

Realising the Chinese Dream and Building Up National Defense and Armed Forces^{*}

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China is at a new historical stage of national rejuvenation. It has never been so closely linked with the outside world as it is today, and the interactions between China and the rest of world produce unprecedented impact both at home and abroad. Thanks to the continuous growth of its comprehensive national strength, China is also brought to face more and more internal and external challenges that are becoming increasingly complicated and difficult to address.

President Xi Jinping proposed the concept of “China Dream.” The “China Dream” cannot be realised with absence of world peace, stability, and security. At the new historical starting point, the future of China is inseparable from that of the rest of the world. In the face of common opportunities and challenges, China insists on a new security concept of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination; it links the fundamental interests of the Chinese people up with the common interests of other nations’ peoples, ties China’s security to world peace, coordinates China’s development with global development, and tries to build a harmonious world of lasting peace and common prosperity.

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Today, what deserves great attention is the huge gap in perceptions of China between the Chinese public opinion and the global public opinion. The Chinese public pays more attention to domestic problems and challenges, such as environmental protection, ecological issues, imbalanced development among different regions, the social income gap, official corruption, and other phenomena — all of which generate social grievances. Conversely, people outside China pay more attention to China's rapid GDP growth and increasing economic strength, political influence, and military power. Many believe China has already become a superpower second only to the United States. As far as China's foreign policy is concerned, the Chinese public believes it is too weak, while some foreigners believe the nation is becoming increasingly assertive.

Regarding Chinese military power, Chinese people believe that China was subject to significant bullying and humiliation in the past, and now still faces pressure from great powers and is “abused” by some small and middle-sized countries. This is because the Chinese military power is insufficiently strong and the Chinese government is not resolute enough to use military force to protect national interests. But some foreigners hold that the rapid increase of China's military power is tipping the regional balance of power, causing some countries to feel pressure from China.

I. PROSPERITY AND MILITARY POWER:
BOTH IMPORTANT COMPONENTS AND CONDITIONS
FOR REALIZING THE “CHINA DREAM”

The key to the realization of the “China Dream” is what a road to follow. Peaceful development and a national defense policy are important components of socialism with Chinese characteristics. China's national strategy determines that China will unswervingly pursue an independent foreign policy of peace and a national defense policy which is defensive in nature. To put it in concrete terms, it is China's unshakable national commitment and strategic choice to pursue a path of peaceful development. China will inevitably adopt a national defense policy which is defensive in nature because of its development strategy, fundamental tasks, foreign policy, and historical and cultural traditions.

China focuses on building a socialist harmonious society internally and a world of lasting peace and common prosperity externally. It unswervingly pushes forward reform and opening up and socialist modernisation drive, taking advantage of a peaceful international environment to develop itself and promote world peace through its own development. China pursues an independent foreign policy of peace and seeks friendly cooperation with all other countries on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. It adheres to the culture and traditions of the Chinese nation and the concept of valuing dearly harmony. China advocates settling disputes through non-military means and is cautious about war. Strategically, the country will attack only after being attacked. China will never seek hegemony or pursue military expansionism, no matter how powerful it will become in the future.

A rising China faces multiple and complex security challenges. With vast land and sea territories and at the critical moment of building a prosperous society, China has a heavy task of safeguarding its national security.

In today's world, international military competition remains fierce: All major powers are taking steps to readjust their security and military strategies and accelerate the pace of revolution in military affairs and the vigorous development of military technology. Some of them have made outer space, cyberspace and polar strategies, developed global rapid strike means, built up missile defense systems and strengthened the capability of cyber operations — all of which are aimed at occupying strategic commanding heights. Some developing countries also maintain the momentum of military modernization. Despite the progress witnessed in arms control, anti-WMD proliferation situation remains complicated; there is still tough work ahead and a long way

to go to maintain and strengthen an international non-proliferation regime.

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for the last several decades, without fighting any wars of massive scale. Yet, it now faces an unprecedented and complicated security situation, both internationally and domestically. Especially, the military is required to enhance its capabilities to protect the country's boundaries of interest as national security and development interests expand beyond the traditional fields of territorial land, sea, and air into wider ocean, outer space, electromagnetic technology and cyberspace. The situation determines the military missions and security needs lead the military build-up. The national security situation and the country's development interests have put forward new demands on the build-up of national defense and the armed forces. To meet such demands, the national defense and armed forces still have a long way to go. The two most outstanding problems in this regard are as follows:

First, China's military modernization level does not suit the requirement of fighting and winning local wars under the conditions of information warfare. And second, China's military capability does not suit the requirement of fulfilling its historic missions in the new century. These two problems are the bottlenecks in the build-up of China's national defense and the armed forces, as well as the realization of the "China Dream."

The report of the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China pointed out, "Building strong national defense and powerful armed forces that are commensurate with China's international standing and meet the needs of its security and development interests is a strategic task of China's modernization drive. China is faced with interwoven problems affecting its survival and development security as well as traditional and non-traditional security threats. To address these problems and threats, we must make major progress in modernizing national defense and the armed forces. We must, responding to China's core security needs and following the three-step development strategy for modernizing national defense and the armed forces, ensure both economic development and development of defense capabilities, intensify efforts to accomplish the dual historic tasks of military mechanization and full IT application, striving to basically complete military mechanization and make major progress in full military IT application by 2020."

It is a strategic task of China's modernisation drive, as well as a reliable guarantee for its peaceful development, to build strong national defense and powerful armed forces that are commensurate with China's international standing and meet the needs of its security and development interests. The key solution of the problem of the so-called "two does-not-suit's" is to speed up transformation in the modes of military combat effectiveness development. The essence of such a transformation is to fully take advantage of the leading role of information technology and make the informationization a multiplier of combat effectiveness, and the core is achieving an optimal combination of manpower and weapon system by way of vigorous development of science and technology and enhancement of the quality of officers and men. China can successfully integrate the development of military and civilian sectors; keep coordinated development of social economy and national defense; enhance war-fighting capabilities based on information systems; gradually establish PLA joint operations system under the conditions of informationization and a modern military force system with Chinese characteristics; enhance military strategic guidance; and diversify the employment of armed forces as times require. China's armed forces provide a security guarantee and strategic support for national development, thus making due contributions to the maintenance of world peace and regional stability.

Some countries express grave concern at China's development of military power, especially its objective to develop a "blue-water navy." Yet, viewing from the perspective of China's development interests is it natural for China to develop a powerful naval force to protect itself?

China is a major maritime and land power. Oceans provide immense space and abundant resources for China's sustainable development, and are thus of vital importance to its future and its people's wellbeing. It is an essential national development strategy for China to utilise and protect oceans, as well as to build itself into a maritime power. It is an important duty for the PLA, particularly the PLA Navy (PLAN), to resolutely safeguard China's maritime rights and interests.

In recent years, in combination with its routine combat readiness activities, the PLAN has provided security support for China's maritime law enforcement, fisheries, and oil and gas exploration. It has established mechanisms to coordinate and cooperate with law-enforcement organs of marine surveillance and fishery administration, as well as joint military-police-civilian defense. Furthermore, the PLAN has worked in coordination with relevant local departments to conduct maritime surveys and scientific investigations; build systems of maritime meteorological observation, satellite navigation, radio navigation, and navigational aids; release timely weather and sea traffic information; and ensure the safety of sea traffic in areas of responsibility.

Meanwhile, with the gradual integration of China into the world economic system, overseas interests have become an integral part of China's national interests. Security issues are becoming increasingly prominent, involving overseas energy and natural resources, strategic sea lines of communication (SLOCs), and Chinese nationals and legal persons overseas. Protection of shipping routes, evacuation of Chinese nationals overseas, and emergency rescues have become important ways and means for the PLA to safeguard national interests and fulfil China's international obligations.

II. PEACEFUL USE OF MILITARY FORCE: PROVISION OF "PUBLIC GOODS" FOR WORLD PEACE AND STABILITY

In line with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the Chinese government dispatched a combined naval task force to carry out escort operations in the Gulf of Aden and waters off Somalia starting on December 26, 2008. The combined Chinese task forces are mainly tasked with safeguarding the security of Chinese ships and personnel traversing those waters and the security of ships delivering humanitarian supplies for the World Food Programme (WFP) and other international organisations, and sheltering passing foreign vessels as far as possible. As of December 2012, the Chinese navy has dispatched, in 13 task groups, 34 warships, 28 helicopters and 910 Special Operations

Force (SOF) troops, escorting 4,984 ships in 532 batches. Among them, 1,510 were from China's mainland, 940 from Hong Kong, 74 from Taiwan and one from Macao. The task forces also rescued two Chinese ships from pirates who had boarded them, as well as 22 ships that were being harassed by pirates. These actions not only protect China's national interests, but also constitute a contribution to global and regional security, peace, stability and prosperity.

Chinese navy escort task forces have maintained smooth communication with other navies in the areas of joint escort, information sharing, coordination, and liaison. They have conducted joint escorts with their Russian counterparts, carried out joint anti-piracy drills with naval ships of the ROK, Pakistan and the U.S., and coordinated with the EU to protect WFP ships. They have also exchanged boarding visits of commanders with task forces from the EU, NATO, the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), the ROK, Japan and Singapore, and exchanged officers for onboard observations with the navy of the Netherlands. China takes an active part in the conferences of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) and "Shared Awareness and Deconfliction" (SHADE) meetings on international merchant shipping protection.

China's security and development are closely connected with the peace and prosperity of the world as a whole. China's armed forces have always been a staunch force upholding world peace and regional stability, and will continue to increase cooperation and mutual trust with the armed forces of other countries, participate in regional and international security affairs, and play an active role in international political and security fields. China earnestly fulfils its international responsibilities and obligations, and supports and actively participates in UN peacekeeping missions.

In accordance with UN resolutions as well as the agreements between the Chinese government and the UN, China dispatches peacekeeping troops and specialized peacekeeping personnel to designated countries or regions to carry out peacekeeping operations under the auspices of the UN. They are mainly tasked with monitoring ceasefires; disengaging parties in conflict; providing engineering, transportation, and medical support; and

participating in social reconstruction and humanitarian assistance. So far, China is the biggest contributor of peacekeeping troops among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. It also dispatches the most number of troops for engineering, transportation and medical support among all 115 contributing countries. China pays and contributes the largest share of UN peacekeeping costs among all developing countries.

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China's armed forces take an active part in international disaster relief and humanitarian aid operations organised by the government. They provide relief supplies and medical aid, dispatch specialized rescue teams to disaster-stricken countries, provide minesweeping assistance, and carry out international exchanges of rescue and disaster relief.

The "China Dream" has been the dream of the Chinese people for the past several hundred years. It is a dream for peace, development, cooperation, and a win-win global dynamic. China is the largest developing country in the world, and the realization of the "China Dream" of prosperity, national rejuvenation and people's happiness will be a most important contribution China makes to global development and security.

III. PROMOTING POSITIVE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE CHINESE AND U.S. MILITARIES TO BUILD A NEW TYPE OF MAJOR-POWER RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES

The impact of positive interaction between the Chinese and U.S. militaries has gone beyond bilateral relations. It will directly affect the regional geopolitical pattern and the prospect of global peace, stability and development. In recent years, Sino-U.S. security relations, especially mil-to-mil relations, have been a weak link in overall bilateral relations; such a negative factor in interactions should in no way be ignored because the failure to

properly handle the mil-to-mil relations will adversely impact efforts in building a new type of major-power relationship between the two countries.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, mil-to-mil relations between China and the U.S. have played different roles in bilateral relations at different stages. During the Cold War era, military threats of the former Soviet Union were the main driving force behind the strategic reconciliation between two formerly long-time adversaries. In the first few years after the establishment of diplomatic relations, military exchanges and cooperation in equipment and training were important factors in promoting Sino-U.S. relations.

After the Cold War, the disappearance of threats from the former Soviet Union led to a “devaluation” of China’s role in the USA’s national security strategy. Mil-to-mil relations became the “mortgage” of bilateral relations, and “first to break, last to restart” has become a main feature of the mil-to-mil relations within the framework of bilateral relations.

Since the 21st century, with China’s fast-pace development and rapid rise, mil-to-mil relations between China and the U.S. are increasingly becoming a zero-sum game. The U.S. pays greater attention to China’s ramping up of military power, research and development of weapons and equipment, and change of military strategy and operational concept. It also hedges against China’s military power through readjusting its military deployment and promoting military cooperation with regional allies. Particularly, it tries to maintain military superiority and pressure over China by proposing its “Air-Sea Battle” concept, focusing on conventional prompt global strike capabilities.

Although China is the weaker party and victim in bilateral security relations, it has always been the accused, however. The U.S. constantly criticises China’s military spending as not transparent, keeps a vigilant watch over China’s naval build-up, and recently publicised attacks against the U.S. by so-called “Chinese hackers.” Playing up China’s military threats has been the time-tested tactic for American interest groups to achieve their political aims. China must properly handle the weak links in Sino-U.S. relations, while

paying high attention to the management and control of the “negative force” of bilateral military relations. It must try to turn the “negative force” into a “positive” one.

Today’s world is facing various challenges, many of which arise from important regional and global issues that should be addressed through Sino-U.S. cooperation. Therefore, it is urgent to resolve the “security dilemma” of bilateral military relations between China and the United States. This is crucial not only for the stable and healthy development of Sino-U.S. relations, but also for the security and stability of East Asia and the whole Asia-Pacific region.

The key to the resolution of a “security dilemma” in Sino-U.S. relations is that both countries should handle bilateral relations with a kind of “mutually adapted” and “mutually considerate” approach.

First, the United States should apply a correct strategic orientation. It should abandon the Cold War mentality and traditional Sea Power concept. Further, it should not regard China’s military power, especially Chinese naval power, as a challenge or threat. Rather, Chinese military power will be conducive to a virtuous interaction between the two militaries and the stable and healthy development of bilateral relations, allowing the countries to move away from “zero-sum” thinking and toward a more cooperative security concept of “jointly coping with security challenges.”

Second, China should keep its commitment to building a harmonious world, never seeking hegemony, and pursuing peaceful development. While safeguarding its own national interests, China also should increasingly contribute to world peace and global development. One of the important approaches to resolving the “security dilemma” between the two militaries is to improve strategic communications between them.

Third, the “third-party factor” should be properly handled:

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There still remain unresolved territorial and maritime disputes between China and some neighboring countries. While unswervingly protecting its national interests, China also tries to achieve peaceful settlement of these disputes through diplomatic means. One should notice that some countries attempt to draw the U.S. into their disputes with China, bringing the U.S. into trouble. If the U.S. adheres to the “endowed mission” concept and believes that China will compromise under U.S. pressure, its involvement will not help but instead serve to make matters even more complicated.

As long as China and the United States are willing to strengthen cooperation and avoid lose-lose results, there is much room for cooperation between the two militaries, particularly in non-traditional security issues. Such cooperation will not only contribute to regional and world peace, but also promote strategic mutual trust, eliminate misunderstanding and prevent strategic miscalculation. There is every reason to believe that China and the United States can avoid the law of a zero-sum game in the process of rising powers and each play a leading role in building a harmonious world.

Today, at this new historical starting point of providing a security guarantee for the “China Dream,” China’s armed forces are undertaking missions that are noble and lofty, assuming responsibilities that are paramount and honourable. They will consistently give top priority to the protection of national sovereignty and security, as well as the protection of the interests of the Chinese people. They will persistently regard the maintenance of world peace and promotion of common development as their important missions, and accelerate the modernization of national defense and the armed forces. They will continue to actively participate in international security cooperation, and endeavor to foster, together with the armed forces of other countries, a global environment of peace, stability, equality, mutual trust, and win-win cooperation.