Session II

How Much Military Capability Does China Want to Develop? How Much Will It Succeed?

How Much Military Capability Does China Want to Develop? How Much Will it Succeed?: The Dragon at Sea[1]

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Introduction

This paper addresses China's naval ambitions, to include forces, strategy, and possible future missions. Naval points in China's 2006 White Paper on National Defense will be used to project People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) strength in 2016.[2] The discussion will focus on three scenarios of maritime dispute involving China; each is unlikely to be resolved before 2016, and each balances the PLAN against opposing naval power.

Beijing's White Paper, "China's National Defense in 2006," focuses on basic changes to the PLA that follow trend lines adumbrated in the 2004 Defense White Paper. Navy organization remains based on three fleets—North, East, and South Sea fleets—but reports continuation of the significant changes begun following the 2003 loss of the *Ming* submarine.

These focus on streamlining and clarifying the organization and chain of command for maintenance and logistics responsibilities; the 2006 White Paper reemphasizes these processes and further highlights the reduction in headquarters personnel. While the PLAN has reportedly "cut some ship groups….the naval aviation department and converted naval bases into support ones," this process does not reflect a lessening of the PLAN's importance to China's leadership. Rather it results from Beijing's determination to increase the power and usefulness of the navy as an instrument of national statecraft. This is strongly reflected in the Paper's noting that the navy remains unaffected by reductions in PLA manpower.

Taiwan continues to head the list of China's security concerns, and hence the PLAN's primary concern. "Active Defense" remains the strategic coda, supported by the need to improve capabilities in "joint operations and integrated maritime support," particularly in coastal waters. The White Paper repeatedly emphasizes the importance of "science and technology" and "informationization" as the key guide posts for naval modernization. A

[1] The views presented in this paper are the author's alone, and may not represent those of the National War College or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

[2] China's 2006 White Paper is in "Full Text: China's National Defense in 2006," *Xinhua* (Beijing), 29 December 2006, in FBIS-CPP2006122968070.

naval role in nuclear deterrence is noted, probably reflecting the national investment in the new *Jin*-class ballistic missile submarines currently under construction.

The 2006 White Paper repeats earlier statements about improvements to China's naval reserve and militia forces, as it does to the continuing codification of military laws. The Paper also emphasizes the maritime laws that follow the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), reflecting Beijing's continuing concerns with maritime sovereignty disputes in the East and South China Seas.

Current PLAN Forces

The size of China's navy is a strong indicator of national intentions, although not necessarily an indicator of national belligerency, PLAN strength does establish the potential for using naval power as an instrument of statecraft.

Surface Combatants

China's surface force includes destroyers, frigates, and patrol craft; it is on the forefront of PLAN modernization, with several new classes launched during the past fifteen years. The most capable destroyers and frigates are multi-mission capable, equipped especially for anti-surface warfare (ASUW), anti-submarine warfare (ASW), and anti-air warfare (AAW). [3] ASUW consists of operations against surface ships; ASW is conducted to detect, target, and attack submarines; AAW is conducted against manned aircraft and unmanned air vehicles. Amphibious warfare (AMW) is designed to land ground forces ashore; the PLAN has a two-brigade Marine Corps for this mission, but army divisions in Fujian and Guangdong Provinces have also been assigned AMW as a primary mission.[4]

The PLAN built small classes of ships in the 1990s, trying different combinations of mostly foreign built or foreign designed weapons, sensors, command and control, and propulsion systems. The two *Luhu*- and one *Luhai*-class destroyers are essentially identical in capability, although the latter is larger—displacing 6,000 rather than the former's 4,600 tons. The 2,250 ton displacement *Jiangwei*-class frigates, at least twelve of which have now been built by China, are smaller versions of the destroyers. None of these ships are capable of operating successfully in a modern fleet environment, however, because of inadequate ASW

[3] The warfare abbreviations are those used by the United States and its NATO allies; the PLAN at least informally uses them as well, as evidenced in the author's conversations with various senior Chinese officers.
[4] Dennis J. Blasko, The Chinese Army Today: Tradition and Transformation for the 21st Century (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 188.

and AAW capabilities.

Two PLAN ship classes bridge the gap between 20th and 21st centuries, including the three sub-classes of the *Jiangwei*-class frigates now exist.[5] The second "bridging" combatant is the *Sovermenny*-class destroyer, four of which China purchased from Russia. This 8,000 ton displacement ship was designed by the Soviet Union to attack U.S. aircraft carrier battle groups with its "Sunburn" anti-ship cruise missile. That the ships were designed to operate as part of a multi-mission capable task force is indicated by its marginal ASW and AAW capabilities.

Post-2000 ship-building programs reflect a new Chinese confidence and technological expertise in warship construction. Three new classes of destroyers and a new class of frigate already have been launched. All continue the PLAN's emphasis on anti-ship cruise missile batteries and, while equipped with problematical ASW systems, are armed with the most advanced AAW system yet put to sea by China. The *Luyang I*, *Luyang II*, and *Luzhou*-class destroyers are all gas-turbine powered ships[6] designed with some stealth characteristics and the first designed to be capable of area AAW defense.

China's frigate force is now led by the diesel powered *Jiangkai*-class, three of which reportedly have been commissioned.[7] This ship appears to be a larger version (3,500 ton displacement) of the *Jiangwei*-class, but exhibits "stealthy" characteristics. The PLAN has since 2000 commissioned several new ships in other mission areas as well, including at least seventeen amphibious warfare ships. Although lightly armed—as are all amphibious assault ships—these are almost all equipped with a helicopter landing deck, which increases their flexibility by allowing the vertical transport of embarked troops and equipment. Even more significant is a much larger amphibious ship, possibly as much as 25,000 tons displacement, launched in late 2006. This ship is similar to a U.S. Landing Platform Dock (LPD) and offers the PLAN a platform capable of deploying four helicopters and three or four air-cushion landing craft, and embarking perhaps 400 troops.[8]

The PLAN mine warfare force remains limited to one dedicated mine laying ship and a force of Soviet-designed minesweepers. New MIW technology is being acquired and exercised,[9] however, and the PLAN is not ignoring this warfare area, which could have a

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[5] Author's tours of *Jiangwei II* and *Jiangwei III* ships.

[6] These ships's engineering plants also include back-up diesel engines for cruising at low speeds; hence, CODOG, is the name for this "combined diesel or gas turbine" system.

[7] See "Type 054 (*Jiangkai* Class) Multirole Frigate" (16 September 2006), <http:// http://www.sinodefence.com/navy/surface/type054jiangkai.asp>.

[8] See report and pictures at: http://www.chinadefense.com/forum/index.php?showtopic=436; and at: 2547277 8d26665f4891c92ji3.jpg; 2547277a3079954ce149ddfx6.jpg; 3_48705_288bd2b113483cc.jpg; 3_4729_78cf 70af27cfae5.jpg.

[9] See Wang Shi K'o, "Cross-Strait Underwater Warfare: A Comparison of Mine Deployment and

prominent role in a scenario involving Taiwan.

The PLAN's replenishment-at-sea ships are a critical indicator of China's naval ambitions. Until 2005, the PLAN included just three such ships, and only one of these, the ex-Soviet *Komandarn Fedko*, is large enough for fleet operations, at 37,000 tons displacement. In 2005, however, China commissioned two new *Fuchi*-class replenishment-at-sea (RAS) ships, each displacing 28,000 tons and capable of supplying the fleet. If Beijing uses these new RAS ships as replacements for the two smaller units, it will indicate a continued lack of "blue water" ambition on its part. If, however, each of China's three naval fleets—North Sea, East Sea, South Sea—grows to include two or more RAS ships, then more long-range intentions will be indicated for PLAN missions.

Submarine Force

True submersible warships only really became feasible with the advent of nuclear propulsion in the U.S. Navy in the mid-1950s. The PLAN first built SSNs in 1980, with the five-ship *Han*-class. These boats are built along the lines of the old (1950s) Soviet designed *November*-class SSN. They are "noisy"[10] and have experienced significant maintenance problems during their lifetime; in fact, no more than four and perhaps just three of the *Han*-class remain operational.[11]

China is currently building and deploying a new class of SSN, however, the Type-093, *Shang*-class. Two of these boats are in the water, with at least one more under construction. They strongly resemble the 1980s Soviet-designed *Victor III*-class SSN, although no doubt much modernized.

The PLAN has never succeeded in deploying a nuclear powered submarine armed with strategic nuclear missiles. The *Xia*-class fleet ballistic missile submarine (FBM or SSBN) was constructed in 1987, but apparently never regularly patrolled, due to engineering problems.[12] China is building a new FBM, the Type-094, *Jin*-class, apparently determined to have more than one "leg" to its nuclear deterrent force.

Minesweeping Strength," *Ch'uan-ch'iu Fang-wei Tsa-chih* [*Defense International*], March 2006, in FBIS-CPP20060504103001 (04 May 2006).

[10] All vessels generate self-noise from operating machinery and simple passage of the hull through the water. This noise is detectable by an opponent's sonar; hence—and especially for a submarine, which depends on stealth for its very existence—the lowest possible sound "signature" is desirable.

[11] Eric Wertheim, ed., *The Naval Institute Guide to Combat Fleets of the World, 2005-2006* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2005), p. 105.

[12] A second *Xia*-class may have been constructed, but lost to an accident before commissioning. See Bernard D. Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea: China's Navy Enters the 21st Century* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2001), p. 27, n. 46.

China already deploys one of the world's most formidable forces of conventionally powered submarines (SS). This includes of almost sixty old *Romeo*-class boats, but probably no more than a dozen or so of these are operational, due to maintenance problems and crew availability. More useful are the 17 boats of the *Ming*-class, an updated version of the *Romeo*, which began entering active service in 1975.[13]

China also is well into a large-scale construction program for its next-generation conventionally powered attack boat, the *Song*-class, at least twelve of which have been commissioned or are in production. The *Song* appears to be the PLAN's indigenously produced, conventionally powered submarine of choice for the first three decades of the 21st century.

China has also purchased 12 Russian-built *Kilo*-class boats, one of the best SSs in the world. A (so-far) single class submarine, dubbed the *Yuan*, was unveiled in the summer of 2004, perhaps representing an attempt to reverse engineer the *Kilo*-class.

Naval Aviation

Aviation is the PLAN's weakest branch. All fixed-wing aircraft are based ashore, including approximately 24 Su-30 fighter-attack aircraft purchased from Russia, 200 J8II fighters, and 12 B-6 bombers armed with anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCM). The patrol and ASW aviation force is relatively weak.

Helicopters form the PLAN's primary aviation strength. Sixty or so helos of either French or Russian design are deployed, most of them onboard ship. Each of China's new destroyers and frigates is capable of hangaring and operating a helo, although only the newest ships appear able to "link" with aircraft while they are in flight.[14]

Personnel and Training

The PLAN is competing with the booming Chinese economy as it seeks personnel with the intelligence and education to deal with the growing technological sophistication of the weapons, sensor, and engineering systems of its new ships, submarines, and aircraft. To this end, the PLAN has during the past fifteen years revised its system of educating and training

[13] An 18th boat, *Ming* hull number 361, suffered the loss of its entire crew in a 2003 accident; two additional *Ming*s may be under construction, although this report must be considered very doubtful, given ongoing construction of the *Song*-class submarines, which are generally believed the successor to the *Ming*. See http://www.fas.org/man/dod-101/sys/ship/row/plan/index.html.
[14] Author's discussion with *Jiangwei III*'s commanding officer, May 2006

enlisted technicians.

While conscription remains, its usefulness is limited by the reduction of obligated service to just 24 months: conscripts must agree to an extended period of service, perhaps four years, before justifying a PLAN investment in extensive education and training. The navy has realized the need for non-commissioned officers (NCOs) who are both proficient technicians and effective leaders, and is building such a corps.[15]

The PLAN also requires officer candidates with the education necessary to maintain and employ modern, complex technological systems. To this end, since 2000 it has established officer accession programs similar to the U.S. Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC).[16] These focus on students majoring in engineering or the sciences, reflecting the need for technologically competent officers.

The navy pursues an annual training program, which focuses maximum operational readiness in a narrow period of time during the calendar year. It follows a navy-wide training process that proceeds from individual personnel training, to team, crew, multi-ship, and finally to joint training on a significant scale, sometimes involving units from all of China's three fleets, the army, and the air force.

Finally, maintenance is a topic too seldom addressed by observers of naval strength, but naval forces are only as effective as their state of readiness, and readiness is heavily dependent on effective material maintenance. This in turn is linked to effective personnel training: crew members must be able to ensure the operation of assigned equipment to designed specifications.

The PLAN does not have a good reputation for the detailed attention to maintenance demanded of an effective navy.[17] First, ships deploying on long cruises, to the Western Hemisphere for example, have been assigned additional, specially trained maintenance personnel and special spare parts allocations.[18] Second, the loss of *Ming 361* in 2003 reflected an unsatisfactory maintenance-personnel training system.[19] Third, two PLAN senior captains embarked on American warships during the 1998 "Rimpac" exercise conducted in Hawaiian waters emphasized how impressed they were by the fact that U.S. sailors continued performing equipment maintenance during underway operations, which indicates that this was not the practice in the PLAN.[20]

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[15] The best information on this subject is provided by Blasko.
[16] Author's conversations with senior PLAN officers. Also see Blasko, pp. 58-59; "Nation to Recruit More College Students in Military Conscription," *Xinhuanet* (30 October 2003) <www.chinaview.cn>.
[17] Author's conversations with senior PLAN officers and knowledgeable foreign observers, 1994-2006.
[18] Author's discussions with senior PLAN officers, 1989, 2000, 2002.
[19] Author's conversations with senior U.S.N. submariners, 2003-2004.
[20] Jiang Yuanliu, "China's Master-Degree Captain Watches US Naval Exercise, *Jiefangjun Bao* (22 October

In sum, the PLAN in 2006 is a formidable, submarine-centric force. It has entered the 21st century with a limited focus, balanced budgetary allocations, and an ambition for greater accomplishments.

The Future: 2016

The PLAN understands the importance of personnel education and training, as it does that of systematic training from unit to fleet and joint service levels. Improvements in these areas and will almost certainly continue during the next ten years, increasing operational competence.[21] PLAN personnel in 2016 will be better educated, more thoroughly trained, and at least as patriotically dedicated to their mission as their current predecessors.

Modernization is and will continue to occur across the PLAN's aviation, surface, and subsurface communities. The last clearly has been selected by Beijing to serve as China's primary instrument of naval power: SSNs and 25 modern SSs cannot be ignored by any potential maritime opponent, be it Taiwan, with its almost negligible undersea force (2 boats), or the United States with the world's most capable and numerous navy.

ASW remains the most challenging naval warfare area. China's naval development during the next decade does not aim to challenge a particular foreign navy directly, but rather to serve as an effective instrument of national will in specific strategic scenarios. Three of these are illustrative of Beijing's naval concerns for the next decade: Taiwan, the East China Sea, and the Strait of Malacca.

Taiwan

Taiwan's status is China's number one geostrategic concern; ensuring Taiwan's reunification with the mainland is a matter of revolutionary ardor and a symbol of Chinese nationalism. Beijing refuses to discount the use of military force against the island, and the modernized PLAN would be a primary military instrument in such a case.

Options for employing maritime forces against the island range from restricting seaborne trade to full-scale amphibious invasion. The navy's most important role in a Taiwan scenario, however, would be to isolate the battlefield, by deploying submarines to

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2000) p. 5, in FBIS-CHI-98-316, citing Sr. Capts. Mao Zhenggong and Jia Xiaoguang.

[21] The loss of *Ming 361* resulted in the firing of the responsible chain of command, from the PLAN commander, Admiral Shi Yunsheng, to the senior captain responsible for the maintenance failures that contributed to the loss of the submarine's crew. See: "CMC Chairman Jiang Zemin Denounces PLA Navy for Errors Behind Submarine Accident," *Kuang Chiao Ching*, No. 371 (Hong Kong), (15 August 2003), p. 15, in FBIS-CPP20030815000047.

prevent or at least delay intervention by other countries' naval forces. This means the U.S. Navy of course, although the Australian Navy and Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) might assist American intervention in the face of a large-scale Chinese assault on Taiwan.

If China is able to maintain even a dozen submarines covertly on station in the East China Sea for one month, it might well pressure the Taipei government to decide that negotiating was preferable to fighting. In any case, the PLAN will continue to be a primary vehicle for pressuring Taiwan; a role that will end only with the accession of Taiwan to China's governance.

The East China Sea

The East China Sea is China's front porch, vital to its national defense. It contains important fishing grounds, the possible site of rich energy deposits, and is the scene of a sovereignty dispute with Japan over the Senkaku Islands (Diaoyudao in Chinese).[22]

Despite their doubtful material value, the Senkakus/Daoyutais could serve as the spark of naval conflict between the JMSDF and the PLAN. Any shooting incident between Japan and China risks unintended escalation into a serious conflict, and one that might well involve the United States by virtue of its Mutual Defense Treaty with Japan.[23]

This dispute arises from oil and natural gas reserves that lie in two to four sea bottom fields, perhaps as much as 200 billion barrels of the former and 7 trillion cubic feet of the latter.[24] Of current concern is the disputed Shirakaba (Chunxiao in Chinese) natural gas field, being exploited by both China and Japan.

Chinese and Japanese military forces have both been present in the area; PLAN ships have steamed the waters on many occasions, while Japan has relied primarily on its Coast Guard.[25] China also has conducted extensive sea bottom surveys in the area during the past

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[22] The argument focuses on points of disputed geographical definition. The grouping is categorized as five islands and three rocks, although international law is not clear on the question between the two. According to the UNCLOS, "an island is a naturally formed area of land, surrounded by water, which is above water at high tide," while a rock "cannot sustain human habitation," which implies at least the lack of a natural supply of potable water. Yet the definition of an island says nothing about "human habitation."

[23] See "Sino-Japanese Rivalry CNA/IDA/INSS/Pacific Forum CSIS Workshop Series" reports, especially Brad Glosserman, "Workshop Four: Implications for the U.S." (29 September 2006).

[24] J. Sean Curtin, "Stakes Rise in Japan, China Gas Dispute," *Asia Times Online* (19 October 2005), <www.atimes.com>, identifies the Chungxiao/Shirakaba, Duanqiao/Kusunoki, and Tianwaitian/Kashi fields (giving both Chinese/Japanese names) but notes that they may actually be part of the same complex.

[25] For instance, see: "Chinese Warships Make Show of Force at Protested Gas Rig," *The Japan Times* (10 September 2005), and "Japan and China Face Off Over Energy," *Yomiuri Shimbun*, condensed in the *Asia Times* (01 July 2005), <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/printN.html>.

five years, which serves both to ascertain the presence of mineral deposits and to map the ocean bottom to enhance submarine operations.[26]

Presumably, any strong move by China in the East China Sea, whether about the Senkakus/Diaoyudaos or the disputed oil and gas fields, would be conducted by surface combatants, but supported by long range aircraft and submarines. Similar forces would likely be deployed by Japan. While Beijing and Tokyo would presumably immediately curtail a naval conflict, the JMSDF's significantly more advanced naval capabilities would, if employed, almost certainly cause the loss of PLAN units, with significant loss of life. Any such losses at sea would make negotiation extremely difficult.

Concern about the already formidable and improving JMSDF will spur PLAN modernization programs during the next decade.[27] The Chinese navy of 2016 will be able to operate in an East China Sea scenario with surface and air forces that have trained and exercised together, that can communicate among units and with shore stations effectively and in real time both verbally and via computer, that share integrated systems, and operate in accordance with commonly accepted tactical doctrine. The continuing submarine modernization program in which Beijing is so heavily investing will enable the East China Sea to be divided into submarine operating areas assigned to at least 24 modern submarines armed with very effective cruise missiles capable of submerged launch.

Malacca

Speaking in 2004, President Hu Jintao reportedly noted China's "Malacca dilemma." He was referring both to local problems such as piracy, but also to the possibility of the United States having a "choke hold" on China's seaborne energy imports, 80 percent of which flows through Malacca and the South China Sea.[28]

Five nations claim all or some of the land features that dot this Sea, and Taiwan agrees with Beijing's claims. But China is the only claimant that apparently describes the entire

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[26] "China, Japan to Set Up Expert Groups to Solve Gas-Field Row," *The Financial Express* (09 July 2006), and "China, Japan End 6th Round of East China Sea Talks: Wide Gaps Remain," *People's Daily Online* (09 July 2006), <http://english.people.com.cn>.

[27] Author's conversations with PLAN officers; also see Willy Wo-Lap Lam, "China Slams Japan's Military Plans," *CNN* (31 August 2003), <http://edition.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/asiapcf/east/08/31/china.japan/index.html> ; Liang Ming, "Japan Has Begun Pursuing an Offensive Military Strategy," *Liaowang* (Beijing), (04 February 2002), No. 6, pp. 54-55, in FBIS-CPP20020219000059 (19 February 2002).

[28] Quoted in David Zweig and Bi Jianbai, "China's Global Hunt for Energy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 5 (September/October 2005), p. 34; Ji Xiaohua, "It is Not Impossible to Send Troops Overseas to Fight Terrorism," *Sing Tao Jih Pao* (Hong Kong), (17 June 2004), p. A27, in FBIS-CPP20040617000054. Although often quoted, I have not been able to find the original instance/citation of Hu Jintao's "Malacca" statement.

South China Sea—water areas as well as land features—as sovereign territory.[29] It is valued because of possible energy deposits, fisheries, national hubris, and most importantly the fact that more shipping uses its sea lanes than any other comparable body of water in the world.

All of these points require a second look, however: first, while oil and natural gas is already being drawn from the northern and southern South China Sea, the central area around the Spratly Islands is unproven. With the signing of the February 2005 agreement by China, the Philippines, and Vietnam to jointly explore the area, the level of tension associated with disputed sovereignty claims has been much reduced. Significantly, however, Beijing has not displayed any willingness to compromise on its claims.[30]

Second, the stocks in the South China Sea are being over-fished by all claimants; at the present rate and the bordering nations' inability to control their own fishermen, the dispute may soon be moot.[31] Third, while national pride is not amenable to diplomacy, sovereignty claims in the South China Sea may be liable to resolution in a way that would satisfy feelings of nationalism.

Finally, what are the threats to the SLOCs that might evoke the use of naval power by one of the claimants? The threats from piracy and other trans-national crime, terrorism, and environmental degradation may worsen over the next decade, but will best be confronted through international cooperation, as is indeed is already occurring. There is little evidence that the next decade will witness a breakdown of a cooperative international approach to ensuring their security.

Should Beijing order the PLAN to defend the Malacca Strait and its eastern and western approaches, it would have to make extremely large investments in material and personnel resources, since it is presently incapable of carrying out such a mission. The navy would have to increase the number of state-of-the-art warships from the less than 20 it currently deploys at least double that number. A similar increase in RAS ships would also have to occur, to support those surface ships on the relatively long periods at sea required to safeguard sea lines of communication.

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[29] Author's conversation with senior legal adviser at PRC Embassy, Washington DC, 2002. Also see Cole, pp. 39-40.

[30] The agreement was reported in "Philippines, China and Vietnam Agree to Explore South China Sea Areas," *Xinhua* (Beijing), (14 March 2005), in *Alexander's Gas & Oil Connections* [referred to hereafter as *Alexander's*], Vol. 10, No. 7, (06 April 2005), < http://www.gasandoil.com/goc/news/nts51490.htm>. For varying estimates of energy reserves in the central South China Sea: see Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea*, pp. 58-60.

[31] See Cornelia Dean, "Study Sees 'Global Collapse' of Fish Species," *New York Times* (03 November 2006), p. A21: "If fishing around the world continues at its present pace, more and more species will vanish, marine ecosystems will unravel and there will be "global collapse" of all species currently fished, possibly as soon as mid-century, fisheries experts and ecologists are predicting."

If Beijing wanted to deploy the PLAN against expected U.S. or other organized interference with the SLOCs, its submarine force would have to continue to increase its inventory of its 22 most modern boats (*Song*, *Kilo*, *Shang*), again perhaps to three times that number. Most importantly, the PLAN would have to increase its aviation capability to be able to support surface ship task groups operating more than 1,000 nm from home base. This would require not only the construction of bases on disputed, difficult-to- defend South China Sea and Andaman Sea islands, but installation of a defensive system effective enough both to protect the bases and afford the degree of protection necessary enough to allow conduct of offensive missions.

West of the Malacca and Singapore Straits, the Andaman Sea is not the scene of sovereignty disputes, but it is marked by competing Indian and Burmese interests. Barring the overthrow of the well-established Burmese military dictatorship, the increasing Chinese domination of the nation will continue—despite Indian attempts to establish a contravening influence in the country—and by 2016 may include dedicated PLAN facilities on Burma's coast and islands.[32]

The PLAN may have similar use of the Chinese-modernized port at Gwador, Pakistan, which would provide the PLAN with the logistic support necessary to conduct extended operations in the Indian Ocean and North Arabian Sea. Even with the two-fold PLAN expansion noted above, however, such distant operations may not be feasible. First, the Indian Navy is a formidable force, and one that will continue to modernize and expand during the next decade. Second, Pakistan and Burma are two of the world's most unstable nation-states, and are as likely as not to suffer very serious difficulties by 2016.

Conclusion

The current Chinese navy has since its founding in 1949 labored as an adjunct of the army. It has only been since the end of the Cold War and the removal of the Soviet threat that Beijing has felt able to direct significantly increased defense resources to modernizing what has throughout its existence been a marginally effective coastal defense force.

The 2006 White Paper on Defense illustrates Beijing's emphasis on modernizing the navy. Beijing is assigning the PLAN a primary strategic role and is determined to continue naval modernization; the emphasis on improving amphibious and surface combatant forces underlines China's concern with the Taiwan situation, while the importance of improving joint

[32] See Nyi Nyi Lwen, "Economic and Military Cooperation Between China and Burma," (September 2006), <http://www.narinjara.com/Reports/BReport.ASP>.

operational and long-range precision strike capabilities implies direct concern with possible U.S. intervention in that situation.

For the navy, then, China's 2006 White Paper is not mere posturing, but accurately describes naval modernization already underway. Its intentions are not short-term and will continue to guide PLAN developments at least for the next decade.

By 2006, China had deployed a navy with the ships, submarines, aircraft and systems ready to serve in pursuit of specific national security objectives. Modernization will almost certainly continue for the next decade, when Beijing will have a navy capable of achieving these national objectives. The Taiwan imbroglio may still head that list, but the PLAN a decade hence will likely be capable also of denying command of the East China and South China Seas to another power. The PLAN of 2016, at twice its present size, would dominate East Asian navies, with the possible exception of the JMSDF, and would offer a very serious challenge to the U.S. Navy when it operates in those waters.

This will not result from either Japan or the United States ignoring naval modernization, but will be affected by Japan's constrained defense budget and personnel pool, and by the continuing reduction in American naval numbers and increasingly widespread and marginal missions in Southwest Asia and in the Global War on Terrorism. By 2016, present trends indicate that the Chinese Navy will enable Beijing to exert strategic leverage in maritime East Asia.