Sea, and the Yellow Sea—China's actions generated considerable friction with the United States, Japan, and some Southeast Asian nations.

In its relations with the United States, disputes arose not only over the traditional issue of Taiwan but also over the new issue of “freedom of navigation” for US naval vessels in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) claimed by China. With respect to its territorial claims in the South China Sea, China shifted from its previous stance of cooperation and adopted an assertive approach, which included more stringent monitoring of foreign fishing operations and intensified maneuvers by its navy and maritime law enforcement agencies. China's relations with Japan also suffered because of the extremely antagonistic posture that it adopted following the collision between a Chinese fishing boat and a Japan Coast Guard vessel near the Senkaku Islands. One factor contributing to these actions is undoubtedly China's steadily increasing military power. The People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has consistently engaged in maneuvers on the high seas and has enhanced the operational capabilities of its fleets.

1. A Search for Greater Equality in US-China Relations

(1) China's Expanding “Core Interests”

Since the Barack Obama administration took office, China has been working to build a relationship of greater equality with the United States. One outcome of these efforts was President Obama's visit to China in November 2009 and the announcement of a US-China Joint Statement, the first since the one released during President Jiang Zemin's visit to the United States in November 1997. The joint statement reiterated that the two nations would build a “positive, cooperative and comprehensive” relationship, which was the new framework for US-China relations agreed upon at the US-China summit in London in April 2009. It also proclaimed that “a partnership to address common challenges” would be established. Rather than only bilateral issues, in other words, the United States and China would build a wide-ranging cooperative relationship that dealt with

regional and global issues, such as regional cooperation in Asia Pacific, the prevention of nuclear proliferation, the Six-Party Talks, the Iranian nuclear problem, climate change, and so on. The joint statement also included commitments to institutionalize the US-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S&ED), which had been given higher status in the Obama administration with the participation of US and Chinese cabinet officials responsible for foreign affairs, and deepening cooperation in such areas as military exchange and law enforcement. As pointed out by Professor Yuan Peng, Director of the Institute of American Studies, China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), this process of relationship building “sets aside contradictions and divergences between the two nations and concentrates on dealing with larger, global issues.” By going beyond the scope of the bilateral relationship and emphasizing a context of common interests and joint responsibility, the Chinese side felt that it would be possible to build a cooperative relationship with the United States.

This emphasis on the global context of US-China relations was considered appropriate in light of the relative rise of China’s international status following the financial crisis. Cui Hongjian, a scholar at the China Institute of International Studies (CIIS), a Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ think tank, sees the backdrop to calls by the United States and China for greater cooperation in the following way: “The mutual dependence brought on by globalization created an opportunity for China and the United States to turn their sights toward collaboration. The financial crisis shook the global economy to its core and ignited a political reaction. It also clearly exposed the vulnerability of a system of mutual dependence and the danger of a world dominated by a single power. The world needs more countries to collaborate closely and it needs such close collaboration on a huge scale.” This background, in Cui’s view, is what led the United States to seek to create a healthy and stable new international environment by cooperating with China, a country that epitomizes the newly emerging economic powers.

As perceptions of the relative strengthening of China’s position vis-à-vis the United States have grown, Chinese leaders and defense and foreign policy officials have begun explicitly to call on the United States to respond in ways that appear robust in Chinese eyes on the Taiwan issue, the “most important and most sensitive core issue” in Sino-US relations. At the US-China summit in November 2009, President Hu Jintao stressed to President Obama that “the key to the Sino-

US relationship was to mutually respect and accommodate each other's core interests and major concerns," adding that "divergences were normal as the two sides had different national conditions." The joint statement, at China's request, included language about both nations "respecting each other's core interests." According to President Hu, respect by the United States for China's core interests meant "respect for China's national sovereignty and territorial integrity on the Taiwan issue and other matters." With such respect, Hu said that a "strategic mutual trust" could develop. Many of China's major media outlets and expert observers felt that the words "respecting core interests" were what gave the joint statement its meaning.

As is evident in President Hu's statements, China wants the United States to respect Taiwan as one of its core interests. However, as President Hu's choice of words "Taiwan and other matters" suggests, the core interests on which China desires US respect are defined in a broader context within China. State Councilor Dai Bingguo, who heads diplomatic affairs for the Chinese government, says that China's core interests can be lumped into three categories: (1) the state's fundamental systems and national security; (2) national sovereignty and territorial unification; and (3) the continued development of the economy and society. China's core interests, in other words, reach into the political, national security, and economic realms. Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Qin Gang also spoke of core interests in this wider sense when he stated that "China's core interests refer to national sovereignty, security, territorial integrity and development interests." According to the *Hong Kong Economic Times*, in 2009 a Chinese think tank had identified four kinds of actions that constituted a threat against China's core interests: (1) challenges to the state's systems, and actions that interfered in China's domestic affairs, including human rights and religious issues; (2) actions that threatened the nation's security, including military surveillance in regions bordering China; (3) challenges to China's sovereignty and objections voiced to China's handling of issues relating to Taiwan, the South China Sea, Tibet, and Xinjiang; and (4) criticism and politicization of economic activity that China reasonably engages in abroad. Traditionally China has used the term "core interest" to refer to Taiwan, Tibet, and other issues of national unification. What these more recent discussions may be revealing is that China is expanding the range of these interests, both geographically and in terms of the issues it considers vital. According to press reports, in early March 2010 State Councilor Dai told

visiting US Deputy Secretary of State James B. Steinberg and Jeffrey A. Bader, senior director for Asian affairs on the National Security Council, that China now considers the South China Sea a “core interest.”

The year 2010 saw a succession of situations that China viewed as threatening to its core interests. The first was the decision in January by the Obama administration to sell weapons to Taiwan; the second was President Obama’s meeting in February with the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism. On January 7, the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), the de facto embassy of the United States, announced that Lockheed-Martin Corporation had been awarded the contract to build surface-to-air Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) missile systems for Taiwan. The George W. Bush administration had notified Congress in October 2008 about its plans to sell these missiles along with other weapons to Taiwan. Now the Obama administration, by contracting with Lockheed-Martin, was executing the plan. Some experts in Taiwan who analyzed the deal believe that the Obama administration tried to avoid a backlash from China by assuring Beijing that it “would not develop and adopt any new plans to sell weapons to Taiwan.” For China, however, it mattered little whether it was a Bush administration plan; it expressed outrage at the Obama administration for carrying it out. On consecutive days in the wake of the announcement, Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokespersons conveyed “strong dissatisfaction and firm opposition” to the sale, urging the United States to “to adhere to agreements to respect China’s core interests and solemn concerns.” A Defense Ministry spokesman also demanded that the United States respect China’s core interests, saying that if the arms sales to Taiwan were not cancelled, China would “reserve the right of taking further actions.”

Despite these demands, the US Department of Defense formally notified Congress on January 29 that it intended to sell \$6.4 billion worth of arms and military technology to Taiwan. Besides 114 PAC-3 air and missile defense systems and 60 UH-60 Black Hawk utility helicopters, the package included 12 Harpoon training missiles, technical support for Multifunctional Information Distribution Systems, and *Osprey*-class minehunting ships. Although the Obama administration removed a couple of items from the deal that were high on Taipei’s wish list as a token of its consideration toward China (66 F-16 C/D fighters and a diesel submarine), Beijing reacted angrily to the decision. The Chinese Foreign Ministry announced the postponement of upcoming vice-ministerial consultations

on strategic security, arms control, and anti-proliferation, and a decision to impose sanctions on the US companies involved in the arms sales. Separately, the Ministry of Defense said in a statement that it had suspended military exchanges with the United States and that, if the situation required it, “we reserve the right of taking further actions.” Moreover, when word came down that President Obama had scheduled a meeting with the Dalai Lama, Zhu Weiqun, executive vice minister of the United Front Work Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, said that such a meeting “would seriously undermine the political foundations of Sino-US relations.” If the meeting took place, China “would take appropriate measures,” he said, referring to the possibility of retaliation.

As suggested by these discussions on core interests, the background to China’s antagonistic reactions is its rising international status and a growing chorus domestically that is demanding a greater assertion of rights based on this enhanced global importance. In terms of Sino-US relations, China’s emergence is fostering aspirations for more equality in the bilateral relationship. For example, Deputy Director Yang Xuedon of the Center for Contemporary Marxism, Central Compilation & Translation Bureau of the CPC, believes that the greater equality in the Sino-US relationship brought on by the enlargement of China’s aggregate national power means that the United States is no longer able to unilaterally set the agenda in the bilateral relationship, and that the long-standing “asymmetry” in the relationship “is improving.” Also, when the “*lianghui*” (“two sessions”)—i.e., the National People’s Congress (NPC) and the National Committee of the People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC)—were in session in March 2010, discussions among delegates grew spirited on the question of China’s foreign policies and on the shape and direction of the Sino-US relationship, with many delegates calling for China to be more forceful in word and deed in line with its growing power and expanding interests. Speaking about the Chinese government’s responses on the Taiwan issue, one delegate stated that “whereas previously China opposed [the United States] with relatively meek language, today not only is it using tough language but it is following up with action.” In the view of this delegate, it was up to the United States to adapt to China’s new approach to dealing with the outside world.

In other words, along with a growing tendency in China to define its interests more expansively, what we are witnessing is the emergence of thinking on foreign

policy that assumes China's enhanced national power and that wants to convert it into leverage in diplomatic negotiations. China attempted to concretize this thinking in its diplomatic dealings with the United States over Taiwan and Tibet.

(2) The Fragility of Improved Sino-US Relations

This is not to say, of course, that realistic perceptions and discussions about China's diplomacy and Sino-US relations are nonexistent in China. For example, Professor Wang Jisi, Dean of the School of International Studies at Peking University, has expressed a critical view of such "get tough" arguments and the situational assessments that underlie them. The Chinese current affairs magazine *Nanfengchuang* stated the proposition as follows: "The peaceful development of China-US relations has rested on compromise and concessions that the Chinese side has made over an extended period of time.... Is China capable of changing this passive situation?" In the accompanying interview, Prof. Wang emphasizes the need to clarify the power balance between the United States and China. According to Wang, even after the financial crisis, this balance has not fundamentally changed. Hence, China will be compelled to make the transition from passive to active gradually. Addressing the Chinese public's desire for concrete results, Prof. Wang argues that China's US policy has achieved realistic outcomes even though a shared perception regarding what constitutes China's core interests and how such interests should be respected has yet to be formed between the two nations. He points to the lack of any significant rise in the quantity and level of weapons sold by the United States to Taiwan during this period and to the difference in atmosphere between President Obama's meeting with the Dalai Lama and President Bush's.

In fact, Chinese diplomacy quickly began to move toward improving relations with the United States. On February 27, the Chinese Foreign Ministry announced that it had accepted the request for a visit to China by Deputy Secretary Steinberg and NSC senior staff member Bader. At the end of March, on a visit to the United States, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Cui Tiankai and Vice Minister of Commerce Zhong Shan made appeals to the US side for better US-China relations. Zhang Yesui, China's ambassador to the United States, told President Obama that "China's leaders and the Chinese government have consistently attached great importance to Sino-US relations." On April 2, President Hu and President Obama spoke over the phone. According to the US

press release, the main reason for the discussion was to enable both leaders to exchange opinions on areas of possible policy cooperation at the Nuclear Security Summit scheduled for the middle of the month. China's official media, however, took the view that the telephone call was an attempt by both nations to move beyond the iciness that had befallen the bilateral relationship since the beginning of the year. President Hu, in fact, told President Obama of his intentions to improve the relationship, saying that he "wanted to strengthen dialogue and cooperation in all areas and to spare no effort to develop a positive, cooperative and comprehensive relationship with the United States." In these efforts to improve relations, China argued that a cooperative relationship would have to be developed based on the US side respecting China's core interests and on both parties reverting to the principles expressed in the joint statement of November 2009.

A summit meeting took place between President Obama and President Hu on April 12, during the latter's visit to the United States to attend the Nuclear Security Summit. There President Hu presented a "five-point proposal" aimed at advancing Sino-US relations, in which he said that the United States and China should: (1) take action to establish "a partnership to deal with common challenges"; (2) respect each other's core interests and major concerns; (3) maintain high-level exchanges and exchanges at other levels, and especially to work to achieve positive results at the second round of the S&ED; (4) deepen practical cooperation in such areas as economics and trade, counter-terrorism, energy, environment, and law enforcement; and (5) strengthen coordination on major international and regional issues. Under the final proposal, President Hu referred to maintaining and strengthening cooperation through the G20 and to working on other challenges such as climate change, nuclear security, reform of the UN Security Council, the Iranian nuclear issue, denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and stability in South Asia.

At the second S&ED, which convened in Beijing at the end of May, the Chinese side emphasized that the

China-US relationship was improving based on President Hu's five-point proposal. On May 20, before the S&ED got underway, the Chinese Foreign Ministry held a press conference where Vice Foreign Minister Cui Tiankai said that "although the Sino-US relationship met with unnecessary obstacles that damaged the common interests of both countries, the relationship has returned to the normal path of development recently as a result of the joint effort of both sides." Vice Minister Cui then stated that the objective of the second S&ED would be to carry out the agreement of the US-China summit, which is to say, to execute the principles agreed upon in the joint statement of November 2009. Moreover, under the strategic track of the S&ED, the Chinese submitted "seven opinions" for the promotion of the Sino-US relationship, which took Hu's five-point proposal as a starting point and added exchanges among legislative bodies, regions, academic institutions, and youth to the framework.

The remarks by President Hu at the opening ceremony for the S&ED also hinted at China's resolve to improve relations. While indicating that China would accelerate its transition to a development model aimed at expanding domestic demand and consumer spending, President Hu expressed sensitivity to the strong desire of the United States for an appreciation of the renminbi by touching on China's steady efforts to advance reform of the exchange rate mechanisms that determine its value on foreign exchange markets. Although no detailed discussions were held on the currency issue under the economic track of the S&ED, US Secretary of the Treasury Timothy Geithner said that the US government "welcome[s] the fact that China's leaders have recognized that reform of the currency exchange rate is an important part of their broader reform agenda." The second round of the S&ED resulted in the signing of eight memorandums of agreement on issues ranging from energy and trade to the use of atomic energy, enough to leave the impression that a certain amount of progress was taking place in US-China relations.

This is not to imply, however, that improvements in US-China relations are being seen on all fronts. China's political leaders and foreign policy officials have sought to improve the bilateral relationship within the framework of the joint statement of November 2009. But neither President Hu's five-point proposal nor the seven opinions offered by China at the second S&ED contain references to the resolve expressed in the joint statement to "take concrete steps to advance sustained and reliable military-to-military relations in the future." To put it another

way, leaders within the Chinese government, which includes the People's Liberation Army (PLA), have failed to make progress in building a consensus on how the military relationship with the United States should be improved or when such steps toward improvement should be taken. This of course does not mean that contacts between both militaries were completely cut off following China's decision to suspend military exchange with the United States at the end of January 2010. For example, under the strategic track of the second S&ED, discussions regarding UN peacekeeping operations (PKOs) took place with the participation of the PLA. However, the strategic dialogue was led by the countries' foreign ministers and discussions about PKOs were not considered a direct step toward advancing military relationships. Moreover, when Adm. Robert F. Willard, commander of the US Pacific Command, and Wallace Gregson, assistant secretary of defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs, came to China to attend the second round of the S&ED, they met with Ma Xiaotian, deputy chief of the general staff of the PLA. General Ma maintained that China always valued mutual trust and cooperation with the United States in military matters. At the same time, he said that for a long while US weapons sales to Taiwan, frequent reconnaissance by US warships and warplanes in the waters and air space of China's exclusive economic zone (EEZ), and the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000, which restricts exchanges between the two nations' militaries, have been major impediments affecting the stability of such relations. He stressed that restoring healthy military relationships and enabling those relations to develop would depend on the United States showing sincerity in resolving these kinds of major issues. In June the US Department of Defense sounded China out on the possibility of a visit to Beijing by Secretary Robert Gates, in conjunction with his trip to Singapore to attend the Asia Security Conference (the "Shangri-La Dialogue"), but the Chinese rejected the idea, saying "it is not a good time."

As is evident from Gen. Ma's statements, the PLA is suspicious not only of US intentions regarding Taiwan but also about the US military's actions overall. For example, a commentary in the July 14, 2010, issue of the *Jiefangjun bao* (*PLA Daily*) analyzed the characteristics of the Obama administration's military strategy based on the *Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR), which was released by the US government in February 2010. According to this analysis, military strategy in the Obama administration was changing in a number of areas, including in its threat perceptions, tactical objectives, and tactical targets. In the post-9/11 world, the

United States had considered international terrorism and religious extremism to be the primary threats. Its assessment was now that “the anti-access and area-denial capabilities of emerging powers constitute the major threat.” Accordingly, the tactical objectives of the US military, particularly in the Western Pacific, have changed to “protecting freedom of movement and restraining the rise of emerging powers.” Although the 2010 QDR does not cite China by name, in the commentary’s eyes the PLA had become the tactical target of the US military and the militaries of its alliance partners. The commentary concluded that the PLA “must prepare to deal with the emergence of a difficult situation.”

These lurking suspicions about US military trends prompted China to severely criticize the joint military exercises held by the United States and Korea at the end of July. The United States and Korea announced the exercises after finding that a North Korean attack had caused the sinking of a South Korean frigate in late March. The exercise was originally scheduled for June in the Yellow Sea. The outraged response by China took the form of a PLA-led criticism. On July 1, Deputy Chief of Staff Ma told Hong Kong media that “the location of the upcoming drill is very close to China’s sea area and China strongly opposes it.” On July 6, China Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang, avoiding a direct response to reporters’ questions, said only that “we were paying attention” to media reports about Gen. Ma’s statement and that “we would make our position clear after looking closely at the situation.” On July 8, Qin released the ministry’s official position, which was that “We firmly oppose foreign military warships and planes carrying out activities in the Yellow Sea and Chinese coastal waters that affect China’s security interests.” This position was repeated on the 13th and again on the 15th. This situation suggests that Gen. Ma’s remarks had not been cleared with the Foreign Ministry beforehand. In other words, it would be reasonable to speculate that only after the posture of the PLA was announced did the Chinese government coordinate policy internally, which may mean that the military’s opinion was adopted as the official opinion of the government.

Based on this official position, PLA analysts began sounding a harsher tone in their criticisms of the US-Vietnam search and rescue exercise to be held in the South China Sea off Da Nang in August. Major General Luo Yuan of the Chinese Academy of Military Sciences, spoke of the possibility of China reconsidering the peaceful and friendly methods that it had used to date to resolve issues, saying that “the United States... is still holding fast to its Cold War mentality” and that its

actions in the South China Sea “violated China’s core interests.” Certain segments of China’s media viewed these kinds of words and actions as an indication that the PLA “had decided to change the rules of the game” in Chinese diplomacy. In their stories and commentary, they cited many examples of military personnel declaring that China would never compromise on its core interests. Of course, some in China were critical of the PLA for its continual reiteration of a hard-line stance. Professor Chu Shulong, deputy director of the Institute of International Strategic and Development Studies at Tsinghua University, said that “the military has too much influence in policy making, particularly in foreign policy.” The *Liaowang* (*Outlook Weekly*), a weekly magazine affiliated with the Xinhua News Agency, published a commentary entitled “Core Interests Should Be Used Cautiously,” in which it raised red flags about the hazards of this line of thought. The commentary pointed out that if China were too quick to use the term “core interests, on which compromise is difficult,” this would limit diplomacy’s role in solving the problems that could arise when China’s interests collided with the interests of other countries, thus increasing the possibility of military clashes.

In October 2010, Chinese Defense Minister Liang Guanglie held talks with US Secretary of Defense Gates in Hanoi and agreed to the resumption of the military exchanges that had been suspended following the US decision to sell arms to Taiwan in January. On October 14 and 15, the two sides took the first step in this process by holding their annual consultations under the Military Maritime Consultative Agreement (MMCA) mechanism in Hawaii. Then in November, at a meeting in Washington, Secretary Gates said that in order to gain a better understanding of one another’s strategic intentions, the United States and China should broaden their relationship from joint training in humanitarian aid and the like to a “strategic dialogue.” Defense Minister Liang, noting the positive trends in the overall China-US relationship, indicated that he hoped military relations could keep pace with the improving political relations between the two countries. He said that “military relations constitute an important part of a positive, cooperative and comprehensive relationship



Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Defense Minister Liang Guanglie meeting in Hanoi (October 11, 2010) (DoD photo by Master Sgt. Jerry Morrison, US Air Force)

between the United States and China” and “we must maintain [their] continuous and stable development.” However, the hard-line view that China must assert its rights in international society is definitely on the upswing within the PLA. The political leadership thus faces the highly difficult task of harmonizing opinions within the government on diplomatic and security issues, which compels us to say that the outlook for a comprehensive improvement in US-China relations, including military relations, is not exceedingly bright.

2. Increasing Friction in Coastal Waters

(1) Conflict over the South China Sea

China is involved in a number of disputes with countries bordering the South China Sea over territorial claims to islands, EEZ boundaries, and so on. Because of actions that it took in the 1990s, which include enacting a territorial waters law that identified the Spratlys and other island groups as Chinese territory and occupying the Mischief Reef, there is a growing sense among Southeast Asian nations that China poses a threat to them. In response to China’s aggressive moves into the South China Sea, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) adopted a Declaration on the South China Sea in 1992 and a Statement by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers on the Recent Developments in the South China Sea in 1995, which urged China to resolve differences by peaceful means, to act with restraint, and to enter into a code of conduct for the region. China, in effect, ignored these appeals and, while arguing for bilateral solutions to the disputes, proceeded to expand military facilities on the islands that it occupied.

From the end of the 1990s through the early 2000s, however, China swung sharply away from this assertive stance toward a cooperative approach to problem solving. It accepted the multilateral framework of discussions sought by ASEAN for the adoption of a code of conduct and, in 2002, signed the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. In this 2002 declaration, China agreed to resolve disputes by peaceful means, to forgo the use of force and to respect freedom of navigation; it also agreed to refrain from inhabiting presently uninhabited islands and to work toward the adoption of a code of conduct. Then, in 2005, it began a joint resource survey of the ocean around the Spratly Islands with Vietnam and the Philippines. These accommodations greatly reduced the threat that Southeast Asian nations sensed it posed in the region.

Recently, however, China has once again begun adopting a hard-line stance on the South China Sea. One example is the stepped-up tempo of patrols by the Chinese fisheries administration. In March 2009, the agency dispatched the *Yuzheng 311* to the region for the first time to oversee China's EEZ, protect Chinese fishermen operating in its waters, and monitor the activities of foreign fishing boats. A converted Navy submarine rescue vessel, the *Yuzheng 311* is a large ship with a maximum displacement of approximately 4,500 tons. It is the largest surveillance vessel operated by the fisheries administration. In April 2010, the *Yuzheng 311* patrolled the South China Sea for over a month. According to Chinese press accounts, the *Yuzheng 311*, along with its consort ship the *Yuzheng 202*, engaged in operations aimed at protecting Chinese fishing boats and defending China's maritime interests. These patrols, largely in the ocean's two major fishing grounds, took the form of these fisheries administration's vessels accompanying fishing boats as they carried out their operations. Altogether, they provided protection for 276 Chinese boats. Simultaneously, they monitored the activities of 204 foreign fishing vessels and engaged in surveillance of thirteen islands currently occupied by other nations.

These Chinese fisheries administration patrols are generating friction with other countries in the area. On April 29, 2010, for example, the Malaysian navy deployed a missile boat and patrol aircraft to pursue the *Yuzheng 311* when it steamed close to the Swallow Reef/Danwan Reef, an island under Malaysia's control. The pursuit lasted eighteen hours. At one point, when the *Yuzheng 311* returned to a position near the atoll, it reportedly sailed to within only 300 meters of the missile boat. China is also causing friction with coastal countries over fishing boat seizures. In June 2010, when an Indonesian patrol boat seized a Chinese fishing vessel operating near Indonesia's Natuna Islands, the *Yuzheng 311* aggressively forced its release, using intimidating tactics that included aiming its gun at the Indonesian ship. Seizures by China of Vietnamese fishing boats have also become a common occurrence. When China detained nine Vietnamese fishermen in September 2010 near the Paracel Islands, the Vietnamese government demanded their release, turning the affair into a diplomatic incident.

Not only is China ratcheting up its fisheries surveillance in the South China Sea; it is also taking steps to expand its naval presence in the area through large-scale military training exercises. In March 2010, six warships belonging to the PLAN's North Sea Fleet, which is headquartered in Qingdao, Shandong Province,

spent three weeks in an open ocean training exercise there. On its way from the East China Sea to the Pacific Ocean, the training formation transited the Miyako Strait and then sailed through the Bashi Channel between Taiwan and the Philippines before entering the South China Sea. In the process, it engaged in practical combat exercises with a number of units, including those with ships from the East Sea Fleet and the South Sea Fleet. Search and rescue, fueling, and other exercises also took place. The principal duty of warships from the North Sea Fleet is presumably to defend the capital city of Beijing. The fact that they were deployed to the distant South China Sea for training can be viewed as a sign of the importance that the PLAN attaches to that region.

On July 26, 2010, the PLAN, principally the South Sea Fleet, conducted a live-ammunition training exercise in the South China Sea. This exercise brought together many arms of the service, including warships and naval aviation aircraft. Held under actual battle conditions, including electromagnetic warfare, it sought to evaluate the Navy's long-range precision strike capabilities, air control operations, and air-defense tactics by surface warships. During the exercise, the PLAN made a total of seventy-one missile launches, using sixteen different types of missiles, an indication of the large scale of the event. The exercise also included participation by the North Sea Fleet and the East Sea Fleet, which each provided an advanced missile destroyer. General Chen Bingde, the PLA's chief of the general staff, observed the exercise and gave an instructional speech. According to the Chinese media, this was the largest exercise in naval history in terms of the number of missiles launched. The media also reported on the exercise's high degree of "informatization." This large-scale, combat training exercise by the PLAN in the South China Sea has caused Southeast Asian countries involved in territorial disputes with China to feel increasingly uneasy about its intentions in the region.

The United States is also becoming more wary about this extensive activity and growing belligerence by China in the South China Sea. In March 2009, Chinese ships interfered with the operations of a US Navy acoustical surveillance vessel, which was conducting operations south of Hainan Island. According to a US Defense Department press release, on March 8 the USNS *Impeccable* was conducting routine operations in international waters seventy miles south of Hainan Island when it was surrounded by a Chinese navy intelligence collection ship, a Bureau of Maritime Fisheries patrol vessel, a State Oceanographic Administration patrol vessel, and two small trawlers. The two fishing boats moved



The acoustical surveillance vessel USNS *Impeccable* (left) and one of the Chinese vessels (right) that harassed its operations (US Navy photo)

dangerously close to the US vessel and dropped pieces of wood in the *Impeccable*'s path. These trawlers also moved in front of the US ship, forcing it to stop. The Chinese then tried to snag the *Impeccable*'s towed acoustic array sonar. Calling these actions by the Chinese boats unlawful interference with the activities of a vessel operating properly in international waters, US officials lodged a formal protest against China.

This elicited a forceful rebuttal from China. On March 9, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Ma Zhaoxu said that “China has lodged a solemn representation to the United States as the USNS acoustical surveillance ship *Impeccable* conducted activities in China’s exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea without China’s permission, violating international and Chinese law.” He added: “We demand that the United States take effective measures to prevent similar acts from happening [again].” Later, Huang Xueping, a spokesman for the Defense Ministry, after repeating these assertions, said that obstructing the *Impeccable*'s operations was appropriate because “China conducts normal activities in its own exclusive economic zone to defend its rights and interests... such activities are completely justified and lawful.”

The conflict between the United States and China over this issue results from differing interpretations of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea regarding activity by foreign warships in an EEZ. The United States contends that an EEZ, unlike territorial waters, are part of the open ocean where “freedom of navigation” is guaranteed, and thus the nation with jurisdiction over the zone cannot restrict activity by naval vessels operating there. China, on the other hand, maintains that activity by foreign naval vessels that affects maritime safety in an EEZ can be

restricted on the basis of the UN convention and has incorporated these restrictions in its domestic laws. The argument of the Chinese side cannot be reconciled with the principle cited by the United States, which attaches great importance to freedom of navigation on the high seas. The *Impeccable* incident is likely to have a significant impact on US-China relations hereafter because China's challenge to the US principle was accompanied by concrete action.

In recent years, China has also made progress on the construction of a new naval base on Hainan Island, where it has begun to deploy its most advanced ballistic missile nuclear submarine. Observers believe that this submarine will carry the JL-2 SLBM, which is now under development. Because Hainan Island sits at the edge of the quite deep South China Sea, the location of this base offers the concealment necessary for submarine activities. If a nuclear submarine carrying a new SLBM can be successfully deployed from this base, China's ability to deter the United States will be enhanced. It would be reasonable to believe that the *Impeccable's* intelligence gathering activity south of Hainan Island was in response to these moves by the Chinese navy. The fact that China actually obstructed those activities has undoubtedly become a considerable source of concern for US security.

Thereafter China continued to take issue with activities by US warships in its coastal waters. On March 26, 2010, the South Korean Navy patrol vessel *Cheonan*, which was participating in a joint US-Korea exercise, was sunk in the Yellow Sea near the Northern Limit Line between the two Koreas. After an international investigation, the United States and South Korea concluded that a North Korean torpedo caused the sinking, and, to deter further adventurism by North Korea, announced joint military exercises in the Yellow Sea and the Sea of Japan. This announcement included word that the US Navy aircraft carrier *George Washington* would be taking part in the Yellow Sea exercise. When this became known, China objected vehemently and, as noted above, Deputy Chief of Staff Ma and a spokesman for the Foreign Ministry declared their opposition. But China did not stop at verbally opposing the exercise; in June the PLA began holding a series of its own maneuvers near the Yellow Sea to keep the United States and South Korea in check.

The United States is beginning to adopt a stance opposing China's attempts to constrain US military actions in its offshore waters. While in Hanoi for the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in July, US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham

Clinton touched on the territorial dispute in the South China Sea, saying that the United States opposed the use or threat of force by any of the claimants. She added that the United States supported the 2002 ASEAN-China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and made it clear that it was encouraging the parties to reach agreement on a full code of conduct. The United States was taking these positions, Secretary Clinton said, because it “has a national interest” in freedom of navigation, open access to Asia’s maritime commons, and respect for international law in the South China Sea. The United States thus indicated that it would be deepening its involvement in the region to help maintain stability in the South China Sea.

By establishing more contact with the nations of Southeast Asia, the US military is gradually enhancing its presence in the South China Sea. Over a two-month period between June and July 2010, the US Navy joined the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) and others in “Pacific Partnership 2010,” a humanitarian project designed to provide medical and other assistance to countries in the region. The US Navy’s hospital ship *Mercy* and the JMSDF’s *Kunisaki* jointly visited Vietnam and Cambodia, where they spent two weeks each performing medical procedures and other tasks on behalf of local residents. In August, the US Navy’s aircraft carrier *George Washington* and Aegis guided missile destroyer *John S. McCain* visited Da Nang, Vietnam, where they deepened their relations with the Vietnamese military by providing it with training in damage control, search and rescue, and maintenance.

Southeast Asian nations also appear to desire the United States to become more involved in the security of the region. At the Fourth ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM) held in Hanoi in May 2010, the ministers voted to hold an expanded version of the ADMM (“ADMM-Plus”) in Hanoi in October. The defense ministers of eight countries outside the region, including the United States, would be invited to attend. Because of deeply ingrained distrust among member nations, it was not until 2006, nearly forty years after its founding, that ASEAN succeeded in establishing the ADMM. That the ADMM went beyond the membership of existing frameworks of regional cooperation, such as ASEAN+3 (Japan, China, Korea) and the East Asia Summit (EAS), to include the United States in ADMM-Plus probably means that ASEAN has now reached a consensus on the need for greater US involvement in the region to maintain stability. Decisions by ASEAN require the consent of all member nations. Myanmar’s

consent to the participation of the United States is especially noteworthy because of its conflicts with the United States and its increasing dependence on China. The common concerns of the United States and Southeast Asia regarding China's confrontational actions in the South China Sea are steadily deepening their collaboration on security matters.

(2) Friction with Japan in the East China Sea

China and Japan are involved in a dispute over the borders of their respective EEZs in the East China Sea. Because the ocean in question is relatively narrow, claiming a zone that is 200 nautical miles from each country's base line results in considerable overlap. Consequently Japan and China have engaged in discussions aimed at demarcating the border. Citing the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, Japan has argued that establishing the border at the median line, a point equidistant from each country's base line, would be equitable. But China is claiming rights up to the Okinawa Trough, based on the natural extension of the continental shelf. The border, thus, remains undrawn to this day. China, meanwhile, has been engaged on its own in the development of oil and gas fields near the median line, an action that has aroused growing concern in Japan. In June 2008, both nations reached an agreement during a transitional period lasting from the date of the agreement until final border demarcation. The key points of the agreement were that a joint development district straddling the Japan-China median line would be established and that Japanese corporations participating in the development of the Shirakaba oil and gas field (Chinese name "Chunxiao field") would abide by Chinese law. Although discussions on executing the agreement have continued and the two nations have declared their willingness to enter into the necessary exchange of notes, the Chinese side was reluctant to move the project forward because of strong opposition domestically. Finally, at the end of May 2010, Premier Wen Jiabao, in a meeting in Japan with Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, agreed to begin formal negotiations on an exchange of notes. In making the announcement, Premier Wen said that both sides should "continue to work on implementing principled consensus on the East China Sea issue, strengthen crisis management on the oceans, and avoid confrontation and conflicts to make the East China Sea a sea of peace, cooperation, and friendship."

On the other hand, in 2010 China began to increase the tempo of its activity in the East China Sea. In April, a formation of ten ships belonging to the PLAN's

East Sea Fleet, including two destroyers, three frigates, and two submarines, sailed through the Miyako Strait between Okinawa Island and Miyako Island on its way to the Western Pacific, where it conducted various training exercises. The Miyako Strait is located within Japan's EEZ and is defined as international waters, so Chinese warships were free to transit it legally. However, on two occasions between April 8 and April 21, the Chinese acted in a provocative and



PLA Navy ship-borne helicopter that approached a Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force destroyer (April 8, 2010)
(Japanese Ministry of Defense photo)

dangerous way, launching shipboard helicopters and flying them abnormally close to the JMSDF ships that were tracking them. Japan lodged a formal protest with the Chinese government. However, Chinese Ministry of Defense spokesman Huang Xueping said that the exercises were carried out in accord with international law and did not constitute a threat to other nations. Turning the tables, he then criticized Japan's actions against "warships of the Chinese navy, which were engaged in normal training exercises," saying that Japan "should not have interfered with our ships by conducting a pursuit over so many days and at such close range."

With respect to the Senkaku boat collision incident in September 2010, China's response was even more belligerent. In the morning of September 7, the Japan Coast Guard (JCG) patrol boat *Yonakuni* discovered the Chinese fishing boat *Minjinyu 5179* operating without Japanese government permission in territorial waters off Kubajima, an island in the Senkaku group. Following procedures prescribed by law, the *Yonakuni* ordered the *Minjinyu* to leave the area, whereupon the *Minjinyu* rammed its hull and attempted to flee. While still in Japan's territorial waters, the *Minjinyu* brushed up against the *Mizuki*, another JCG patrol boat. Ultimately, a number of JCG vessels forced the Chinese boat to come to a stop and conducted an onboard investigation. On September 8, the JCG arrested its captain, Zhan Jixiong, on suspicion of obstruction of performance of public duty, and in accordance with the law, took the boat and its fourteen crew members into custody.

Claiming that the Senkaku Islands were Chinese territory, Beijing called the arrests "illegal," and summoned Japan's ambassador, Uichiro Niwa, multiple times over several days to demand the immediate release of the boat and the crew.

China then unilaterally postponed negotiations on the exchange of notes for oil and gas field development in the East China Sea and suspended an invitation to a Japanese youth group that was supposed to visit the Shanghai Expo. On the 21st, Premier Wen, who was in the United States to attend the UN General Assembly, demanded the immediate and unconditional release of the boat's captain, threatening further action if this demand were not met. Having halted rare earth exports to Japan and detained employees of the Fujita Corporation, China then demanded an apology and compensation from the Japanese government on the 24th, this after the Naha District Public Prosecutors Office had released the captain pending a decision on whether to prosecute him. On the same day it also cancelled the scheduled visit of a JMSDF training ship to Qingdao. China's belligerent posture caused pro-Chinese sentiment to fall precipitously in Japan. In a poll conducted by the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 87 percent of respondents said that China "could not be trusted."

China's assertive stance in the East China Sea has had as one of its consequences the advancement of cooperation between the United States and Japan in security matters. Meeting in Washington on May 25, Japanese Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa and Secretary of Defense Gates agreed on further cooperation in response to the PLAN's stepped-up pace of activity. In New York on September 23, Secretary of State Clinton told Foreign Minister Seiji Maehara that the Senkaku Islands are covered under Article 5 of the US-Japan Security Treaty. Then, on October 11, during his meeting with Defense Minister Kitazawa in Hanoi, Secretary Gates said that as China expands its activities on the oceans it will be important for countries involved in ocean-related disputes with it to discuss the issues. Both ministers agreed that close collaboration and cooperation would be needed between the United States and Japan hereafter. At his meeting with President Obama at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation conference held in Yokohama in November, Prime Minister Naoto Kan expressed his appreciation to the United States for the support that it has consistently provided to Japan during difficult times in its relations with China. The prime minister also noted that there was a deepening appreciation on a national level about the importance of the US-Japan alliance and the presence of the US military in the region.

Over the past several years, the PLAN and Chinese law enforcement agencies such as the fisheries agency have become more active in the East China Sea, the South China Sea, and other coastal oceans. These actions have sometimes been

provocative and belligerent, causing countries in the region to become concerned. China's recent actions in these waters have given rise to a shared sense of alarm among nations on the periphery of these oceans, especially in view of Beijing's buildup of military power. On his visit to the United States in September, Premier Wen stated that "[China will] always seek to strengthen friendly relations and to increase practical cooperation with its neighbors, while advocating the peaceful settlement of differences through dialogue and discussion." The Premier added that "China's development will not harm or pose a threat to anyone." China's neighbors are paying a great deal of attention not just to such words but also to China's actual actions.

3. The Military Situation in China

(1) Response to the Senkaku Incident

China's belligerence on the Senkaku boat collision incident continued unabated, with Chinese Foreign Ministry spokespersons and the *People's Daily* and other media escalating their condemnations of Japan. The PLA, however, remained silent. Except for a news report from the Xinhua News Agency that it carried on its international pages, the *PLA Daily* has said nothing editorially about the incident. This is in direct contrast to its conventional reporting posture, where anything related to China's territory or sovereignty, such as the US weapons sale to Taiwan or the actions of the US military in the South China Sea, provokes strong denunciations. While all of these attacks on Japan were occurring, moreover, top PLA leaders went ahead as planned with their inspection of "Peace Mission 2010," a joint military exercise that was taking place in Kazakhstan within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

How should this stance by the PLA be interpreted? With regard to China's disputes over islands, Adm. Yin Zhuo, a member of the PLAN Informatization Experts Advisory Committee, has argued that priority must be placed on economy building, saying that "as a general principle, economic development requires a peaceful international environment, [hence] conflict resolution by military means and the destruction of the external environment are not desirable." Giving the economy precedence has been a policy passed down by Chinese leaders since Deng Xiaoping, who forged such principles as "sovereignty in our own hands" and "setting aside disputes and pursuing joint development" as a means of creating

an international environment that would allow China to focus on the economy.

A scholar specializing in strategic studies at the PLA National Defense University has discussed these principles in concrete terms in an article published in the *Chinese Social Sciences Today*. In his view, making “sovereignty in our own hands” a concrete reality would first require stronger legislation on the ocean and the clarification of the scope of zones of exclusive jurisdiction through the establishment of base lines. Secondly, it would require strengthening law enforcement effort on the seas, through the uniting of the China Marine Surveillance agency, the Bureau of Marine Fisheries, and the China Coast Guard into a quasi-military force. The third requirement is propaganda—using the media in China to build a shared perception within the country of “sovereignty in our own hands” and the foreign media to actively foster a climate of international opinion favorable to China. As preparation for the use of force, he then proposes that China enhance its blue-water operational capabilities and increase its ability to deter adversaries by deploying the PLA Second Artillery Corps to the East China Sea and the South China Sea, paralleling these moves with preparations for a propaganda campaign to promote public acceptance of the legality and the justice of the use of force. With respect to “setting aside disputes and pursuing joint development,” he begins by noting that the United States is now dependent on the Chinese economy for its own economic recovery and argues that China should take advantage of this dependency by moving even closer to the United States as a trade partner. China could then demand that the United States maintain neutrality on the Senkaku Islands and on disputes in the South China Sea. By circumventing US deterrence and direct intervention in this way, it could compel Japan to respect the principle of “setting aside disputes and pursuing joint development.” If conflict occurs, he says that China should take strong countermeasures and carry out “defensive attacking actions,” citing as a concrete example the measures that China adopted during the Senkaku incident.

With its greatest concern being the maintenance of a peaceful environment that would enable it to pursue economic development, China has until now endeavored to sustain cooperative external relationships—by accentuating the “setting aside disputes” principle over the “sovereignty in our own hands” principle. But with the rapid rise of its economic and military power, it now appears to be implementing a policy in which the focus is increasingly the “sovereignty” principle, something that it has not emphasized very much to date.

Research into “Disintegration Warfare” within the PLA

Between 2003 and 2009, the PLA Nanjing International Relation College, examined the concept of “disintegration warfare.” A part of the Intelligence Department of General Staff Headquarters, the College is widely thought to be the institution which educates the military attaches and intelligence officers who go to work in China’s embassies around the world. According to this research, “disintegrating enemy forces” is one of the three major principles prescribed by Mao Zedong as political work to be carried out by the Communist Party. Even today, it is considered an unused and potentially valuable strategy for the PLA. At its core lies Mao’s dictum that “to subdue the enemy without fighting is the supreme excellence”—which is to say, it is about winning without fighting. The Academy’s research sought to keep this tradition of disintegration warfare alive, examining ways of “winning without fighting” in a modern-day context by taking in the lessons learned from “informatized” wars fought in recent years. Disintegration warfare comprises activity in a variety of arenas: political, media, economics, psychology, information, and strategy. Warfare over media and economics, two kinds of disintegration warfare that begin during peacetime, need in particular to be noted.

“Media disintegration warfare” is, in effect, propaganda warfare. Using all types of modern information media, including satellite communications, television, movies, radio, the Internet, newspapers, and magazines, it aims to convey to a wide audience perspectives and information that are advantageous to China, doing so in a planned, organized, and selective manner. By guiding and controlling public opinion internationally and domestically, this kind of warfare seeks to heighten morale in China while battering and disintegrating the enemy’s will to fight.

“Economic disintegration warfare” is an activity which seeks to disintegrate the enemy’s economic system and eliminate the capacities that support it. This is accomplished through a variety of means, among them economic blockades, economic penetration, economic acquisitions, trade sanctions, monetary destabilization, blockades of technology, and the cutting off of traffic and transportation. Using such tactics, the strategy confuses the enemy’s economic system, with resultant declines in its productive capability and in the standard of living felt by people on an everyday basis. The College’s research points out that, by provoking popular dissatisfaction against the government and causing confidence and the will to resist among the enemy’s people to be lost, China can place the enemy under its control, win without fighting, or convert the enemy into a friend. After the Senkaku incident in September 2010, exports of rare earth metals to Japan began to drop off. Although the Chinese government denies it, it is commonly accepted in Japan that this interruption was intended as retaliation by China. In terms of the categories being discussed here, this action falls under trade sanctions. In addition, some Chinese economic experts were advocating that China punish Japan by intervening in foreign exchange markets to increase the value of the yen. Such an action would be lumped under monetary destabilization.

(2) The National Defense Mobilization Law

On February 26, 2010, the National Defense Mobilization Law of the People's Republic of China (hereinafter, the "Defense Mobilization Law" or the "DML") was passed at the 13th meeting of the Eleventh National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee. The law took effect on July 1, 2010. The DML sets forth rules relating to the requisition of civilian resources during peacetime and during times of national emergency. Initial attempts to draft a national mobilization law go back to 1984. In 1994, the National Defense Mobilization Committee was established, creating a situation in which an organization to manage mobilization was in place before the legislation. A bill came up again for consideration in August 2000, but it was not until January 2009 that formal deliberations at the NPC began, leading finally to the law's recent enactment. During this period, local governments had begun to establish their own laws on defense mobilization, so there was a need to pass a national defense mobilization law to fill the gap between the upper level Law on National Defense and lower level laws. That it took around twenty-five years to achieve enactment could reflect difficulties encountered in adjusting the government's interests with the interests of private companies. In the 1980s, when many state-run enterprises were still in existence, requisitioning resources and personnel was not a problem. For private businesses, however, requisitions are a burden. With private companies now making up the bulk of businesses in operation, measures offering compensation and preferential treatment have also become necessary.

As President Hu Jintao emphasized at the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China and at the plenary session of PLA deputies to the NPC in March, the idea of "military-civilian integration" underlies his government's approach to defense building and economy building. The Defense Mobilization Law is also rooted in military-civilian integration. A senior official in the General Affairs Office of the National Defense Mobilization Committee states: "The Defense Mobilization Law is an important measure for enabling the nation's potential to be transformed into actual defense capabilities. It is also an important way to realize military-civilian integration and to integrate peacetime production with wartime production." One could even say that the ideological origin of defense mobilization is the "people's war" strategy and that the DML is the embodiment of this strategy under current conditions. The *PLA Daily* argues that "however much forms of war or tactical styles may change, a people's war strategy will never grow

old. Tapping skillfully into the resources of the masses and fully exploiting the power of a people's war remains an effective method of defeating the enemy in local 'informatized' wars." China no longer intends to have its militia fight a guerilla war. The militia that is needed to fight local wars under conditions of informatization is a militia skilled in information technology. When Minister of Defense Liang inspected the progress of defense mobilization in the Nanjing Military Region in July, he was provided with reports on the level of science, technology and information mobilization in the militia. This can be understood as a sign that China is seeking ways of developing a people's war strategy that will be effective in "informatized" local wars.

There are a number of points that should be remarked on about the DML. The first is that it gives responsibility for executing the law primarily to governments. For example, it provides that the State Council and the Central Military Commission will jointly lead the national defense mobilization system, while requiring that civilian governments at the country level and higher include defense mobilization measures in their national economic and social development plans. Because the DML deals not only with military matters but also branches out widely to areas such as politics, economics, society, science, energy and the media, it is understandable that governments have been called upon to be the primary overseers of the process.

The second is the provision requiring citizens and organizations to perform the public service of defense, and the provision governing requisitions of and compensation for civilian resources. According to the DML, "the public service of defense" comprises support for military operations, prevention of wartime disasters and the provision of relief during such disasters, and cooperation in maintaining societal order. It provides that all male civilians between the ages of 18 and 60, and all female civilians between the ages of 18 and 55, must engage in the public service of defense. It mandates further that all organizations and individuals are obligated to accept the requisition of civilian resources. The question here becomes whether foreign-owned enterprises or joint ventures will be exempted from such obligations or not, but the DML does not address this point.

The third is the DML's linkage to "emergencies." These are defined, on the one hand, as events that affect public safety, such as natural disasters, calamitous accidents and public health accidents, and, on the other, as events that affect public order, such as large-scale demonstrations. In the General Provisions section

of the DML, there is a reference to the mutual linkage between defense mobilization and the emergency response mechanism. China responded to an increase in non-traditional threats by enacting an Emergency Response Law in 2007, and has been operating an emergency response mechanism separately from defense mobilization since then. But the senior NDMC official has categorized emergency responses as a part of defense mobilization, declaring that “returning fire in wartime is the basis for building a defense mobilization system; peacetime operations and emergency response are an extension of the defense mobilization function.” In emergency situations, when there is a need to control riots or to provide disaster relief, it is primarily local reservists, militia and civilian resources that are called upon to respond until regular units of the military or the armed police arrive. Thus, this statement could have been motivated by the need to establish a basis for mobilizing the militia and other local resources. The senior NDMC official also spoke of “wanting to have the use of local resources in emergency response situations and preparations for response in battle to be mutually reinforcing,” suggesting that he was also trying to keep the intensity of these groups high. On the other hand, some critics feel that it is wrong to have jurisdiction over defense mobilization and emergency response split between two different government departments. In their view, these tasks should be organized and integrated into one department having two functions.

(3) The Normalization of Blue-water Exercises

In March 2010, six warships from PLAN’s North Sea Fleet transited the waters between Okinawa Island and Miyako Island on their way to the Western Pacific, where they turned south and sailed to the South China Sea. In April ten warships from the East Sea Fleet, including two submarines, also transited the strait between the two islands before turning south in the Western Pacific. The *People’s Daily* reported that the training exercises engaged in by these ships marked “the dramatic beginning of a normalization of blue-water training.” In the words of Du Jingchen, then Commander of the East China Sea Fleet (currently, Navy Chief of Staff), “normalizing blue-water exercises is a choice that must be made in order for the Navy to advance into the open ocean.” Adm. Du adds: “Only by normalizing blue-water exercises and moving our training areas from coastal waters to the high seas will we be able to deal effectively with threats to the safety of the ocean.”

The “offshore defensive strategy” adopted by the PLAN has had the aims of

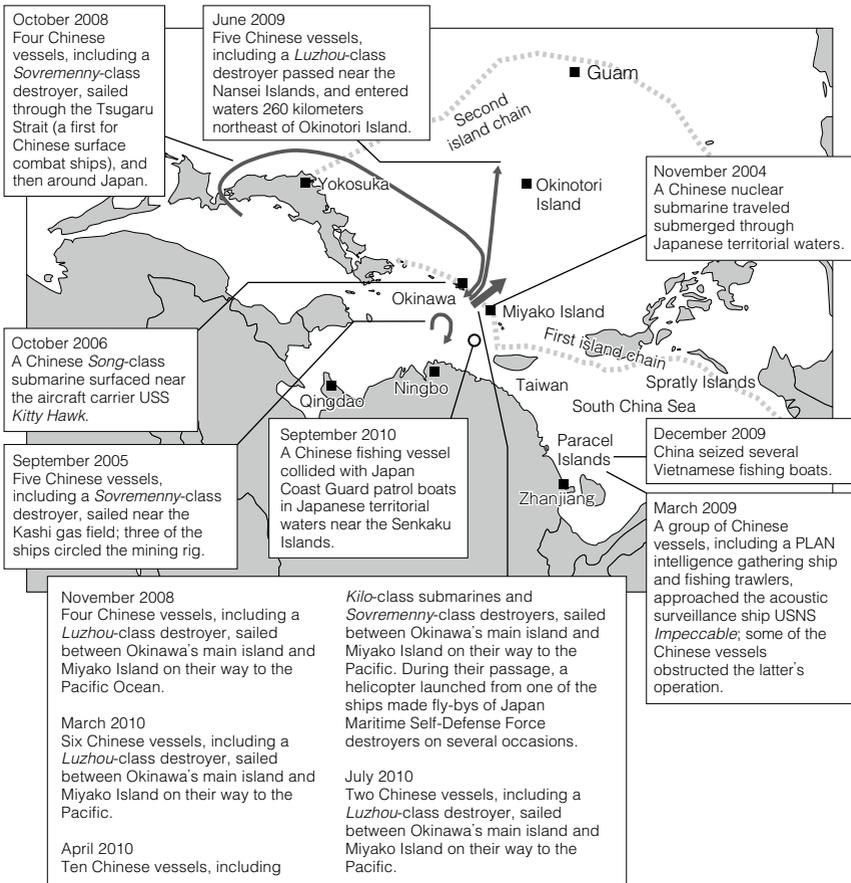
defending national sovereignty, securing territory, and achieving unification with Taiwan. There appear to be two reasons why the Navy is now engaged in blue-water training exercises. The first is the expansion of the operational area that needs to be defended under the offshore defensive strategy. In 1985, Liu Huaqing, Commander of the PLAN and the originator of this strategy, said “with the continuous development of our nation’s economic strength and technological capabilities, our operational area will expand from the Northern Pacific to the second island chain.” The greater cruising distance of today’s aircraft has also extended the range over which support can be provided to warships. Warship performance has also improved, making it possible for the Navy to cover a wider area. Secondly, the Navy is adapting to the needs of a “blue-water defensive strategy,” which was proposed by President Hu in 2007. Under this strategy, the Navy is responsible for protecting the nation’s island territories and other ocean-related interests and for securing the safety of strategic routes for ocean industries, ocean transportation and energy resources. As its experience combating pirates in the Gulf of Aden has grown, the PLAN has acutely sensed the need to enhance its blue-water defensive strategy.

A number of advances are enabling the PLAN to normalize blue-water training, including the higher performance capabilities of its warships, modernized navigation systems, and greater crew adaptability to the ocean through more experience with long cruises. But there is another advance that is making this possible, according to the *PLA Daily*: a reformed food system. Because of its traditional offshore defensive strategy, the Chinese Navy had made virtually no provisions for long-term cruises. The ordinary training cycle for submarines was, at most, a week. One reason was that the Navy’s food preservation technology was underdeveloped and the resulting lack of fresh vegetables and fruits affected the health and the psychology of crews. A point stressed by the *PLA Daily* in its reporting on the Navy’s food systems is that as deployments for blue-water operations in the Gulf of Aden lengthened, the Navy did make improvements to its refrigeration technology, which has enabled food to be preserved for longer periods. The *PLA Daily* also wrote about a submarine unit, which was able to extend food preservation times, decrease the volume of refuse that it generated, and increase the length of its cruises by changing menus from Chinese food to bread and other Western foods.

In its April 10, 2010, edition, the *PLA Daily* reported on the blue-water exercises

of the East Sea Fleet, entitling the story “Media Warfare, Psychological Warfare, and Legal Warfare.” When a fleet conducts exercises in these areas, what actually takes place? In media warfare, the task is probably to try to win the support of public opinion in China for blue-water training by having reporters participate in and report on the exercises. Psychological warfare training is probably designed to protect the psychological state of the crew. This is suggested by the PLA’s definition of psychological warfare, which includes discussions of ways of maintaining a psychological line of defense for its own forces. In recent years the

Figure 4.1. Major Chinese activities in regional waters



Source: Compiled from Japanese Ministry of Defense resources.

PLA has given psychological counseling increased attention and assigns political officers the responsibility of maintaining psychological health. According to reporters accompanying the North Sea Fleet on its blue-water exercise, crews are given psychological tests before embarking. Those who fail the exams are unable to participate. During the exercise, political officers plan various events to maintain the morale of the crew. The adoption of this approach by the North Sea Fleet suggests that the same thing probably occurs in psychological warfare training by the East Sea Fleet. Legal warfare exercises are thought to relate to assistance provided by the legal staff. When the PLAN dispatched warships to the Gulf of Aden, it sent along a “legal adviser” to prevent problems of international law from arising. A legal adviser also accompanied the North Sea Fleet in its blue-water exercise. With respect to this matter, the assistant commandant of the North Sea training fleet said “blue-water exercises are military activities that are heavily influenced by policy, public liaison, and law” so it “behooves us to take steps to avoid actions that could cause unnecessary problems and misunderstandings.” Because its blue-water exercises take place in areas where the interests of multiple countries collide, the North Sea Fleet has a legal adviser on board to permit China to assert its sovereignty while avoiding legal troubles. In the same way, the East Sea Fleet took a legal adviser along to ensure that it would be in complete adherence with international law. In its “three warfares” exercise, the East Sea Fleet prepared not only for external adversaries; the exercise was primarily also an inward-facing event.

The Elevation of Xi Jinping to Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission

At the Fifth Plenum of the 17th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, which was held in Beijing on October 15–18, 2010, Vice President Xi Jinping was elected Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission, a position held by President Hu Jintao before he became China’s paramount leader. With this appointment Xi has been anointed as the leading candidate to succeed President Hu.

Xi is the son of Xi Zhongxun, a senior statesman in the generation of leaders who served with Deng Xiaoping, and a former vice premier of China. With this background, Xi became a poster person for the “Crown Prince Party,” a reference to the children of powerful political officials. On the other hand, there are many stories told about the difficulties that he endured after his father was purged

during the Cultural Revolution. During that time, Xi worked in a rural village under the “Down to the Countryside Movement.” Thereafter, he gained leadership experience through a number of posts held in Fujian and Zhejiang provinces and in Shanghai.

Compared to other leaders of his generation, Xi Jinping has close ties with the PLA. After graduating from Tsinghua University, he began working in the General Office of the General Staff Department of the Central Military Commission, where he served as secretary to Geng Biao, who was then secretary-general of the CMC. During this period, he had “active military” status. In today’s China, according to the principle that “the party controls the gun,” secretaries of regional party committees serve concurrently as first secretaries of the respective provincial military districts, military sub-districts, and security garrison districts, first political commissars of reserve divisions, and local leaders of National Defense Mobilization Committees. As he rose through the ranks in county, municipal, and provincial level positions, Xi was given increasingly more responsibility in military roles, serving as first political commissar in a county People’s Armed Forces Department, a county garrison division and an anti-aircraft reserve division, as chairman of a National Defense Mobilization Committee, and as first secretary of a provincial military district. In 2007, he became first secretary of the Shanghai Security Garrison District. In the period between 1979 and 2007, Xi was gaining military-related experience, in the broad sense of the term, virtually the entire time. For civilian leaders in the Communist Party such as Xi, this kind of experience in the regional leadership roles plays an important part in building good relationships with the PLA.

Xi Jinping’s close relationship with the PLA is further strengthened by a family connection: his wife, Peng Liyuan, is the head of the Song and Dance Troupe of the PLA General Political Department and, as a civilian member of the PLA, holds a rank comparable to major general. Since his appointment in October 2007 to the Politburo Standing Committee and in March 2008 as vice president of the People’s Republic of China, Xi has met frequently with military leaders and defense ministers from countries large and small who were visiting China, a step which may be viewed as laying the groundwork for his rise to the vice chairmanship of the Central Military Commission.

For the Communist Party of China, there are few more important issues in politics than wielding control over the PLA. Xi Jinping’s selection as leading candidate for paramount leader of China indicates that the military is behind him. Just how Xi will exert his control over the PLA, however, remains a matter of major interest to observers around the world.