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Chinese Military Modernization and Export Control Regimes

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Let me begin by expressing my appreciation to the Chairman and the other distinguished members of the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission. It is an honor to have the opportunity to testify here today.

My testimony will briefly examine three areas of pressing concern:

- People's Republic of China naval and air force modernization strategies, in the context of China's national security interests and objectives
- Likely deployment of China's air and naval forces between now and 2020
- Implications of Chinese air and naval modernization and force deployment strategies

### **China's National Security Framework and Evolving Military Doctrine**

*China's View of the Geo-strategic Environment.* Chinese force modernization and deployment plans and programs follow from the overarching strategic and doctrinal frameworks by which Beijing defines threats to national security and the military capabilities required to counter them. Chinese strategists do not envision a need for global power projection capabilities through the first half of this century, and believe that only the U.S., or the U.S. and a treaty ally like Japan, present a viable military threat to strategic interests in the near to mid-term. These interests primarily include resolution of the Taiwan issue in China's favor, security of energy resources and economic lifelines, and increasing Chinese leadership in Asian economic and diplomatic decision making forums. Territorial or resource disputes between Beijing and Japan, Russia, India or a unified Korea could conceivably be added to the list in certain future scenarios—but in all cases, the Chinese view their periphery as the competitive arena.

Chinese strategists do not see the PRC assuming preeminence of influence in Asia during the first half of this century, based on Chinese assessments of comprehensive national power. To protect economic growth and integration, and the fragile domestic control that the Communist Party is able to exercise as a result, Beijing will for the foreseeable future seek to avoid a Sino-U.S. showdown in any sphere of international competition. In any case, China will not have the capacity to dramatically alter the Asian security architecture via military competition for at least the next two decades. Beijing believes, however, that if the Party can maintain internal order while the People's Liberation Army (PLA)

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develops capabilities to control China's immediate periphery, then strategic objectives will be met. While definitions of the periphery have expanded due to the importance of distant sea lanes for energy and market access, the Chinese know that they will not conduct operations, other than limited anti-access activities, beyond the Asian continent or adjacent seas.

***PLA Strategy and Doctrine.*** PLA strategists understand that for the wars they expect to fight in the next few decades, their focus must be on using the niche capabilities they have to counter the moves of a technologically superior adversary. The Chinese are carefully studying how American forces approach dominant command and control, surveillance and reconnaissance, rapid re-supply, and the capability to quickly overwhelm an opponent with multi-dimensional firepower. PLA campaign planning, modernization programs, and research, development, and acquisition initiatives aim less at decisive victory in what Chinese strategists call “local war under high-technology conditions,” but more at defeating an adversary who brings such a war to China's neighborhood. While this sounds like a defensive focus, it is anything but. The PLA is committed to an offensive capability—to limited power projection and preemptive, or at least rapid, strikes against an enemy's critical vulnerability. Viewed in this light, it is easy to understand why Chinese strategists are fixated on information dominance in the early stages of a fight, on the interruption of enemy supply lines, and on strikes against key adversarial high-tech weapons systems.

Within this framework, Chinese military planners look to accomplish a “quick battle to force quick resolution,” but with an emphasis on preemptive and unexpected strikes to remove an enemy's technological superiority—what one Chinese theorist calls a “structural destruction operation.” The Chinese believe that creating local and momentary momentum (especially air and information superiority) in a regional clash will allow them to defeat a more advanced adversary's plan and bring conflict to a close under Beijing's terms. This is a defeat criterion more focused on an enemy's strategy than on his military force. The Chinese seek to deprive an adversary of the ability to use operational and technical superiority to control strategic outcomes.

***Impetus for, and Priority of, PLA Air and Naval Modernization.*** China's current air and naval strategies are driven by Beijing's overarching diplomatic and economic priorities as delineated in the Communist Party's 11th five-year plan—a plan that is far from transparent to observers outside of Beijing. One cannot speak of China as having a “pure” security strategy, because the political and economic dimensions of its perceived security needs loom so large. Because of military limitations, Beijing relies on economic and diplomatic initiatives to help shape the security environment in the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans. Ultimately, this strategy could increase the access of Chinese air and maritime forces to regional bases—eventually supporting a regional power projection capability.

The 2004 Chinese Defense White Paper stated emphatically that air and naval modernization programs, and the capabilities they forge, are national priorities. The PLA approaches capabilities development and the assignment of roles and missions to these

service arms in terms of the campaigns they will be expected to conduct. Campaigns to force resolution of the Taiwan issue on Beijing's terms are currently paramount. Capabilities to support blockade and anti-access campaigns are already resident or will be within three years; amphibious landing and airborne capabilities sufficient to conduct a costly but conceivably effective joint invasion campaign could follow before 2012.

After Taiwan, priority falls to PLA campaigns to control the near periphery, defined primarily by sovereignty claims in the East and South China Seas. Potential expansion of Japanese Self Defense Force missions causes great consternation in Beijing, and the PLA intends to respond by developing regional air superiority and sea control capabilities. China is probably a decade away from deploying and integrating the key components needed to conduct these campaigns—capabilities such as joint command and control, long-range surveillance and reconnaissance, maritime area air defenses, and a real-time, joint targeting architecture. By roughly 2020, Beijing hopes to be able to focus capabilities on the “greater periphery,” particularly the Straits of Malacca, the Indian Ocean, and the Persian Gulf. This will require development of a blue-water fleet and a strategic reach bomber force to protect trade and natural resource flows, and “first among equals” status with India and Japan.

### **People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) Modernization Strategy**

As a rising maritime trading power, Beijing approaches its naval modernization as a component of a larger effort that includes robust civil and military shipbuilding capacity, and control of or access to major port facilities on each of the major regional seas. As such, the Chinese are seeking a naval presence along maritime chokepoints in the South China Sea, the Straits of Malacca, the Indian Ocean, and the Arabian Sea by acquiring access to bases in Cambodia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. These tasks coincide with China's push to acquire and protect its rapidly growing energy requirements, and to protect the trade that keeps the export-focused economy afloat. To support the technical and infrastructure requirements of maritime power, China is in position to become the world's largest shipbuilder by the middle of the next decade—the world's largest shipyard is currently under construction in Shanghai.

***Constructing a Sea Denial Force.*** Chinese strategy is often couched in defensive terminology, but with obvious offensive connotation. This is particularly true for Beijing's evolving naval strategy. China is building a force that can best be described as a “sea denial” force. Beijing is focused on fielding modern destroyers, submarines, cruise missiles, and maritime strike aircraft to deter or prevent an adversary from operating for a given period of time in or above a critical sea lane or maritime zone of maneuver. By 2008, China will have the capability to credibly conduct short-term sea denial operations out to about 400 nautical miles from its coastline; and by 2010 may be able to sustain such operations for a few weeks. Obviously, this capability does not accrue to the Straits of Malacca and the Indian Ocean—China can at best hope to “show the flag” for coercive and/or defensive purposes in those waters until after 2015.

China's submarine force is the key component in Beijing's sea denial strategy. Beijing is concurrently building four classes of submarines, and acquiring another from Russia. China commissioned 11 submarines in 2005, and will commission another five or six this year. The PLAN will have about 28 modern submarines in the fleet by the end of this year, in addition to a similar number of older boats that will continue to require the attention of American commanders in the Pacific theater. With over 50 subs operational, and about half of them modern and highly lethal, the ant-submarine warfare (ASW) mission for the U.S. in the Pacific is becoming extremely difficult. In a protracted head-to-head fight, the PLA would lose these submarines; but they could be quite effective in slowing U.S. response to a short, limited objective fight on China's periphery.

The backbone of the modern diesel attack fleet is the Russian KILO class, of which Beijing will have 10 in the fleet by next year. Because China has access to the entire family of Russian CLUB missiles, the new KILO submarines that began arriving last summer could have the 300km-range 3M-14 land attack cruise missile (LACM), the 220km-range 3M-54E anti-ship cruise missile (ASCM), and the 91RE1 ASW rocket. This is an extremely lethal weapons suite that allows the KILO to support a number of PLA campaign requirements. China's new indigenously produced nuclear attack submarine, the Type 093 SHANG class, benefits greatly from Russian technology and design—it will be armed with both ASCMs and LACMs. The SHANG's range and weaponry will give the PLA its first non-nuclear global strike capability. By 2008, the PLA may have more than 10 SHANGs operational. The new indigenously produced YUAN class diesel boat, the first two of which should enter service this year, may include air-independent propulsion systems that will increase the submerged endurance of the platform. China's older MING and ROMEO submarines remain in service, and likely will continue to do so for some years. They can serve as mine-laying platforms, and can be used to bait or decoy U.S. submarines and complicate the ASW picture.

The second pillar of Beijing's sea denial strategy is the new destroyer and frigate fleet (currently 21 destroyers and 43 frigates). Beijing has purchased four Russian SOVREMENNY destroyers, and is building eight new classes of indigenous destroyers and frigates. China will have nine modern destroyers in service by the end of this year, with greatly improved anti-air and anti-ship missile systems. The LUHAI and LUYANG destroyers are designed to ameliorate the PLAN's most glaring maritime power projection shortfall—ship-borne area air defenses. Of particular note is the LUYANG II class destroyer, which has the very capable vertical-launch HQ-9 area air defense system, with phased-array radar somewhat similar to that of the U.S. AEGIS system. The LUHAI and LUYANG also will have the capability to conduct long-range anti-surface warfare (ASUW) missions with supersonic ASCMs.

Beijing will probably have 17 modern frigates in service by the end of this year, incorporating much-improved air defenses. The JIANGKAI class is noteworthy, as it has a stealthy design similar to the French LAFAYETTE class. China has also introduced a new fast-attack missile platform with a stealthy, catamaran hull design; and is investing in a deep-water mining capability, with a wide variety of applications via varied delivery and activation mechanisms (to include acoustically activated, remote control technology).

To improve the deterrent impact of Beijing's strategy, the PLAN is also modernizing the sea-based nuclear force. China's navy is a strategic force in name only at the moment, but this is changing. A new SSBN, the Type 094 class, will enter service within the next four years. Analysts expect it to be armed with 12 JL-2 ballistic missiles, which could have a range of as much as 12,000km. This would permit attacks on most continental U.S. targets from protected locations close to China's shore.

***Blue Water Aspirations.*** Faced with the perceived requirement to conduct sea control and air superiority operations along sea lanes in the Philippine Sea, Straits of Malacca, and Indian Ocean, the ability to project and sustain air power and air defenses over long distances becomes paramount. Given its national development priorities, it is not in China's interests to pursue the high cost of transition to a carrier navy for at least two decades. But this does not rule out the possibility of a "hybrid" navy that has one or two carrier groups designed to provide minimum blue-water power projection for regional contingencies. China will, however, approach this slowly. Beijing understands its security conundrum—carrier development will increase unease among regional neighbors, who might in turn adopt more active strategies to balance against growing Chinese power projection capabilities.

The recent emergence from dry-dock of the VARYAG carrier purchased from Ukraine has been the source of much discussion and consternation. The VARYAG would require a tremendous amount of energy and expense to become operational—some observers have suggested that it would be a good training platform for the PLAN while an indigenous carrier program pushed ahead to build and deploy China's first fully operational carrier. Some observers believe that China will indigenously build a 45,000-60,000-ton carrier that could carry 30-40 SU30MKK multi-role fighters—something that the Chinese could possibly achieve around 2015.

### **The People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) and PLAN Air Force (PLANAF) Modernization Strategy**

***A Defensive Force...*** China's air modernization strategy at present focuses on improving capabilities to conduct a traditional defensive mission, the strategic air defense campaign. The SA10/20 surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems acquired from Russia provide the heart of these defenses, with powerful radar capabilities and high-performance missiles that can range in excess of 100 nautical miles. Extended range missiles are available from Russia and will probably be fielded soon—giving the PLAAF the ability to cover the island of Taiwan from deployment locations near the Chinese coast. The growing, modern PLAAF and PLANAF indigenous and Russian-produced fighter fleet is capable of supporting the air defense campaign, but is not yet prepared to sustain even regional air superiority operations against a modern adversary.

***...with Offensive Aspirations.*** The PLAAF, however, aspires in the near future to develop capabilities to conduct an offensive air campaign that would push an enemy on the defense further from China's shore at decisive points in a fight. Beijing has acquired

or is developing airborne early warning and aerial refueling force-multipliers, while improving targeting capabilities via unmanned aerial vehicles, ship-borne helicopters, and over-the-horizon radars. Integrating these systems with each other and with space-based detection and tracking systems remains a shortfall that the PLAAF will not likely correct until about 2012.

China's air force is, and will remain for the next decade, tethered to the Mainland and the near periphery. This does not, however, provide great comfort for the preponderance of regional actors lying within this expanding "near periphery." The SU-30 multi-role and maritime strike aircraft and newer, longer range strategic SAM systems purchased from Russia provide the capability to conduct temporary offensive operations out to at least 200 KM from China's land and sea borders—and perhaps beyond when sea-based air defenses become more capable over the next 5 years. The stand-off capabilities of the PLANAF's SU-30MKK2 maritime strike fleet would also be greatly boosted if Russia sells Beijing the new 300km-range Kh-59MK ASCM.

The Chinese have indigenously assembled from Russian kits around 100 SU-27 fighter airframes—known as the J-11. Russian kit delivery has stopped, and some analysts believe that the Chinese are now confident that they can make the J-11 program completely indigenous. This would require Chinese industry to overcome some significant shortfalls in the capability to produce turbofan engines and advanced radar. China likely will need another five years to overcome these difficulties, but could purchase specific major end components such as engines as a stopgap.

***Attaining Strategic Reach?*** In June 2004, media reports indicated that at the 10<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, PLA leadership passed a resolution that the PLAAF would become a "strategic air force." If true, this would indicate a significant shift in PLAAF doctrine and campaign planning. A number of analysts note Beijing's interest in Russia's Tu-22M-3 BACKFIRE bomber, but as of yet a BACKFIRE purchase remains speculative. The BACKFIRE uses a range of supersonic and subsonic precision-guided munitions that would greatly enhance China's ability to conduct sea denial or sea control operations. With a combat radius of over 2,000 nautical miles, the BACKFIRE has an impressive footprint that could hold at risk Guam and, if operating from Myanmar, Diego Garcia—without aerial refueling.

## **Future Deployment of PLA Naval and Air Forces**

***Components of Air and Maritime Force Employment.*** The PLA has developed three key components of an employment strategy for operations focusing on Taiwan and the near periphery. The first is the formation of elite configurations of air and maritime packages to conduct the key sub-campaigns of a larger blockade, sea denial, or joint invasion campaign. The second is a preemptive strike capability, represented by a large array of cruise and ballistic missiles. The final component is development of doctrine, tactics, and capabilities (especially command, control and intelligence) to gain temporary, localized air and sea superiority in support of a quick, decisive battle.

The force that China will have afloat and in the air by roughly 2008 would be formidable in using “fist” forces to conduct blockade operations against Taiwan. While Beijing would not be able to sustain a lengthy, full blockade in the face of U.S. response, the PLAN and PLAAF could impose considerable harm on the Taiwan economy and the Taiwan military before withdrawing.

Over-the-horizon detection and targeting are a significant capability shortfall for the PLA, but will improve greatly as new space-based sensors, long distance air reconnaissance drones, and airborne early warning platforms deploy over the next decade. Integration of space-based sensors with aerial reconnaissance aircraft will represent a viable threat to forward bases, command and control nodes, logistics assets, and forward deployed forces. The combined Sino-Russian “Peace Mission 2005” exercise this past August illustrated that, with Moscow’s assistance, Beijing is making headway in targeting capabilities. The exercise reportedly featured submarine missile launches coordinated by Y-8 airborne early warning aircraft through use of communication buoys.

“Peace Mission 2005” also featured airfield capture training for Chinese and Russian airborne forces—a key mission for Beijing in certain Taiwan conflict scenarios. Strategic lift in the PLAAF is a constraint on airborne power projection at the moment, but Beijing has inked a deal to purchase additional IL-76 transport aircraft, which could increase lift capacity by as much as 150 percent. Beijing will also purchase IL-78 refueling tankers, which will refuel the Russian SU-30 aircraft in both PLAAF and PLANAF inventories—giving them reach out into the Sea of Japan, the South China Sea, and to Guam. SU-30 aerial refueling training occurred during “Peace Mission 2005,” but Russian pilots were probably in all of the involved aircraft. Chinese aerial refueling capability is coming to fruition very slowly, but can no longer be dismissed by opposing force commanders.

***Future Regional Power Projection.*** Looking beyond Taiwan and the near periphery, the PLA’s increasingly formidable green water capability will not easily translate to blue water ambitions. A shift to a blue water, sea control strategy would be evident if we see the aircraft carrier program begin to gel; production of nuclear attack submarines increase dramatically; and an integrated space-based and terrestrial command, control, and intelligence architecture become operable. Even for green water operations, the PLAN has yet to achieve full integration and automation of the fleet command and control communications system, but will probably be able to do so by 2010—due to what some observers note is the Chinese acquisition of the French TAVITAC system, which is very similar to the U.S. Navy’s Link 11 secure tactical data system.. At-sea replenishment also remains a weakness, but two new DAYUN class supply ships are entering service.

As noted earlier, China is seeking to ameliorate the lack of a blue water capability by opening access for maritime forces in nations along key sea lanes. Improvements to infrastructure in the South China Sea will facilitate submarine and aircraft range and performance in and over those waters. While the South China Sea “islands” are for the most part tidal reefs, some of them offer the capability to support blockade or surveillance and tracking operations along major sea lanes south of the islands. Beijing’s

close relations with Pakistan have opened the door for the PLAN to the Arabian Sea, with a naval base under construction at Gwadar. China's construction of a new highway connecting Myanmar's capital, Yangon, with the PRC has been rewarded by negotiating PLAN access to naval bases under construction along the Andaman Sea and the Indian Ocean. Beijing is also building a railway line from China through Cambodia to the sea. Beijing is using its economic and growing military muscle to increase interaction with Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. Of particular note is the relationship with Bangladesh—Beijing is Dhaka's main weapons supplier, is establishing a road link to Bangladesh via Myanmar, and has gained naval access to the Bay of Bengal via Chittagong port.

Regional access astride the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf allows Beijing to push forward its green water capability, but does not allow for sufficient power projection to conduct blue water operations absent aircraft carriers or strategic forward air basing. Beyond 2015, Beijing likely will have one or both of these pieces in place, making operations on the greater periphery feasible.

### **Strategic Implications for the United States**

*Window of Vulnerability?* Looking at a net assessment of emerging Chinese capabilities and U.S. power projection in the Pacific theater, there is a window of concern between roughly 2008 and 2015. Many Chinese programs focused on Taiwan and the near periphery (new cruise and maneuverable ballistic missiles, submarines, and destroyers) will be fully online around 2008; but some of the US capabilities to defeat China's sea denial strategy (missile defenses, littoral strike assets, a state-of-the-art, integrated ASW network) may not be in place until around the middle of the next decade. In this window, America's ability to effectively conduct offensive air and naval operations will depend in large part on the willingness of regional allies to support these operations. The importance of Japan is obvious; but our relations and access negotiations with Manila, Singapore and Seoul are also critical. In part as an attempt to reduce support for American intervention in a Taiwan imbroglio, the Chinese have worked hard over the past two years to gain reaffirmation of strong "one-China" policies from Singapore, the Philippines, and Australia.

Countering PLA submarines in a Taiwan scenario over the next few years would probably rely heavily on Japanese ASW support. For Taiwan and beyond, the U.S. needs an integrated ASW architecture with distributed sensors, unmanned vehicles, and the full complement of surface, sub-surface, and aerial detection, targeting, and weapons systems. As a new generation PLA SSBN becomes part of the equation sometime in the next five years, this will become even more critical. While we have reversed a trend that since 1990 has de-emphasized U.S. ASW capabilities, there are still significant shortfalls in this area. China's ASW, however, is much weaker still—the Chinese are concerned about this, but perhaps believe that the U.S. will not have the number of submarines in theater to rapidly influence the fight. Maintaining a larger number of nuclear attack submarines in the Pacific would provide a number of advantages—ISR operations, mine-



laying, SOF insertion, missile strikes—that would certainly give great pause to Chinese decision makers when considering use-of-force options.

As China fields a more effective stand-off capability via improved detection, tracking and long-range cruise missile systems, U.S. carrier groups may have to operate further from China's coast to avoid unacceptable risk. Ensuring air superiority over potential trouble spots in the East and South China Seas (particularly the Taiwan Strait) will involve difficult decisions about the extent to which the U.S. is willing to strike targets on the Chinese mainland. Threat assessments for the East Asia littoral and the South China Sea are becoming more complicated with the proliferation of advanced ASCMs, fourth generation aircraft, and advanced diesel submarines. The U.S. Navy's new destroyer program (DD(X)) will help to address this threat, but will be another decade or more in coming—U.S. frigates are outdated for the job. As the PLA develops deep-water mining capabilities, new mine counter-measure systems also will be increasingly important. Should Beijing acquire the BACKFIRE bomber from Russia, U.S. carrier battle groups and forward bases will face a significantly increased threat—Air Force F-15 and, eventually, F/A-22A aircraft provide excellent intercept capability; but in some scenarios, the constraints of land basing are a formidable obstacle.

***Reinforcing the Regional Security Structure.*** The PLA will not, for the next two to three decades, have the power projection capability to challenge the U.S. Navy in the open waters of the Western Pacific or the Indian Ocean; but its ability to present a very capable littoral and green water power projection capability will certainly weigh ever more heavily on regional actors as they determine security alignment policies and force development priorities. At the moment, the best the PLA can hope for in terms of the Straits of Malacca and the Indian Ocean is a strategy of reciprocal deterrence—absent the capability to control those sea lanes or defeat US, Japanese, or Indian naval forces in a decisive engagement, the PLAN at least represents a threat against the critical shipping of potential adversaries should Chinese shipping be held at threat. As we have seen, Beijing is attempting to expand its sphere of influence into India's backyard, and the US-Indian relationship in the security realm is thus an extremely important counterbalance.

U.S.-Southeast Asian military-to-military contacts are a critical component of the regional security architecture—one that must not slip as China grows in influence. Since 1995, the US and maritime Southeast Asian nations have conducted Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) exercises, and annual Cobra Gold exercises include Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia. Singapore's Changi port facility is especially designed to accommodate US carrier visits. The Philippines are now the largest recipients of US military assistance in East Asia, and are considered a "major non-NATO ally." The Chinese have also recognized the strategic importance of the Philippines, however, and have parlayed growing economic ties into strategic level dialogue with Manila on a number of security issues. When discussing mil-to-mil relationships and activities in the region, it is important to include the mil-to-mil program with China in the discussion. Whatever the direction of Sino-U.S. cooperation and competition in the future, a more variegated, robust mil-to-mil relationship is needed to minimize distrust and miscalculation.

Physical presence of naval forces in the Pacific must not be underestimated, and naval exercises should openly illustrate rapid surge capabilities. It should be clear to Beijing that there are no “asymmetries” or “stratagems” that can prevent the U.S. from timely response to crises in the region. There are a number of initiatives already underway to ensure U.S. rapid response and reassure regional allies, such as the transfer of an additional carrier to either Guam or Hawaii. New concepts for rotational ship deployments should also be encouraged. The U.S. response to the catastrophic 2004 Tsunami sent a clear message to the Chinese regarding U.S. surge capabilities; and certainly reinforced in minds throughout the region the need for U.S. presence and access. Because of the importance of physical presence and the various mission challenges that we face in the Pacific, the size of the fleet is important. Numbers do matter, for both operational and political reasons. A growing East Asian Community, albeit still in its infancy, will to some extent measure U.S. security commitment by numbers of ships in theater, port calls, and related measurements.

***Beyond Military Competition.*** The preponderant position among this generation of China’s leaders, and probably the next two generations to follow, is that diminishing U.S. influence and access in Asia must eventually occur to accommodate China’s rise. Perhaps the most effective way to alter this “zero-sum” thinking is via cooperative security and market mechanisms. This requires a delicate balancing act—Washington absolutely must maintain the physical military presence in Asia that sends a clear message of commitment to the region; but should show this muscle to be a component of the evolving, inclusive regional security architecture, rather than as an exclusive effort to trump a more powerful China. China retains a “victim mentality” that is not easily vitiated—this mentality raises the likelihood that otherwise manageable tensions could spiral into a security dilemma. If U.S. security initiatives in the region appear to marginalize the development of mutually beneficial security frameworks in favor of “encirclement,” then China will be more likely to respond aggressively on all fronts. The resulting dilemma will force regional actors to make decisions based on an “opposing camps” security structure—decisions that they are trying very hard to avoid.

The regional influence of Chinese air and, especially, naval power is not completely determined by PLA systems and capabilities—US littoral capabilities in Asia, Chinese maritime access via states friendly toward Beijing, US and allied intelligence focus and capabilities, and regional economic trends also play important roles. Washington should ensure overtly recognized U.S. supremacy in key capabilities, but must not rely on this dominance as sufficient to ensure regional stability in the longer term. U.S. leadership in regional security arrangements, such as our work with Singapore on counter-proliferation and anti-terror cooperation, is essential. Along with a cooperative, market-based approach to oil and natural resource access, these avenues potentially can channel PRC military capacity toward shared security roles and interests, rather than toward confrontation.