

Canadian
Forces
College

Collège
des
Forces
Canadiennes



ONE BELT, ONE ROAD, ONE POWER: CHINA'S MARITIME DOMINANCE IN ITS NEAR ABROAD

Lieutenant-Commander Jeremy Ruggles

JCSP 45

Exercise Solo Flight

Disclaimer

Opinions expressed remain those of the author and do not represent Department of National Defence or Canadian Forces policy. This paper may not be used without written permission.

© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, as represented by the Minister of National Defence, 2019.

PCEMI 45

Exercice Solo Flight

Avertissement

Les opinions exprimées n'engagent que leurs auteurs et ne reflètent aucunement des politiques du Ministère de la Défense nationale ou des Forces canadiennes. Ce papier ne peut être reproduit sans autorisation écrite.

© Sa Majesté la Reine du Chef du Canada, représentée par le ministre de la Défense nationale, 2019.

CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE – COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

JCSP 45 – PCEMI 45
MAY 2019 – MAI 2019EXERCISE *SOLO FLIGHT* – EXERCICE *SOLO FLIGHT***ONE BELT, ONE ROAD, ONE POWER: CHINA’S MARITIME DOMINANCE
IN ITS NEAR ABROAD**

Lieutenant-Commander Jeremy Ruggles

“This paper was written by a candidate attending the Canadian Forces College in fulfilment of one of the requirements of the Course of Studies. The paper is a scholastic document, and thus contains facts and opinions, which the author alone considered appropriate and correct for the subject. It does not necessarily reflect the policy or the opinion of any agency, including the Government of Canada and the Canadian Department of National Defence. This paper may not be released, quoted or copied, except with the express permission of the Canadian Department of National Defence.”

« La présente étude a été rédigée par un stagiaire du Collège des Forces canadiennes pour satisfaire à l'une des exigences du cours. L'étude est un document qui se rapporte au cours et contient donc des faits et des opinions que seul l'auteur considère appropriés et convenables au sujet. Elle ne reflète pas nécessairement la politique ou l'opinion d'un organisme quelconque, y compris le gouvernement du Canada et le ministère de la Défense nationale du Canada. Il est défendu de diffuser, de citer ou de reproduire cette étude sans la permission expresse du ministère de la Défense nationale. »

**ONE BELT, ONE ROAD, ONE POWER:
CHINA'S MARITIME DOMINANCE IN ITS NEAR ABROAD**

Spice. An ingredient that instantly transformed a bland medieval meal. Silk. A textile that was softer on the aristocratic skin compared to rough-hewn wool. These were but two of the Far Eastern treasures that ignited the Age of Discovery and propelled explorers into the water under a canopy of sail to reach exotic lands to generate wealth for their investors and to tickle the fancies of their customers back home. For Europe, this era marked the very beginning of the cultural renaissance and the quest for European empires. For China, this marked the beginning of the age of invasion by sea.¹

China has always had a vibrant trade and strong interest in its indigenous natural resources and in its unique manufactured goods. Prior to European arrival in the Orient, the Chinese transported their specialties along the ancient Silk Road, bringing the delights to the Arab world and then eventually to Europe. At each stop along the Silk Road, the prices rose; to the point where spice, silk and other exotic enchantments were available only to the wealthiest of Europe. "But around the year 1500 other interested parties had appeared on the scene. It was to reroute the spice trade to the greater advantage of Christendom and their own considerable profit that European seafarers [...] first ventured on to the world's oceans."² The trade initially involved only company outposts in far-off lands at the pleasure of the local ruler; yet eventually the outposts grew from privately owned fortifications to dominance and occupation by foreign officials and armies in the

¹ John Keay, *The Honourable Company: A History of the English East India Company* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991), 6.

² *Ibid.*

names of the Crowned Heads of Europe. Some of the most important seaports of China and its Asian neighbours were hence under the control of Europeans.

Jorge Álvares, a Portuguese explorer during the Age of Discovery, has been historically recognized as the first European to arrive in the traditional Chinese lands by sea.³ His ship arrived at the port of Tamão (present day Macau) in 1513. This marked the settlement of Portuguese explorers and trade officials in the city that would not officially end until the year 1999. Similarly, the British handover of control of Hong Kong was overseen by the Prince of Wales and Chinese officials in 1997, the resultant end to the Opium Wars of the 19th century. Thus, foreign governments' direct influence over Chinese territories for nearly 400 years had terminated; the age of invasion had ended. The latter part of European dominance – especially by the British - has been characterized as the “century of humiliation.”⁴ In actions and in words, Chinese officials in the 21st century have rectified policies and military contingencies to prevent another era of subjugation. The philosophy? Do not let the adversary touch our shores.

This essay shall argue that the present-day Chinese government, reflective of the nation's history, has enacted policies and doctrine that will permit the government to control the waters of its near-abroad for the first time since European and American warships have plied the seas. This anti-access and area denial (A2AD) strategy underpins the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that will see China's political and economic influence expand throughout the region and gain pre-dominance along the new Maritime Silk Road.

³ Macau Daily Times, “Residents Pay Tribute to Portuguese explorer Jorge Álvares”, *Macau Daily Times* (27 April 2014), last accessed on 14 April 2019 at <http://macaudailytimes.com.mo/archive-2009-2014/macau/49253-residents-pay-tribute-to-portuguese-explorer-jorge-alvares.html>.

⁴ Alison Adcock Kaufman, “The “Century of Humiliation,” Then and Now: Chinese Perceptions of the International Order,” *Pacific Focus*, Vol 25, Iss 1 (11 March 2010).

This essay will evaluate the recent evolution of Chinese military thought towards the maritime domain, the policies and capabilities put in place by authorities to ensure success in its adjacent seas and along its maritime trade routes, and western adaptation to the rise of China as a hegemonic military power. Notably, this essay will not address the strategic implications of China's nuclear capability nor the US and its allies response to China's growing inventory.

TURN TO THE SEA

Xi Jinping, the president of China since 2012, has iterated his desire for the *Chinese dream*. Translated from his terms, the Chinese dream is a “great rejuvenation” of the Chinese nation that will see moderate economic and social strides by 2020 in time for the centenary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) founding and a fully modern nation by 2049, 100 years after the Japanese and Nationalist Chinese were expelled from the Chinese mainland.⁵ The BRI is the leading Chinese economic strategy designed to advance the Chinese dream. According to Bernard Cole, a noted expert on Chinese naval capabilities, CCP documents suggest “a strong military is declared necessary ‘as part of the Chinese dream’ to make the country safe and secure.”⁶ Cole reasons that China must realize a triad of effects in order to properly secure that nation's economic well-being and continued growth. That triad is: a modernized Chinese navy, established and guarded energy security and the effective execution of foreign policy objectives that will see Chinese influence grow in the Asia-Pacific region and, in time, throughout the rest of the

⁵ Zheng Wang, “The Chinese Dream: Concept and Context,” *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, Vol 19, Iss 1 (March 2014), 2.

⁶ Bernard Cole, *China's Quest for Great Power: Ships, Oil and Foreign Policy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2016), 4.

world.⁷ The view of a strong Navy extends on the thoughts by Admiral Liu Huaqing, “a central figure in China’s dramatic turn to the sea.”⁸

Admiral Liu was the commander of the People’s Liberation Army - Navy (PLAN) throughout the 1980s and was subsequently elevated to the Central Military Commission and to the Chinese Politburo.⁹ His Communist pedigree and his extensive military experience offered an insight into the military requirements necessary to safeguard the expanding Chinese trade and nation at a time of unprecedented growth and integration into the global economy. Liu was a proponent of Mahan’s theory that “command [of the sea] must be exercised in both peacetime, facilitating the international commerce that underlies wealth creation, and in wartime, to control sea communications with the theater of conflict.”¹⁰

Liu was the first Chinese official to clearly delineate Chinese defensive lines at sea, described as the first and second island chains.¹¹ Within each of the defensive lines, Liu imagined a host of defences and tactics that would limit an adversary’s ability to operate freely, and most importantly, to prevent the adversary from imposing its will on the Chinese people. Liu believed that naval operations should focus on six pillars, including: offshore defence – measures in place within the first island chain; strategic defence – creating a maritime offensive capability that would take the fight to the enemy as far from home shores as possible, out to the second island chain; operational area – operational control of the seas should occur within the first island chain before expanding

⁷ *Ibid*, 1.

⁸ James R Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, *Chinese Naval Strategy in the 21st Century: The Turn to Mahan* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 27.

⁹ *Ibid*, 28.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 29.

¹¹ James R Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, *Chinese Naval Strategy in the 21st Century: The Turn to Mahan* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 30.

to the second island chain and then beyond; national objectives – PLAN efforts should integrate into the wider PLA intent as well as foreign policy objectives; peacetime missions – PLAN must be able to defend the homeland, conduct deterrence operations as well as support regional operations; and finally, wartime missions – conduct operations with the other services while ensuring SLOCs remain open and being prepared to conduct a nuclear strike.¹²



Figure 1: Depiction of First and Second Island Chains as envisioned by Liu
 Source: *Global Security, People's Liberation Navy – Offshore Defense*

Liu was the first to articulate a vision for Chinese A2AD and the maritime boundaries the PLAN should aspire to create in order to affect the defence of China. Liu used his political good-standing within the elite to foster acceptance of the maritime domain as crucial to Chinese economic and territorial well-being.¹³ In May 2015, the Chinese published their latest Military Strategy, notably also in English. Cole believed this document to be highly relevant to the maritime domain as it marked the “most direct focus on maritime strategy issued by the Beijing government.”¹⁴

¹² James R Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, *Chinese Naval Strategy in the 21st Century: The Turn to Mahan* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 31.

¹³ Bernard Cole, *China's Quest for Great Power: Ships, Oil and Foreign Policy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2016), 92.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 95.

China's Military Strategy, from its opening pages, emphasizes the peaceful rise of China and the country's intent to live neighbourly with its fellow Asian nations. The opening paragraph states "the Chinese people aspire to join hands with the rest of the world to maintain peace, pursue development and share prosperity".¹⁵ The document also noted that China would not attempt to gain regional hegemony nor would it seek to expand its territory.¹⁶ The Strategy outlines the principle of active defense, amounting to strategically defending the homeland through operational and tactical offensive actions.¹⁷ The PLAN's role in this defence strategy is to take part in the offensive actions, defending the homeland in depth by engaging the adversary as far from Chinese territory as possible. The document also referenced the *preparation for military struggle (PMS)*. The maritime domain plays the central role in this effort: "In line with the evolving form of war and national security situation, the basic point for PMS will be placed on winning informationized local wars, highlighting maritime military struggle and maritime PMS." Cole stated that China's ultimate maritime end state is to control activities in the Yellow, East and South China Seas – within the first island chain – and to actively discourage activities that it does not approve, including freedom of navigation movements by the United States Navy (USN) and allies, out to the second island chain.¹⁸

China's stated desire for peaceable relations with the world community stands to reason. In the globalized economy and with the initial steps of the BRI being taken to establish the Maritime Silk Road, even a military win for China would be devastatingly

¹⁵ State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, "China's Military Strategy (2015)" (Beijing: State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, May 2015), 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁸ Bernard Cole, *China's Quest for Great Power: Ships, Oil and Foreign Policy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2016), 42.

costly. But drawing on the lessons of history, Chinese leadership can draw on concrete examples from the Royal Navy (RN) and USN that he who controls access to the high seas, controls the trade upon it. With Chinese products disseminated throughout the globe and the country's heavy reliance upon energy imports, the CCP believes that its navy's ability to defend in depth the first and second island chains as well as protect the SLOCs of the Maritime Silk Road is of paramount importance.

GROWING FIRE IN THE BELLY OF THE DRAGON

China's island building within the South China Sea supports its A2AD strategy. It is also coherent with its stated policy of non-expansion. China has put forth continued arguments that it has historical claim over the Spratly and Paracel Islands, Scarborough Shoal and the Senkaku Islands between Taiwan and Japan.¹⁹ China has also been insistent since it signed the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) that it took exception to territorial water limitations as delineated in the convention.²⁰ China has maintained that its domestic laws reign supreme, even over agreed international treaties and conventions it has signed. Thus, China's 1992 Law on the Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zones has granted domestic legal status to assume control of the disputed islands and the accompanying water features inconsistent with UNCLOS.²¹ This approach has been described as lawfare, using domestic and international governance structures and agreements to reinterpret the intended framers' meaning. By claiming sovereignty over islands within the South and East China Seas, China is exercising an A2AD strategy

¹⁹ Bert Chapman, "China's Nine-Dashed Map: Continuing Maritime Source of Geopolitical Tension," *Geopolitics, History and International Relation*, Vol 8(1), 2016, 154.

²⁰ Bernard Cole, *China's Quest for Great Power: Ships, Oil and Foreign Policy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2016), 29.

²¹ Thomas A Drohan, "Responding to China's Strategic Use of Combined Effects," *Pacific Forum Issues and Insights*, Vol 16 No 17, October 2016, 7.

through physical presence combined with international interpretations of sovereignty over territorial waters and the associated extending zones of influence. Though the USN regularly challenges Chinese territorial water claims around island-built reefs through freedom of navigation operations, China's regional neighbours are much more reluctant to do so. By forcing regional players out of the game through physical deterrence, the A2AD strategy is having a normative effect.

Since Admiral Liu first prophesized a stronger PLAN that could challenge the USN and its allies within the first and second island chains, China's economic prosperity has enabled an unparalleled expansion of naval capabilities. The United States Congressional Research Service in 2015 discerned that the PLAN's capability expansion is aimed at militarily retaking Taiwan, defending territorial water claims in the East and South China Seas, controlling foreign military activities within its claimed waters and contiguous zones, and reducing the influence of the USN within the Asia-Pacific region.²² Further, the report notes: "China wants its military to be capable of acting as an anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) force – a force that can deter U.S. intervention in a conflict in China's near-seas region [...] or failing that, delay the arrival or effectiveness of intervening U.S. forces."²³

Cole suggested that the PLAN would focus on the combined use of cruise and ballistic missiles, submarines, and mines to deny access to foreign forces inside the first and second island chains.²⁴ Surface ships, similarly equipped with anti-ship missiles,

²² Ronald O'Rourke, "China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities – Background and Issues for Congress" (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 1 June 2015), 4.

²³ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

²⁴ Bernard Cole, *China's Quest for Great Power: Ships, Oil and Foreign Policy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2016), 71.

would bring agile and quantitative focused firepower on designated targets with the aim of overwhelming the detection and engagement capabilities of the adversary. According to Admiral Harry Harris Jr, former Commander of United States Indo-Pacific Command, during his testimony before the United States Congress in February 2018, “Much of this [PLAN] activity is linked to China’s ambitious Belt and Road Initiative, which is meant to increase China’s global influence.”²⁵ Admiral Harris further stipulated later in his testimony about the island building in the South China Sea “These bases appear to be forward military outposts, built for the military, garrisoned by military forces, and designed to project Chinese military power across the breadth of China’s disputed South China Sea claims.”²⁶ It was his assessment that these bases would be used for the stationing and possible launch of short and immediate range missiles, aircraft and the basing of surface and subsurface assets. The most formidable of these assets are the ballistic and cruise missiles operated by the PLA Rocket Force.

A primary focus of Chinese maritime A2AD strategy has been on the quality and quantity of its anti-ship cruise and ballistic missiles, intended for striking at the heart of USN power projection, the aircraft carrier, while at sea and in port. Cited in Cole’s *China’s Quest for Great Power*, the US Naval War College has assessed that the “PLAN in 2020 will deploy greater quantities of missiles with greater range than those in the U.S. Navy.”²⁷ Through the joint effect of PLAN organic missile systems in concert with the PLA Rocket Force, a formidable array of missiles is now deployed that can strike capital

²⁵ Admiral Harry Harris (speech, Testimony before the United States Congress’ House Armed Services Committee, Washington, DC, 14 February 2018), 10.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 12.

²⁷ Bernard Cole, *China’s Quest for Great Power: Ships, Oil and Foreign Policy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2016), 71.

assets operating within the first island chain, and when additional missiles are operationalized, within the second island chain. During the summer months of 2015, the PLAN and Rocket Force conducted joint exercises that suggested “these exercises were focused on anti-access/area denial operations”.²⁸ Chinese Rocket Forces routinely launch missile variants into their Western desert as part of a comprehensive missile research and development plan. As reported by Reuters news agency along with satellite pictures depicting the same, it appears that China has created a Yokusuka harbour mock-up – where USN assets are docked, including aircraft carriers – and have fired missiles at the area.²⁹ The picture, with pockmarked terrain surrounding the mock up indicative of missiles strikes, clearly demonstrates Chinese A2AD preparations and intentions within the region.

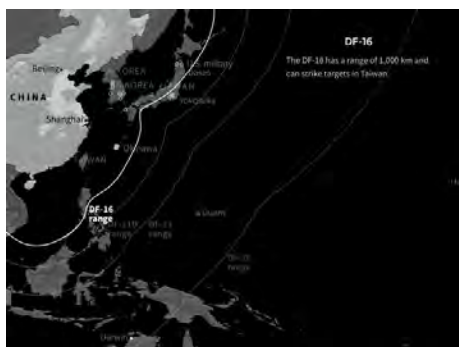


Figure 2: Estimated ranges of DF16 ballistic missile with ranges to strike US bases in S Korea and Japan.
 Source: Reuters, *The China Challenge: Rocket Man*

²⁸ Bernard Cole, *China's Quest for Great Power: Ships, Oil and Foreign Policy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2016), 77.

²⁹ Lague, David and Benjamin Kang Lim. “The China Challenge: Rocket Man.” *Reuters Investigates*. 25 April 2019. Last accessed on 23 April 2019 at <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/china-army-rockets/>.

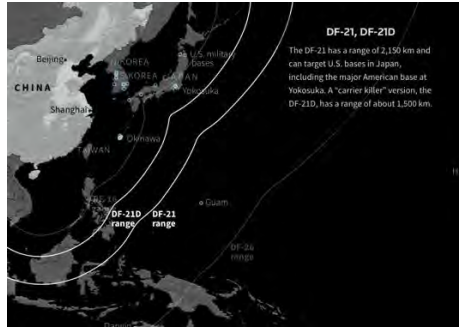


Figure 3: Estimated ranges of DF21 ballistic missile with ranges expanding beyond the second island chain, with a carrier-killer variant.

Source: Reuters, The China Challenge: Rocket Man

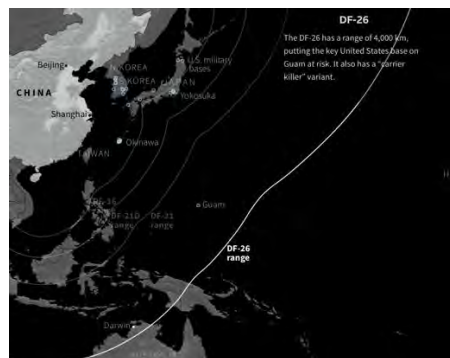


Figure 4: Estimated ranges of DF26 ballistic missile with ranges that would threaten US forces in Guam, also with a carrier-killer variant.

Source: Reuters, The China Challenge: Rocket Man

Cole described the Chinese submarine force as the PLAN's "most potent strength" because of the significant numbers of submarines China can deploy and the modernity of those boats.³⁰ The United States Department of Defense, in its 2018 annual report to Congress regarding Chinese military and security developments, indicated that the submarine force could grow to 78 submarines, of various capabilities, including both diesel and nuclear-powered as well as capable of firing anti-ship cruise missiles or more

³⁰ Bernard Cole, *China's Quest for Great Power: Ships, Oil and Foreign Policy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2016), 61.

tactical munitions meant for ships at closer ranges.³¹ To date, China has demonstrated its ability to deploy submarines for moderate durations throughout its three adjacent seas. Cole suggested that the KILO and SONG class submarines can be deployed within 1000NM of the Chinese coast to intercept adversary surface and subsurface assets.³² The East and South China Seas are relatively shallow waters and, in many cases, designated shipping channels are identified to move the world's maritime traffic for safety reasons, creating chokepoints. These chokepoints are also located in the multiple straits around the many islands of Southeast Asia. Chokepoints are the submarine's hunting, and, perhaps even more significant, surveilling ground. Chinese submarines can operate with relative stealth while passing invaluable targeting information back to surface and rocket forces. The submarine force constitutes an important element in the Chinese A2AD infrastructure.

The Chinese also have an array of approximately 50 000 sea mines that can be deployed from a variety of platforms.³³ The original maritime A2AD weapon system, the sea mine again can be deployed near chokepoints where maritime traffic is expected to be routed. Or, as perhaps in the case of Taiwan, to hem an adversary's fleet into its own harbour, frustrating its ability to sail until a safe shipping lane can be cleared through the minefield. China could be expected to deploy minefields around its maritime approaches should an adversary begin to threaten landing of forces onto mainland China. Mines serve the dual role of preventing adversary and friendly forces use of the mined waters; hence

³¹ United States, Office of the Secretary of Defense, "Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2018" (Washington, DC: US Department of Defense, 2018), 29.

³² Bernard Cole, *China's Quest for Great Power: Ships, Oil and Foreign Policy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2016), 61.

³³ Bernard Cole, *China's Quest for Great Power: Ships, Oil and Foreign Policy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2016), 63.

making mine use as part of strategic defence – while the PLAN is on the operational and tactical offence – could hinder the PLAN’s ability to operate freely.

Above the brown and blue waters of the three seas, China is developing capable anti-satellite weapons systems (ASAT) that would be capable of disrupting if not destroying GPS and other communications satellites that would aid an adversarial force operating near its waters.³⁴ In 2007, China conducted the first ASAT ground-based launch that successfully took out one of its only satellites in low earth orbit, demonstrating its capacity to affect space-based systems.³⁵ The resultant debris field though was significant and posed a threat to nearby satellites. The destructive effects of a kinetic strike in space may discourage the Chinese from pursuing the option on a constellation scale. Instead, it has been suggested that cyberattacks on GPS and communications satellites command systems are more likely options that could render the systems unserviceable.³⁶ Another possibility would be the use of direct-energy weapons that could similarly disable a satellite without the resultant breaking apart.³⁷ Denying the USN and its allies space-based assets within the first and second island chains would pose a nearly insurmountable obstacle with its effects on navigation of ships, submarines and aircraft as well as the advanced weapons systems that would be required to operate against and overcome the Chinese A2AD infrastructure.

An unconventional force for Chinese efforts in its maritime domain has been the substantial fishing fleets that operate near and in contested waters of the East and South

³⁴ Bohumil Dobos and Jakub Prazak, “To clear or eliminate? Active debris removal systems as antisatellite weapons,” *Space Policy*, Vol 47 (2019), 219.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

China Seas. The fleet has been estimated at nearly 200 000 vessels.³⁸ It has been suggested that the fleet directly supports the PLAN and the Chinese coast guard “as an unofficial constabulary”.³⁹ The fleets have pushed into the exclusive economic zones of its neighbours and into disputed territories such as the Senkaku Islands claimed by both Japan and China. In addition to confirming a Chinese presence in disputed waters, constabulary actions by infringed nations have the potential to draw either the PLAN or the Chinese coast guard into the fray, quickly escalating a fishing dispute into a diplomatic or military one.⁴⁰ Controlling the activities of other nations within the first island chain is an unstated goal of the CCP and an effective operating concept that imposes the Chinese will on its neighbours, contributing to the A2AD doctrine.

A longer term A2AD approach currently being pursued by China is co-option of its neighbours. The United States, over decades of persistent engagement and presence in the region, has developed a robust network of key Indo-Pacific allies, notably Japan, South Korea, Australia and, in recent years, greater cooperation with India. However, China, through its BRI, is using its economic clout to garner influence in the region and along the Maritime Silk Road, looking to displace the United States as the dominant power.

China, one of the two Eurasian powers (namely China and Russia), not only has a stake in Eurasia but also possesses great advantage to win friends, build power and expand influence across the continent. As an integral part of China’s periphery strategy, the regional multilateral mechanism serves as a vital diplomatic tool for Beijing not merely to

³⁸ Bernard Cole, *China’s Quest for Great Power: Ships, Oil and Foreign Policy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2016), 69.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ David Brewster, “Chinese fishing fleet a security issue for Australia,” The Lowy Institute (7 November 2018), last accessed on 28 April 2019 at <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/chinese-fishing-fleet-security-issue-australia>.

ensure access to resources and markets but also to advance its key geopolitical objectives.⁴¹

In 2017, the Chinese government released a policy paper on security cooperation with its Asian neighbours and outlined six engagement priorities.⁴² Among the economic priorities associated with the BRI, Chinese engagement would serve to “[provide] competitive alternatives to the US-led security infrastructure in the Asia-Pacific; [... normalise] US and other great power acceptance of the emerging regional order; and [announce] PRC’s intent to incentivise regional compliance through rewards and punishments.”⁴³ The Chinese government has established a presence at Djibouti, Piraeus, Greece and in the near future likely at Gwadar, Pakistan – sometimes referred to as China’s “string of pearls” – along the Maritime Silk Road that will allow the country to exert influence over the nations along the route.⁴⁴ In addition to the economic engagement, the PLAN’s surface force has instituted a visits campaign that supports the traditional diplomatic effort.⁴⁵ The Chinese use the now substantial surface fleet to protect the SLOCs of its maritime trade in addition to the three adjacent seas. The PLAN has had a presence in the Gulf of Aden for nearly a decade as part of the anti-piracy mission off the coasts of Somalia.⁴⁶ These missions have served not only their intended

⁴¹ Weifang Zhou and Mario Esteban, “Beyond Balancing: China’s Approach towards the Belt and Road Initiative,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol 27, Iss 112 (12 March 2018), 491.

⁴² Dhara P Shah, “China’s Maritime Security Strategy: An Assessment of the white paper on Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation,” *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the Maritime Foundation of India*, Vol 13, No 1 (2017), 2.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Gurmeet Kanwal, “Pakistan’s Gwadar Port: A New Naval Base in China’s String of Pearls in the Indo-Pacific,” Center for Strategic and International Studies (2 April 2018), last accessed on 28 April 2019 at <https://www.csis.org/analysis/pakistans-gwadar-port-new-naval-base-chinas-string-pearls-indo-pacific>.

⁴⁵ Bernard Cole, *China’s Quest for Great Power: Ships, Oil and Foreign Policy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2016), 48.

⁴⁶ Jérôme Henry, “China’s Military Deployments in the Gulf of Aden: Anti-Piracy and Beyond,” Institut Français des relations internationales, last accessed on 28 April 2019 at <https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/notes-de-lifri/asiae-vision/chinas-military-deployments-gulf-aden-anti-piracy-and>.

purpose of protecting Chinese – and nominally other nations’ vessels – while proceeding through the Red Sea to the Suez Canal but also in providing beneficial experiential learning in overseas deployments and the logistics of such movements.⁴⁷

Economic leverage in the region as designed through the BRI backed up by military might has had the effect of creating an A2AD environment in the first and second island chains where Chinese acquiescence to the presence of foreign vessels is required, even when freedom of navigation efforts are undertaken by other navies. The Chinese Rocket Force can now strike at targets out to the second island chain, including bases in South Korea and Japan. The submarine force operates freely within the first and second island chains with growing proficiency. The PLAN’s large sea mine stockpile, easily deployable through a variety of platforms – including non-military vessels – poses a significant threat to freedom of movement in key waterways. And the surface forces operating within the first and second island chains as well as in the Indian Ocean along the Maritime Silk Road actively challenge foreign vessels within the East and South China Seas. China’s anti-satellite capability has demonstrated its ability to render inoperable a satellite in orbit and could threaten Position-Navigation-Timing satellites through kinetic and non-kinetic operations. Though China has not activated the A2AD defensive network it has created, it has capacity to do so and to offer a costly battle to any who may seek to challenge its power in its own backyard. A simple, one-word question needs to be evaluated: So?

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

ACCEPTING CHINA'S ASCENT

Canada's Foreign Minister, Chrystia Freeland, has stated "beginning with the international conference at Bretton Woods in 1944, Canada has been deeply engaged in, and greatly enjoyed the benefits of, a global order based on rules."⁴⁸ This rules-based order has been underwritten by the dominant powers following the end of the Second World War and their contributions in defending the global maritime commons, none more so than the United States through a globally-deployed USN. Canada has contributed RCN assets to this effort and has remained a steadfast ally of the USN. In the Canadian government's defence policy, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, the document states that "the re-emergence of major power competition has reminded Canada and its allies of the importance of deterrence, [...] discouraging a potential adversary from doing something harmful before they do it."⁴⁹ For the RCN, Canada's defence policy is to address "the complexity of naval operations [...] in the modern threat environment [by pursuing] interoperability with allied capabilities."⁵⁰ Again, no interoperable relationship is more important for the RCN than the USN.

The United States Congressional Research Service has noted specific United States Department of Defense responses to increased Chinese military capability, including changes to its operating posture previously described in *Air-Sea Battle* and now contained in the Joint concept for Access and Maneuvre in the Global Commons.⁵¹ The USN surface forces have put forth the concept of distributed lethality – "designed to open

⁴⁸ Chrystia Freeland (speech, Canada's House of Commons, 6 June 2017).

⁴⁹ Canada, National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (Ottawa: Canada Communication Group, 2017), 50.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 35.

⁵¹ Ronald O'Rourke, "China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities – Background and Issues for Congress" (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 1 June 2015), 47.

battlespace and enable concealment and deception in order to inject uncertainty and complexity into an adversary's targeting".⁵² Such doctrinal changes are aimed, at part, in overcoming the complex A2AD environment presented by present-day China. The USN continued a tradition of freedom of navigation operations near China in 2018 by challenging a variety of Chinese assertions including overzealous claims in contiguous zones and requirements for notification of innocent passage through claimed waters.⁵³ Where the USN leads, the RCN – as much as possible under the current force configuration, including the pre-eminence of Task Group operations⁵⁴ – will contribute. Despite the necessity to maintain combat-ready forces that can challenge an adversary, perhaps it is time to consider a return to bipolarity (if not multipolarity) and accept that the global rules-based order may need updating to incorporate concerns from those nations that were not represented at Bretton Woods.

As noted previously, Chinese government strategy documents – be they related to the BRI or to the PLA – emphasize the peaceful intentions of a rising China. Despite the tensions over the disputed territorial water and water feature claims, China has worked with its neighbours on a variety of disputes through bilateral engagements or within regional security frameworks.⁵⁵ In their book *Strategic Adjustments and the Rise of China*, Ross and Tunsjø suggest that “Since 2009, however, the United States and China have gradually changed their strategies from hedging toward more balancing.”⁵⁶ The two

⁵² United States, Commander, Naval Surface Forces, “Surface Forces Strategy: Return to Sea Control” (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office), 7.

⁵³ United States, Department of Defense, “Annual Freedom of Navigation Report: Fiscal Year 2018” (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2018), 3.

⁵⁴ Canada, National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (Ottawa: Canada Communication Group, 2017), 35.

⁵⁵ Robert S Ross and Øystein Tunsjø, *Strategic Adjustment and the Rise of China: Power and Politics in East Asia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017), 248.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 41.

authors suggest that China does not need to achieve parity with the United States in either the economic or military domains for world power dynamics return to bipolarity.⁵⁷ Some have suggested that China's economic and military rise is reminiscent of other nations arrival at great power status and that adaption is called for rather than confrontation.⁵⁸ The Chinese are building financial institutions, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, to bankroll initiatives and projects of countries around the world that may have found difficulty in securing funds through more established financial arms such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund.⁵⁹ These activities show a China operating within a global rules-based order but modifying its institutions to better reflect its own needs while catering to nations of the developing world. Chinese leadership have professed that, as a country that has been humiliated through invasion and occupation in the past, it views its rise with peaceful coexistence in mind and a humbleness to help other developing nations reach their own aspirations.

Just as Europe watches with a wary eye the movement of Russian military movements through the North Sea and the Mediterranean, North America takes keen interest in Chinese and Russian movements near our waters, so too does China take exception to USN and allied movements in the waters close to its shores. Through its economic ascent and military capability development, perhaps it is now the moment to accept China as a regional power that – as a regional power – can be expected to exert influence over its neighbours. Perhaps western nations – and their militaries – should continue efforts to engage China on friendly terms and accept that China's actions can be

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 46.

⁵⁸ Jennifer Lind, "Life in China's Asia: What regional hegemony would look like," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol 97, Iss 2 (March/April 2018), 2.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*.

a contributing, positive advantage in world politics and global economics rather than an economic adversary and potential military enemy. If so, will China be content to remain a regional power player while protecting its interests along its trade routes? Or will China seek to become more globally dominant, spreading its military influence over all of the world's oceans? Perhaps an early answer of Chinese intentions is its declaration of interests in the Arctic. The United States Department of Defense has suggested that Chinese movements in the Arctic under the auspices of research may actually be mapping undersea routes for its submarines to operate in the near future.⁶⁰

China has become an accredited observer to the Arctic Council and, through its government newspaper, has stated that “China calls for the peaceful utilization of the Arctic and commits itself to maintaining peace and stability, protecting lives and property and ensuring the security of maritime trade, operations and transport in the region.”⁶¹ Does acceptance of Chinese pre-eminence in East Asian affairs, unchecked politically, by the United States and its alliances both in the region and beyond, including Canada, portend a China ever more assertive in non-regional affairs?

CONCLUSION

From the modern Chinese state's inception in 1949, the CCP has held an ever firmer grip on power within China while “Chinese elites today use the memory of national humiliation to promote nationalism and bolster support for a regime that depicts itself as able to block any current-day attempts by Western power to again subjugate [its

⁶⁰ Levon Sevunts, “Pentagon warns of risk of Chinese submarines in the Arctic,” *CBC News* (4 May 2019), last accessed 5 May 2019 at <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/china-arctic-military-submarines-pentagon-1.5123287>.

⁶¹ “China's Arctic Policy,” *Xinhua News Agency* (25 January 2018).

people].”⁶² Through the funds generated from a powerful economic engine and dubious technology-acquiring methodologies, China’s has developed a robust maritime A2AD network reaching from the seabed to space. These technologies and strategies are a clear manifestation of its intentions – if the network were to be activated - to deter if not outright prevent an adversary from operating in the seas of its near abroad. China’s A2AD strategy coincides with its stated desire to incorporate Taiwan into the People’s Republic of China. Its design, combined with the military exercises undertaken by both the PLAN and the Rocket Forces, marks out the United States as its primary adversary.

China’s economic output continues to rise substantially; and China’s military, though less capable than the United States military and its alliance partners, does not operate currently as a global force and concentrates its forces within China, its three adjacent seas and along its maritime trade routes. Though interested states along the first and second island chains, including Japan, South Korea, Australia, and possibly India would be encouraged to join the United States in any coalition effort to deter and if necessary defeat China, the United States would still be hampered by its operations globally and the amount of resources that could be brought to bear, even if China became the primary theatre.

In 1996, Taiwan was in an election cycle where the favoured candidate was for declared independence from the People’s Republic of China. China conducted missile firings near the island and, in response, the United States sent two aircraft carrier strike groups. Despite its initial intent to influence the people of Taiwan to reject the candidate over fears of possible invasion, it became clear that that PLAN’s ability to conduct

⁶² Alison Adcock Kaufman, “The “Century of Humiliation,” Then and Now: Chinese Perceptions of the International Order,” *Pacific Focus*, Vol 25, Iss 1 (11 March 2010).

“combat operations at sea would require U.S. acquiescence. The military at that time was unable even to detect the presence of U.S. carriers on its own.”⁶³ The roles have reversed; despite freedom of navigation operations being conducted by the USN and its allies in the East and South China Seas, the operations are conducted under a watchful eye of an integrated A2AD network and with Chinese acquiescence. The Chinese have reached a capability marker that renders military intervention by foreign actors – perhaps with the exception of an existential threat to their own homelands – that makes a war with China undesirable. Not only would the economic consequences of such a war be disastrous but the military and human costs would be such that the collective appetite to fight such a war is simply not there.

The dragon has grown and now possesses the economic and military clout to impose its will on its neighbours, and to an increasing extent, on the world. The BRI is condition-setting through peaceful means to achieve regional pre-dominance where one belt and one road is underpinned by one unrivalled regional power.

⁶³ Bernard Cole, *China's Quest for Great Power: Ships, Oil and Foreign Policy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2016), 55.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adcock Kaufman, Alison. "The "Century of Humiliation," Then and Now: Chinese Perceptions of the International Order." *Pacific Focus*. Vol 25, Iss 1, 11 March 2010.
- Benabdallah, Lina. "Contesting the international order by integrating it: the case of China's Belt and Road Initiative." *Third World Quarterly*. 7 November 2018.
- Blanchard, Jean-Marc F and Colin Flint. "The Geopolitics of China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative." *Geopolitics*. Vol 22, Iss 2, 18 April 2017.
- Brewster, David. "Chinese fishing fleet a security issue for Australia." The Lowy Institute, 7 November 2018. Last accessed on 28 April 2019 at <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/chinese-fishing-fleet-security-issue-australia>.
- Canada. Canadian Security and Intelligence Service. *China and the Age of Strategic Rivalry: Highlights from an Academic Outreach Workshop*. Ottawa: Canada Communication Group, 2018.
- Canada. National Defence. *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*. Ottawa: Canada Communication Group, 2017.
- Chapman, Bert. "China's Nine-dashed Map: Continuing Maritime Source of Geopolitical Tension." *Geopolitics, History and International Relations*. Vol 8, Iss 1, 2016.
- China. State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China. "China's Military Strategy (2015)." Beijing: State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, May 2015.
- Clark, Bryan. "The emerging era in undersea warfare." *Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments*.
- Cole, Bernard. *China's Quest for Great Power: Ships, Oil and Foreign Policy*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2016.
- Dobos, Bohumil, and Jakub Prazak. "To clear or eliminate? Active debris removal systems as antisatellite weapons." *Space Policy*. Vol 47, 2019.
- Drohan, Thomas A. "Responding to China's Strategic Use of Combined Effects." *Pacific Forum Issues and Insights*. Vol 16 No 17, October 2016.
- Harris, Harry, Admiral. Speech, Testimony before the United States Congress' House Armed Services Committee, Washington, DC, 14 February 2018.

- Henry, Jérôme. “China’s Military Deployments in the Gulf of Aden: Anti-Piracy and Beyond,” Institut Français des relations internationales, last accessed on 28 April 2019 at <https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/notes-de-lifri/asie-visions/chinas-military-deployments-gulf-aden-anti-piracy-and>.
- Holmes, James R and Toshi Yoshihara. *Chinese Naval Strategy in the 21st Century: The Turn to Mahan*. New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Global Security. “People’s Liberation Navy – Offshore Defense.” *Global Security*. Last accessed on 15 April 2019 at <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/china/plan-doctrine.htm>.
- Kanwal, Gurmeet. “Pakistan’s Gwadar Port: A New Naval Base in China’s String of Pearls in the Indo-Pacific.” Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2 April 2018. Last accessed on 28 April 2019 at <https://www.csis.org/analysis/pakistans-gwadar-port-new-naval-base-chinas-string-pearls-indo-pacific>.
- Keay, John. *The Honourable Company: A History of the English East India Company*. London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991.
- Krepinevich, Andrew F. “Maritime competition in a mature precision-strike regime.” *Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments*. 2014.
- Lague, David and Benjamin Kang Lim. “The China Challenge: Rocket Man.” *Reuters Investigates*. 25 April 2019. Last accessed on 23 April 2019 at <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/china-army-rockets/>.
- . “The China Challenge: Ruling the Waves.” *Reuters Investigates*. 30 April 2019. Last accessed on 30 April 2019 at <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/china-army-navy/>.
- Lanteigne, Marc. “China’s Maritime Security and the ‘Malacca Dilemma’.” *Asian Security*. Vol 4, Iss 2, 24 April 2008.
- Lind, Jennifer. “Life in China’s Asia: What regional hegemony would look like.” *Foreign Affairs*. Vol 97, Iss 2, March/April 2018.
- Liu Xiaobo. “How China can resolve the FONOP deadlock in the South China Sea.” Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1 March 2019. Last accessed on 15 April 2019 at <https://amti.csis.org/how-china-can-resolve-fonop-deadlock/>.
- Macau Daily Times, “Residents Pay Tribute to Portuguese explorer Jorge Álvares”, *Macau Daily Times* (27 April 2014). Last accessed on 14 April 2019 at <http://macaudailytimes.com.mo/archive-2009-2014/macau/49253-residents-pay-tribute-to-portuguese-explorer-jorge-alvares.html>.

- Maddison, Paul, Vice-Admiral. "Strategic Trust and Cooperation in this Maritime Century." *Canadian Military Journal*. Vol 13, Iss 1, Winter 2012.
- Matsumura, Masahiro. "The Limits and Implications of the Air-Sea Battle Concept: A Japanese Perspective." *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*. Vol 15, Iss 3, 2014.
- O'Rourke, Ronald. "China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities – Background and Issues for Congress." Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 1 June 2015.
- Patten, Chris. "The Rise of China." *The RUSI Journal*. Vol 155, Iss 3, 5 July 2010.
- Ross, Robert S and Øystein Tunsjø. *Strategic Adjustment and the Rise of China: Power and Politics in East Asia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017.
- Schiavenza, Matt. "How Humiliation Drove Modern Chinese History." *The Atlantic*, 25 October 2013. Last accessed on 14 April 2019 at <https://www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/10/how-humiliation-drove-modern-chinese-history/280878/>.
- Sevunts, Levon. "Pentagon warns of risk of Chinese submarines in the Arctic." *CBC News*, 4 May 2019. Last accessed 5 May 2019 at <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/china-arctic-military-submarines-pentagon-1.5123287>.
- Shah, Dhara P. "China's Maritime Security Strategy: An Assessment of the white paper on Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation." *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the Maritime Foundation of India*. Vol 13, No 1, 2017.
- Shen Yamei. "Public Diplomacy and the Chinese Dream: Challenges and Opportunities." *China International Studies*. Vol 56, January/February 2016.
- United States. Commander, Naval Surface Forces. "Surface Forces Strategy: Return to Sea Control." Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office.
- United States. Department of Defense. "Annual Freedom of Navigation Report: Fiscal Year 2018." Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2018.
- United States. Office of the Secretary of Defense. "Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2018." Washington, DC: US Department of Defense, 2018.

Weifang Zhou and Mario Esteban. "Beyond Balancing: China's Approach towards the Belt and Road Initiative." *Journal of Contemporary China*. Vol 27, Iss 112, 12 March 2018.

Xinhua News Agency. "China's Arctic Policy." *Xinhua News Agency*, 25 January 2018.