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CONTENTS

Vol. 6 No. 1, Spring 2011 (January-March)

Editor's Notes

VII

1. THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR ISSUE: INDIA'S RESPONSE 1

Iran has been pursuing a policy of ambiguity on its nuclear programme though it has now been revealed that it was provided centrifuges by Pakistan. The United States which had been following a containment policy toward Iran since 1979, has now increased pressures of all kinds in spite of the fact that the IAEA kept reporting Iran's innocence, though clearly noting the procedural lapses. India's position on the escalating confrontation has been that Iran should implement the international obligations that it had accepted after signing the NPT. Dr. **Asif Shuja**, a young scholar at the Centre for Air Power Studies, examines the Indian response to the Iran nuclear issue in detail.

2. INTERPRETING CHINA'S GRAND STRATEGY 27

China and its strategy are not easy to interpret leave alone understand in spite of, or perhaps because of, the great deal of literature available on China and especially its grand strategy. And yet it is important for us in India to try and make an objective analysis of China's grand strategy in order to understand its policies. Group Captain **J. V. Singh** (Retd), a Senior Fellow at the Centre for Air Power Studies, examines the various facets of China's grand strategy as seen by most analysts, and comes to his own conclusions.

3. **CHINESE SPACE PROGRAMME: INFLUENCE OF CHINESE STRATEGIC CULTURE ON ITS DEVELOPMENT** 59

Wing Commander **Manu Midha** carries out an objective study of China's space programme and the influence of its strategic culture on the programme. Midha has argued that the PLA has looked on enviously as India's armed forces have modernised and worked through many of the issues that China is currently struggling with, particularly AWACS and refuelling aircraft, for example. India also enjoys the advantage of being able to buy Western as well as Russian equipment. As with its concerns with Japan, China is also concerned at increasing US-Indian military ties, which some in the PLA have begun to view as increasingly aimed at containment.

4. **DEFEATING PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR STRATEGY** 105

Pakistan's projection of its irrationality and rather cavalier attitude to claim that it will unleash nuclear weapons the moment even one Indian soldier crosses the international border, has indicated that its leaders have not really thought through the realities of nuclear weapons. Three senior former officials had tried to change this attitude to clarify that Pakistan would use its nuclear weapons "first, but in the last resort." Dr. **Manpreet Sethi** argues that it is possible to "defeat" Pakistan's nuclear strategy without having to fight a nuclear war.

5. **CHINA'S AIRCRAFT CARRIER AMBITIONS** 123

Ever since China purchased the old *Melbourne* aircraft carrier from Australia, ostensibly for breaking it up, the world has watched with great interest and curiosity the question of China's move – so gradually that at times it appears it is not interested – toward the acquisition of an aircraft carrier capability. It is in this context that **Nan Li** and **Christopher Weuve** have undertaken this study to examine in greater depth the issues that China would face as it moves closer to its ambitions to possess not one but a couple of aircraft carriers. China has the financial resources to maintain a few carrier task forces. But will it have the experience to

operate them on the high seas or the technological ability to maintain them operationally? Only time will tell when and for what operational tasks China would convert its carrier ambitions into practical power projection.

6. SECURITY STRUCTURES IN THE GULF:

PAST AND PRESENT

147

The Persian Gulf region, with its phenomenal resources of oil and natural gas under the vast deserts, and political systems with intrinsic fault-lines and ideological tensions across borders, has always attracted great attention from scholars and policy-makers. The more recent upheavals in North Africa and the Gulf region only highlight the sub-surface potential instability factors in countries with low population densities and non-representative political systems and cultures. Commodore **M. R. Khan** (Retd), with his vast hands-on experience of the region reviews the past and current security structures in the region.

EDITOR'S NOTE

This quarter witnessed a great loss to the country with the passing away of Shri K. Subrahmanyam on February 2, 2011. He was one of the Life Trustees of the Forum for National Security Studies which manages the Centre for Air Power Studies. But his loss goes far beyond that since he had devoted his life to strategic thinking and policy formulation on India's future security. A man of great integrity, he focussed his life on seeking truth from facts and carrying out objective analyses which were almost invariably future-oriented and policy-relevant. He had triggered the establishment of the Institute for Defence Studies in 1965 as a Deputy Secretary in the Ministry of Defence, Government of India. Unfortunately, the Institute could not grow according to his original vision of undertaking operations research due to lack of expertise on the subject in the country and, in due course, became India's only think-tank on strategic and security issues. He served as its Director twice, from 1969-75 and later from 1980-87 with great distinction and success.

This quarter also marked the induction of the first of the six (likely to be extended to 12) Lockheed Super C-130J aircraft into the Indian Air Force (IAF). The IAF had been wanting this aircraft since the 1950s and turned to the Soviet An-12 only after it was found that the US would not sell the Hercules (as it was called). But the US did send a C-130 squadron to ferry winter clothing and small arms from New Delhi to Leh just after the Sino-Indian War of 1962. Incidentally, it was the C-130 squadron operations that required the Air Defence Information Zone (ADIZ) in north Ladakh

being marked (on US Air Force Aeronautical Charts) with a straight line joining the famous point NJ9842 in north Kashmir to the Karakoram Pass in the east. ADIZ (Air Defence Information Zone) as the name itself clearly indicates, cannot be assumed to be the boundary between two countries and/or lines of control between them. It is only for the guidance of aircraft and the air defence system.

India again made strenuous efforts in the early 1980s to purchase two C-130s for the Department of Ocean Development for air maintenance of its scientific mission in the Antarctica. This was the only long range transport/cargo aircraft that could be equipped with skids to land on snow. The reason why the US would not supply the aircraft was that it could be used for area bombing also – something that the Soviet An-12 could also do and was used in this role during the 1971 War. But the Super C-130J will not be used even as a true cargo aircraft since it is specifically designed for Special Operations. This capability in due course would help in dealing with terrorism from across the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).

The Centre for Air Power held its 3rd K.K. "Jumbo" Majumdar international seminar on the theme of "Aerospace Leadership in the Coming Decades" in collaboration with Air HQ and VIF. The seminar was inaugurated by the Minister of State for Defence, Dr. M.M. Pallum Raju and attended by over 240 participants. The speakers included the Chief of the Air Staff (CAS), IAF, Chief of Staff, USAF, AOC-in-C Air Command, Royal Air Force (RAF), former CAS, RAF, former CAS, French Air Force, Vice Admiral Vincent, US Navy (Retd), Shri Ajit Doval, Director General (DG), Vivekananda International Foundation, Dr. Ben Johnson, Senior Associate, RAND Corporation and others. The seminar was received very well.

THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR ISSUE: INDIA'S RESPONSE

ASIF SHUJA

The hottest issue on the international platform that is being discussed these days is the nuclear programme of Iran. While Iran has acceded to the fact that it is pursuing a nuclear programme, it has forcefully argued that it is for peaceful purposes. However, the United States, the greatest protagonist of a non-nuclear Iran, does not accept the official Iranian stance and claims that Iran intends to build nuclear weapons. Since Iran does not recognise Israel, the latter feels an existential threat from Iran's nuclear programme. This has brought the issue of the Iranian nuclear programme to the arena of the West Asian power struggle. Further, the fact that Iran has been a signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)¹ and is perceived as a 'rogue state' by the United States, it is apprehended that in future, Iran's nuclear weapons might land into the wrong hands and may ultimately be used, leading to a wide scale disaster. This dimension of the Iranian nuclear issue has raised some doubts over the efficacy of the nuclear deterrence regime.

India has emerged as a great power in the last couple of decades and is widely expected to make its presence felt farther from its immediate neighbourhood. Therefore, it is expected that India should be clear about

* Dr. **Asif Shuja** is a Research Associate at the Centre for Air Power Studies, New Delhi.

1. Iran signed the NPT in 1968 and ratified it in 1970 as a non-nuclear state under the Reza Shah Pahlavi regime. See Esther Pan, "Iran: Curtailing the Nuclear Program," *Council on Foreign Relations*, May 13, 2004, URL: <http://www.cfr.org/publication/7821/iran.html#p5>, accessed on: September 30, 2010, 3:56:18 pm.

its role in this West Asian power struggle. Further, India's balancing of its relations with Iran, on the one hand and the United States on the other, has put a lot of pressure on it to react to the Iranian nuclear issue in a measured manner. Most importantly, India needs to be clear on its approach towards nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation in order to react to the Iranian nuclear issue in a proper manner. This article deals with these issues and, in essence, attempts to assess India's response to the Iranian nuclear issue.

For assessing the Indian response, it is important to understand the recent trends in Indo-Iranian relations. This, along with an understanding of the real status of the Iranian nuclear programme, its power dimension, and its relation with nuclear proliferation and deterrence, would help us in devising a pragmatic policy to address the issue.

It may be recalled that in recent times, India has developed a strategic partnership with the US with the successful conclusion of civilian nuclear cooperation. However, in some quarters², India is regarded as having come under the pressure of the US due to this partnership. India had been vying for such an opportunity for a long time, and, to achieve this, has to put at risk its gas pipeline as well as its long-standing good ties with Iran by voting against the country in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) resolutions. Iran's complaints against India are mainly on this account.

So what efforts have been made by India to mend the worsening ties with Iran? Has India convincingly explained to Iran the justification of its actions in the IAEA resolutions? How far has this action really strained the ties between the two nations? What is the future of the Iran-India gas pipeline? How is India attempting to maintain balanced relations with the US and Iran? Can it continue to do so in the future? If not, what would be the implications? Assuming that the current Iranian regime continues to

2. See, for instance, Ninan Koshy, "India and the Iran Vote in the IAEA," *FPIF (Foreign Policy in Focus)*, October 27, 2005, URL: http://www.fpif.org/articles/india_and_the_iran_vote_in_the_iaea, accessed on: October 2, 2010, 7:45:08 pm. In this article, it is argued that India's vote against Iran in the IAEA resolution on September 24, 2005, was a precondition to the Indo-US nuclear deal which was given final approval by US President George W. Bush in July 2005. Koshy argues that India had "rejected the position" held by the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

maintain its current posture on the nuclear issue in the near future, what kind of relations will India share with that country? All these questions are sought to be answered in this paper.

MAIN APPROACHES TO THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR DEBATE

There are mainly three approaches to the Iranian nuclear discourse. The first approach suggests that although it is prudent to convince, persuade or compel Iran through soft power to abstain from acquiring nuclear weapons capability, the sky would not fall if a nuclear Iran became a reality. The proponents of this approach show a firm belief in the doctrine of nuclear deterrence.

The second approach is adopted by those who suggest that a nuclear Iran simply cannot be accepted. They believe that Iran is a non-dependable rogue state and its further progress in the nuclear field is a potent threat to the peace and security of the world. The basis of this group's argument is that the doctrine of 'nuclear deterrence' is shaky. Nuclear deterrence can only work in an ideal world of rational actors.³

The extremist elements of this group include the proponents of a "muscular"⁴ US foreign policy; showing total lack of faith in any other method of response to the Iranian nuclear issue, viz., engagement, sanctions or deterrence, they suggest various military options. One such military option proposes an innovative idea of strikes on Iran's non-nuclear sites for the regime's compliance "by causing ever-higher levels of pain."⁵

The third approach is adopted by those who believe that Iran is a rational actor and nuclear deterrence would apply in this case. However, this group

This group fears that a nuclear Iran would create the situation of a nuclear arms race, resulting in nuclear proliferation and effectively destabilising the region.

3. For the detailed arguments of these two approaches, see Scott Sagan and Kenneth Waltz, "The Debate: – A Nuclear Iran: Promoting Stability or Courting Disaster?" *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 60, no. 2, Spring/Summer 2007, pp. 135-150.

4. A detailed formulation of this concept can be found in Amitai Etzioni, *Security First: For a Muscular Moral Foreign Policy* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2007).

5. Amitai Etzioni, "Can a Nuclear-Armed Iran be Deterred?," *Military Review*, vol. XC, no. 3, May-June 2010, pp. 117-125.

fears that a nuclear Iran would create the situation of a nuclear arms race, resulting in nuclear proliferation and effectively destabilising the region. Therefore, a sincere effort should be made to stop Iran. This approach, however, does not suggest applying force to stop Iran from going nuclear. The Indian approach on the issue appears to reflect this type of thinking.

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR DISPUTE

Although Iran's first nuclear quest can be traced to the last decades⁶ of the Shah's period, it was soon abandoned, with little progress. There is not much documentation available to chronicle Iran's nuclear quest in its early years. However, it is believed that despite signing the NPT, Iran had indulged in secret nuclear activities "at least since 1985."⁷ The subsequent Iranian nuclear quest has taken the form of an international issue of gigantic proportions, leading to four rounds of UN Security Council sanctions based on the findings of the IAEA.

The Genesis of the Dispute

The clandestine nuclear activities of Iran were revealed for the first time by the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) on August 14, 2002. NCRI is the political wing of the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran, which was exiled from the country after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. It was brought to the notice of the world for the first time by this organisation that "many secret nuclear programs are at work without any knowledge of the International Atomic Energy Agency,"⁸ apart from the declared activities of the Bushehr nuclear plant. The two secret projects revealed by the organisation were the Natanz nuclear facility and Arak atomic facilities. Despite this revelation,

6. The available information on this varies. Some put this period to be the 1960s, "Iran's Nuclear Program: Overview," *The New York Times*, [URL: <http://www.nytimes.com/info/iran-nuclear-program>, August 20, 2010, accessed on: September 4, 2010, 10:32:45 pm], while others {Yonah Alexander and Milton Hoenig, *The New Iranian Leadership: Ahmadinejad, Terrorism, Nuclear Ambition, and the Middle East* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2008), p. 113] establish this period to be the 1970s.
7. Alexander and Hoenig, *Ibid.*, p. 113.
8. Remarks by Alireza Jafarzadeh, US Representative Office, National Council of Resistance of Iran, "New Information on Top Secret Projects of the Iranian Regime's Nuclear Program," August 14, 2002, *Iran Watch*, Website, URL: <http://www.iranwatch.org/privateviews/NCRI/perspex-ncri-topsecretprojects-081402.htm>, accessed on: September 4, 2010, 10:04:03 pm.

“Iran’s policy of concealment continued almost totally until October 2003, when it made an extensive declaration⁹” on its nuclear activities.

On the Iranian nuclear activities, the most exhaustive source consists of the successive IAEA reports that were brought out as a result of the IAEA’s inspections of Iranian nuclear sites and its negotiations with Iran. The IAEA brought out numerous reports on Iranian nuclear activities from June 6, 2003, and has continued to do so. These reports chronicle the Iranian nuclear activities in a very exhaustive manner, and are accessible to the media¹⁰, so much so that Iran becomes “the only country whose nuclear information can be found in every paper.”¹¹

THE ROLE OF IAEA AND UN SECURITY COUNCIL

For a clear perspective of the Iranian nuclear dispute, it is imperative that the roles of the IAEA and UN Security Council are understood and their relationship with the NPT is established. In the Iranian nuclear dispute, the roles of the IAEA and UN Security Council stem from the NPT, the founding document of multilateral non-proliferation efforts voluntarily signed by Iran. This treaty was concluded in 1968 and entered into force on March 5, 1970. “The NPT in effect contains two trade-offs, both of which are problematic in concept or implementation: nuclear disarmament for non-proliferation; and nuclear energy cooperation in return for non-acquisition of nuclear weapons.”¹² Currently, there are 188 member states of the NPT. The formal status of the DPRK (North Korea) remains ambiguous since it withdrew from the NPT in 2003 after being found to be in violation.¹³

9. Alexander and Hoenig, n. 6, p. 113.

10. These reports can be found on the official website of the IAEA at www.iaea.org.

11. Remarks by Ahmadinejad in an interview. See, “Iran Ready for Cooperation on Nuclear Issue: Ahmadinejad,” *Tehran Times*, Online Edition, Interview of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad by the *Press TV*, URL: http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=223726, accessed on: July 28, 2010, 12:59:31 pm.

12. The Acronym Institute, “The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the International Atomic Energy Agency,” URL: <http://www.acronym.org.uk/npt/aboutnpt.htm>, accessed on: August 12, 2010, 2:48:57 pm.

13. Ibid.

The IAEA,¹⁴ set up in 1957, “as the world’s ‘Atoms for Peace’ organization,” within the United Nations family, with its Secretariat headquartered in Vienna, Austria, is assigned the role of its nuclear watchdog by the NPT. Headed by the Director General, the IAEA currently has 151 member states. An important policy-making body of the IAEA is the 35-member Board of Governors. There is a provision for IAEA reports to be submitted to the UN Security Council either periodically or depending upon the cases. It is through this provision that the Iranian case has been repeatedly referred to the UN Security Council by the IAEA. The Board of Governors takes its decisions based on two-thirds majority voting. The Indian role in the Iranian nuclear dispute is predicated due to its membership in the Board of Governors. Using its rights, India has voted thrice¹⁵ against Iran in the IAEA resolutions.

The legitimacy of the United Nations Security Council sanctions is derived from Article 41¹⁶ of Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. Chapter VII is titled, “Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression.”¹⁷ Article 41 of this Chapter states: “The Security Council may decide what measures not involving the use of armed force are to be employed to give effect to its decisions, and it may call upon the members of the United Nations to apply such measures. These may include complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations.”¹⁸ In other words, this Article prescribes economic and diplomatic sanctions.

Based on this Article, the UN Security Council (UNSC) had sanctioned Iran four times by July 2010. Despite these sanctions, Iran has not stopped

14. For the organisation and purpose of the IAEA, see International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Official Website, URL: <http://www.iaea.org>, accessed on: September 4, 2010, 9:45:43 pm.

15. These votes were cast in the IAEA resolutions on September 24, 2005, February 4, 2006, and November 27, 2009. The details of these votes are discussed in the later part of this article.

16. The United Nations, “Chapter VII: Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression,” Charter of the United Nations, URL: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter7.shtml>, accessed on: September 4, 2010, 9:54:09 pm.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

its uranium enrichment programme resulting in “growing pressure for sanctions to be tightened further.”¹⁹

The Precursor to the UNSC Sanctions

Although in 2003, the reformist government of Mohammad Khatami had agreed to suspend Iran’s nuclear enrichment activities fearing international sanctions, the election of the hardline conservative, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in August 2005, changed the status quo²⁰.

The IAEA adopted a resolution on September 24, 2005, showing its concern that Iran’s concealment of its nuclear activities has “given rise to questions that are within the competence of the Security Council, as the organ bearing the main responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.”²¹ However, the Iranian nuclear issue was not yet referred to the Security Council and Iran was given a chance to comply with the NPT. India had voted against Iran for the first time in this resolution.

Defying the IAEA call, in January 2006, Ahmadinejad announced the resumption of enrichment activity²². Therefore, on February 4, 2006, the IAEA adopted its resolution²³ referring the Iranian issue to the UN Security Council. This resolution was adopted through 27 votes in favour, 3 against and 5 abstentions. While Cuba, Syria and Venezuela voted against the resolution, Algeria, Belarus, Indonesia, Libya and South Africa abstained from voting. India voted for second time against Iran in this resolution. Significantly, Pakistan too voted against Iran this time, changing its earlier stance when it had abstained from voting.²⁴

Pakistan too voted against Iran this time, changing its earlier stance when it had abstained from voting.

19. *BBC News*, “UN Sanctions Against Iran,” BBC Online, July 26, 2010, URL: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-10768146>, accessed on: August 23, 2010, 4:09:37 pm.

20. *The New York Times*, n. 6.

21. IAEA Resolution, “Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran,” GOV/2005/77, adopted on September 24, 2005, URL: www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Board/2005/gov2005-77.pdf, accessed on: August 31, 2010, 6:36:06 pm, p. 6, Para 31.

22. *The New York Times*, n. 6.

23. n. 21.

24. “India Votes Against Iran on Nuclear Issue,” *The Financial Express*, Online Edition, February 5, 2006, URL: <http://www.financialexpress.com/news/india-votes-against-iran-on-nuclear-issue/149182>, accessed on: September 2, 2010, 8:45:09 pm.

Iran underplayed the repercussions of the IAEA resolution by saying: “The Security Council is not the end of the world.”²⁵ The Iranian nuclear issue was discussed at the UN Security Council on March 29, 2006, “which called for a report by the IAEA to establish Iran’s compliance with the terms of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT).”²⁶

On July 31, 2006, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1696²⁷ noting that despite the efforts of the IAEA for more than three years “to seek clarity about all aspects of Iran’s nuclear programme, the existing gaps in knowledge continue to be a matter of concern, and that the IAEA is unable to make progress in its efforts to provide assurances about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran.”²⁸

Therefore, the Security Council demanded that “Iran shall suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, including research and development, to be verified by the IAEA.”²⁹

The resolution fixed August 31, 2006, giving one month’s time for Iran to suspend its nuclear activities, failing which, “appropriate measures under Article 41 (meaning economic and diplomatic sanctions) of Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations³⁰ would be adopted.” However, Iran “rejected”³¹ this demand of the Security Council and the deadline expired, compelling the Security Council to take punitive action against Iran.

First Round of UNSC Sanctions

On December 23, 2006, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1737,³² sanctioning Iran for non-compliance of its demands. The resolution called

25. “UNSC Not End of the World,” *Tehran Times*, Online Edition, February 6, 2006, URL: http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=111910, accessed on: September 4, 2010, 11:34:39 pm.

26. n. 19.

27. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1696, S/RES/1696 (2006), Dated: July 31, 2006, URL: <http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/3788552.28424072.html>, accessed on: August 30, 2010, 6:50:07 pm.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

31. n. 19.

32. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1737, S/RES/1737 (2006) (*Reissued), Dated: December 27, 2006, URL: <http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/2448771.74496651.html>, accessed on: August 30, 2010, 6:56:43 pm.

upon all states to “prevent the supply, sale or transfer ... of all items, materials, equipment, goods and technology which could contribute to Iran’s enrichment-related, reprocessing or heavy water-related activities, or to the development of nuclear weapon delivery systems.”³³ This resolution also called upon all countries to “freeze the funds, other financial assets and economic resources ... engaged in, directly associated with, or providing support for, Iran’s proliferation sensitive nuclear activities or the development of nuclear weapon delivery systems.”³⁴

Second Round of UNSC Sanctions

Observing the non-compliance of Iran, on March 24, 2007, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1747,³⁵ toughening sanctions on Iran. The resolution banned Iran from exporting “arms” and importing “any battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large calibre artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, missiles or missile systems.”³⁶ It also called upon all countries “and international financial institutions not to enter into new commitments for grants, financial assistance, and concessional loans, to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, except for humanitarian and developmental purposes.”³⁷

Third Round of UNSC Sanctions

Finding lack of cooperation from Iran on the nuclear stalemate, on March 3, 2008, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1803,³⁸ imposing further sanctions on Iran. The resolution called upon all countries “to inspect the cargoes to and from Iran, of aircraft and vessels, at their airports and seaports, owned or operated by Iran Air Cargo and Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping

33. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

35. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1747, S/RES/1747 (2007), Dated: March 24, 2007, URL: <http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/5809192.06142426.html>, accessed on: August 30, 2010, 7:02:08 pm.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

38. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1803, S/RES/1803 (2008), Dated: March 3, 2008, URL: <http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/142237.6.html>, accessed on August 30, 2010, 7:08:09 pm.

By the end of 2009, international concerns on the Iranian nuclear activities had intensified.

Line, provided there are reasonable grounds to believe that the aircraft or vessel is transporting goods prohibited under this resolution or Resolution 1737 (2006) or Resolution 1747 (2007)."³⁹

The resolution also called upon all countries "to exercise vigilance over the activities of financial institutions in their territories with all banks domiciled in Iran, in particular with Bank Melli and Bank Saderat, and their branches and subsidiaries abroad, in order to avoid such activities contributing to the proliferation of sensitive nuclear activities, or to the development of nuclear weapon delivery systems, as referred to in Resolution 1737 (2006)."⁴⁰

By the end of 2009, international concerns on the Iranian nuclear activities had intensified. In its report dated November 16, 2009, and adopted on November 27, 2009, the IAEA stated that "there remain a number of outstanding issues which give rise to concerns, and which need to be clarified to exclude the existence of possible military dimensions to Iran's nuclear programme."⁴¹ Expressing particular concerns over Iran's concealment of its Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant (FFEP) in Qom, the IAEA stated that "Iran's failure to inform the Agency, in accordance with the provisions of the revised Code 3.1, of the decision to construct, or to authorize construction of, a new facility as soon as such a decision is taken, and to submit information as the design is developed, is inconsistent with its obligations under the Subsidiary Arrangements to its Safeguards Agreement. Moreover, Iran's delay in submitting such information to the Agency does not contribute to the building of confidence."⁴²

Therefore, the IAEA concluded: "Unless Iran implements the Additional Protocol and, through substantive dialogue, clarifies the outstanding issues

39. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

41. Report of the Director General, IAEA, "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and Relevant Provisions of Security Council Resolutions 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007), 1803 (2008) and 1835 (2008) in the Islamic Republic of Iran," GOV/2009/74, November, 16, 2009, URL: <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Board/2009/gov2009-74.pdf>, accessed on July 19, 2010, 3:00:09 pm, p. 6, para 31.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 7, para 34.

to the satisfaction of the Agency, the Agency will not be in a position to provide credible assurance about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran.”⁴³

This resolution was co-sponsored by Russia and China, which had so far championed Iran’s cause⁴⁴. In the 35-member Board of Governors of the IAEA, 25 countries, including India, favoured the resolution. This was India’s third vote in the IAEA against Iran. While Cuba, Venezuela and Malaysia opposed the resolution, countries like Brazil, South Africa, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Egypt and Turkey abstained from voting.

Iran was secretly building the Fordow site as a back-up for other known atomic facilities in case Israel bombed them⁴⁵. This resolution largely served as the precursor to the fourth round of sanctions. Reacting to this resolution, Iran’s Ambassador to the IAEA, Ali Asghar Soltanieh said that the resolution would “cause Iran to discontinue its voluntary cooperation”⁴⁶ with the Agency. This resolution even caused some Iranian lawmakers⁴⁷ to suggest that the Iranian Parliament could consider withdrawal from the NPT so that its nuclear programme would no longer be subjected to the IAEA scrutiny. Subsequently, a fourth round of UN Security Council sanctions was imposed on Iran for failing in its obligations.

Fourth Round of UNSC Sanctions

On June 9, 2010, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1929⁴⁸, imposing additional sanctions on Iran. The resolution further prohibited Iran from buying heavy weapons and toughened financial transactions with Iranian

43. Ibid., p. 7, para 36.

44. Indrani Bagchi, “India Votes Against Iran at IAEA,” *The Times of India*, Online Edition, November 28, 2009, URL: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-votes-against-Iran-at-IAEA/articleshow/5276462.cms>, accessed on: August 12, 2010, 3:02:22 pm.

45. Ibid.

46. “Iran to Halt Voluntary Cooperation with IAEA,” *Tehran Times*, Online Edition, November 29, 2009, URL: http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=208850, accessed on: September 4, 2010, 11:03:47 pm.

47. “Iran Could Leave Nuclear Treaty, Says Lawmaker,” *Tehran Times*, Online Edition, November 29, 2009, URL: http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=208855, accessed on: September 4, 2010, 11:09:47 pm.

48. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1929, S/RES/1929 (2010) (Reissued), Dated: June 9, 2010, URL: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N10/396/79/PDF/N1039679.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed on September 4, 2010, 9:39:53 pm.

Ahmadinejad hailed the Tehran Declaration for a nuclear fuel swap as a “reasonable, legal and fair framework” for resolving its nuclear issue.

banks.⁴⁹ However, there are still “no crippling economic sanctions and there is no oil embargo”⁵⁰ on Iran so far. Iran had been given 90 days for “full and sustained suspension of all activities”⁵¹ related to its nuclear programme. This resolution was adopted through 12 votes in favour, 2 against and 1 abstention. While Lebanon abstained from voting, Brazil and Turkey voted against the resolution.⁵²

FUTURE COURSE OF THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR DISPUTE

The future of the Iranian nuclear dispute rests on Iran’s ability to satisfy the international concerns and on the assurances from the international community on Iran’s legitimate interests provided under the NPT. Although in an interview⁵³ with Press TV on July 26, 2010, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad showed his willingness for “effective cooperation” for resolving the dispute arising due to the nuclear programme, he put the philosophical condition that these talks be based on “respect and justice.”

While promising to resume talks by mid-Ramadan (by early September 2010), Ahmadinejad put two conditions to these talks. The first of these conditions is to involve other countries too apart from the P5+1 (five permanent members of the Security Council and Germany). The second condition is that these nations declare their position on the nuclear status of Israel, which has neither confirmed nor denied its access to nuclear weapons. These conditions largely form Ahmadinejad’s framework package and include what he calls “international affairs and global concerns.”

Ahmadinejad hailed the Tehran Declaration for a nuclear fuel swap as a “reasonable, legal and fair framework” for resolving its nuclear issue.

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5, 7.

50. n. 19.

51. n. 48, p. 9.

52. Security Council, SC/9948, Department of Public Information, News and Media Division, New York, “Security Council Imposes Additional Sanctions on Iran,” June 9, 2010, URL: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2010/sc9948.doc.htm>, accessed on: August 30, 2010, 7:22:46 pm.

53. n. 11.

The Tehran Declaration⁵⁴, signed in May 2010 by Iran, Brazil and Turkey, is an agreement for fuel swap that provides the fuel for the Tehran research reactor through an exchange in Turkey under the supervision of the IAEA and Iran. According to the deal, Iran would exchange 1,200 kg of low-enriched uranium for 120 kg of 20 percent enriched nuclear fuel. This fuel would power the Tehran research reactor that produces radioisotopes for cancer treatment. The Tehran Declaration was brokered between the Turkish Prime Minister and Brazilian President in Tehran, which was later disapproved by the US.

Acknowledging that Iran is “working on technologies that make the construction of a bomb possible,” he reiterated, “But I do not believe that the Iranians are actually producing nuclear weapons.”

Iran has been blamed to have agreed to the nuclear deal through the Tehran Declaration since it had anticipated the new round of sanctions⁵⁵. It is significant that Russia and China, the champions of Iran’s cause, have supported the fourth round of UN Security Council sanctions. Nevertheless, the Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu has said⁵⁶ that despite voting against the new US-backed UN Security Council sanctions on Iran, he has maintained a constructive dialogue with Washington for ending the nuclear standoff.

Seeking to downplay the prevalent apprehensions from Iran’s nuclear activities, the former IAEA Director General Mohamed El Baradei has emphasised that Iran is not producing nuclear weapons and the threats emanating from Iran are intentionally exaggerated by some elements. These views were expressed by the Egyptian Nobel Peace Prize laureate in an interview⁵⁷ that was published in the July 12, 2010, edition of the German magazine *Der Spiegel*. El Baradei’s opinions are significant since he has

54. “Turkey Says Committed to Diplomatic Deal on Iran’s Nuclear Program,” *Associated Press, Tehran Times*, Online Edition, July 15, 2010, [URL: http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=222985], accessed on: August 12, 2010, 2:56:29 pm.

55. n. 11.

56. n. 54.

57. Erich Follath and Dieter Bednarz, “Don’t Believe the Nuclear Hype About Iran: El Baradei,” *Tehran Times*, Online Edition, July 15, 2010, URL: http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=222989, accessed on: August 12, 2010, 2:54:48 pm.

The unfolding Iranian nuclear saga has apparently triggered a fundamental reevaluation of the broader paradigm of 'nuclear deterrence.'

served as the chief of the United Nations nuclear weapons inspectors for 12 years.⁵⁸

Acknowledging that Iran is "working on technologies that make the construction of a bomb possible,"⁵⁹ he reiterated, "But I do not believe that the Iranians are actually producing nuclear weapons." Commenting on the perceived nuclear arms race in West Asia triggered by Iran, he said that this issue "is overrated by the West."

He termed as "nonsense" the alleged plans of Saudi Arabia and Egypt to develop nuclear weapons due to pressure put by the Iranian nuclear programme and concluded that "the danger of a nuclear-armed Iran is overestimated, some even play it up intentionally."

THE DIMENSIONS OF THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR DEBATE

The intense debate that has been generated by the Iranian nuclear issue is due to the fact that this question has multifaceted dimensions. The most important dimension concerns a potent challenge to the nuclear deterrence regime. The West Asian power struggle and the superpower rivalry are among other important dimensions to this debate.

Challenge to Nuclear Deterrence

The unfolding Iranian nuclear saga has apparently triggered a fundamental reevaluation of the broader paradigm of 'nuclear deterrence.' Does one nation, which is increasingly isolated by the international community, have the capability to change the well-established norms of global peace – nuclear deterrence? Answering this question requires an evaluation of the perceived apprehensions of the potent Iranian threat.

At the outset, it is important to clear the dust from the concerns being shown by the world regarding Iranian intentions. Whatever, the intention of

58. El Baradei (an Egyptian) served as the Director General of the IAEA for three consecutive terms (December 1997 to November 2009) before Yukiya Amano (a Japanese) took over from him on December 1, 2009.

59. Follath and Bednarz, n. 57.

Iran, the total separation of the nuclear programme into civilian or military is not possible or judicious from the security perspective.⁶⁰ History has taught us this lesson at a very high cost "... the vain effort made in the Treaty of Versailles to abolish the German military air force while leaving practically unimpaired its so-called civil aviation, aircraft manufacturing industry, and German control of its own air space proved tragically futile. One use of German air power was temporarily impaired but its potential air power remained."⁶¹ Much like the difficulty in separation of air power into military and civilian domains, nuclear power too cannot be strictly separated into the two respective water-tight compartments. It is precisely due to this reason that the world community is alarmed by the prospects of a nuclear Iran, despite its declared intentions to use it only for civil purposes.

Another relevant reason for alarm is the possibility of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists.

Still another relevant reason for alarm is the possibility of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists. This apprehension is based on two assumptions. First, Iran actually builds a nuclear weapon in the future. Second, the Iranian polity becomes so fragile that control over its nuclear arms becomes loose and terrorists are able to lay their hands on them. Such a possibility would give rise to serious issues related to the security of nuclear material and technology.

The apprehensions shown by segments of the international community regarding the portrayal of Iran as a suicidal state, however, are not the full story. A correct insight into the Iranian nuclear issue can be developed only through a proper understanding of the "strategic logic" of Iran's foreign policy while appreciating that it is "formulated not by mad mullahs but

60. For an analysis of "indivisibility" of air power, see John C. Cooper, "The Fundamentals of Air Power," in Eugene M. Emme, ed., *The Impact of Air Power: National Security and World Politics* (Princeton, New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand Company, INC, 1959), pp. 128-135. Much of what is discussed in this classical treatise on 'air power,' holds true to this day. This model of analysis can be effectively applied to understand the indivisibility of nuclear power.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

The United States has tried to persuade Russia and China to support its cause against the Iranian nuclear programme. This has borne some fruit

by calculating ayatollahs.”⁶² Iran’s foreign policy is as “US-centric” now as it was during the era of the Shah, the only difference being that now it is fuelled by anti- and not pro-US sentiments. It perceives the US as posing an “existential threat” to its Islamic regime as well as to its regional ambitions. To counter this challenge from the US, Iran has devised “a strategy of deterrence,” of which its nuclear programme is an important component.⁶³

A careful analysis of Iran’s relationship with the IAEA would reveal how Iran has adopted a delaying technique to proceed with its nuclear programme while, at the same time, avoiding any serious military confrontation with the United States. This is definitely not the symptom of a suicidal state. If this is not true, then how do we explain the portrayal of Iran as such? The answer lies in the prevalent power struggle in the West Asian region.

Power Struggle in West Asia

The mysterious disappearance of the Iranian nuclear scientist Shahram Amiri in June 2009 during a pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia and his subsequent reappearance on July 12, 2010, at Pakistan’s Embassy in Washington, DC unfolds a “secret war,”⁶⁴ indicating some “cold war echoes.” Amiri’s claims of the US offering a huge bribe for disclosing nuclear secrets and the US’ counter claims that he was a “willing defector” are indicative of the behind the scene manoeuvrings by both sides, few details of which are available to the general public.

The United States has tried to persuade Russia and China to support its cause against the Iranian nuclear programme. This has borne some

62. See Mohsen M. Milani, “Tehran’s Take: Understanding Iran’s US Policy,” *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2009, pp. 46-62, p. 46. In this paper, Milani illustrates how Iran’s foreign policy is based on its twin objectives of regime protection and regional ambition.

63. *Ibid.*, pp. 46-51.

64. “Out of the Shadows – Iran Accuses America of Kidnap and Torture,” *The Economist Newspaper*, reproduced in *The Indian Express*, New Delhi Edition, July 20, 2010, p. 13.

fruit as evidenced in the voting for the fourth round of UN Security Council sanctions against Iran. Russia and China supported the fourth round of these sanctions against Iran. Russian President Medvedev⁶⁵ reportedly commented that Iran had attained the capability of making a nuclear bomb. This stand is very close to that taken by the United States. This was perhaps because the Russians had made proposals similar to those made by Turkey, which were refused by Iran. Although Russia is echoing the US stance, China is being careful not to take such antagonistic steps against Iran. This is in line with China's energy imperatives, which binds it with Iran's cause. When one arranges the mosaic of these scattered incidences revolving around the Iranian nuclear issue, the emerging picture will clearly reflect the power politics being played out in the West Asian region.

Despite not being a signatory of the NPT, India has shown a sincere commitment to the principles of non-proliferation.

INDIA'S RESPONSE

The Indian response to the Iranian nuclear issue can be ascertained at two levels: bilateral and multilateral. As far as the bilateral level is concerned, the statements of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs and the verbal exchanges during the bilateral official visits can help us judge the Indian response.

At the multilateral level, the Indian response to the Iranian nuclear issue is largely predicated on the Indian membership of the 35-member Board of Directors of the IAEA. The Board of Directors is an important executive body of the international nuclear watchdog and all the decisions are made and resolutions are passed through the two-thirds majority voting. In this regard, taking a particular stance becomes a mandatory exercise.

Further, the Indian response to the Iranian nuclear issue can be assessed in three broad contexts: commitment to non-proliferation, Indo-Iranian relations and Indo-US relations.

65. n. 11.

Iran an important element of a large energy corridor stretching from Central Asia to India.

Commitment to Non-Proliferation

Despite not being a signatory of the NPT, India has shown a sincere commitment to the principles of non-proliferation. India maintains that Iran voluntarily joined the NPT, and as a member, it must fulfil all its commitments to the treaty. The three occasions on which India has voted against Iran in the IAEA have been in accordance with its non-proliferation commitments. While India respects the rights of Iran as an NPT signatory, it does not favour Iran's nuclear weapons. Any support to the Iranian weapons programme, tacit or explicit, would go against India's "moral high ground"⁶⁶ on nuclear non-proliferation.

India-Iran Relations

While a strong and unparalleled historic bond between the two countries is an undisputed fact, as a part of India's "proximate neighbourhood,"⁶⁷ Iran's importance is fully realised in the Indian strategic calculations. For India, Iran's position is significant in terms of geo-politics, cultural linkages and energy security.

With the second largest gas reserves and the third largest proven oil reserves, Iran is "extremely important to India from the perspective of energy security."⁶⁸ By importing 22 million tonnes of crude oil from Iran, worth US \$10 billion in the year 2008-09, India became the third largest market for the Iranian crude.⁶⁹

This shows how Iran plays a crucial role for India in terms of its energy security. Such realisations have given birth to a number of energy related projects whose fructification could make "Iran an important element of a large energy corridor stretching from Central Asia to India."⁷⁰ The importance of

66. Bagchi, n. 44.

67. For an understanding of how India sees Iran in "strategic terms", see Indian Foreign Secretary, "Speech by Foreign Secretary at IDSA-IPIS Strategic Dialogue on India and Iran: an enduring relationship," New Delhi, July 5, 2010, URL: <http://www.mea.gov.in>, accessed on: July 19, 2010, 1:31:32 pm.

68. Ibid.

69. Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, "India-Iran Bilateral Relations," March 2010, URL: <http://www.mea.gov.in>, accessed on: July 19, 2010, 2:20:43 pm.

70. n. 67.

the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project deserves attention in this context. The Chabahar port project is yet another example of the convergence of interests of the two countries. These significant projects, along with the more ambitious ones such as the international North South Corridor project, of which "India is also a member,"⁷¹ are "seen not only as commercial but also strategic in nature, not just for India, but for all the countries in the region."⁷²

The Indian stance on the issue is clear and consistent. Since Iran is a signatory to the NPT, it must adhere to its norms.

The first traces of changing Indo-Iranian relations can be seen since the 9/11 episode. Although Iran was not directly involved in the issue, its clubbing with North Korea and Iraq as "the axis of evil" by the Bush Administration placed it in a suspicious position. No stones were left unturned subsequently to prove Iran's support to various international terrorist outfits. India too has suffered severely due to international terrorism. So the portrayal of this image of Iran somewhat tarnished its standing in the Indian psyche.

The issue that gave a more serious blow to the Indo-Iranian ties was India's voting against Iran in the IAEA thrice. The Indian stance on the issue is clear and consistent. Since Iran is a signatory to the NPT, it must adhere to its norms. This stance is in accordance with India's consistent position on non-proliferation. True, there is no concrete proof to show that Iran is 'intending' to build a nuclear bomb. Still, Iran should have declared its nuclear programme to the nuclear watchdog since "the IAEA continues to provide the best framework for addressing technical issues related to the Iranian nuclear programme."⁷³

On the issue of its first vote against Iran in the IAEA resolution on September 24, 2005, India clarified that it was "opposed to the matter being referred to the UN Security Council at this stage,"⁷⁴ and it was happy that

71. n. 69.

72. n. 67.

73. Ibid.

74. Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, Press Releases, "Explanation of Vote on Draft Resolution on the Iran Nuclear Issue at the IAEA Governing Board Meeting," September 24, 2005, URL: <http://www.mea.gov.in>, accessed on: August 31, 2010, 5:47:08 pm.

the resolution had “agreed to keep the matter within the purview of the Agency itself.”⁷⁵ However, despite some reservations, India’s support for the resolution was “based on the premise that the intervening period will be used by all concerned to expand the diplomatic space to satisfactorily address all outstanding issues.”⁷⁶

On the apprehensions that the Indian vote may affect Indo-Iran energy cooperation, India clarified that it sees “no reason why there should be any apprehension in this regard. India has played a constructive role in the IAEA and helped safeguard Iran’s legitimate interests. ... India’s principled stand that the issues raised should remain within the purview of the IAEA and that we should give ourselves time for further consultations, has been appreciated by Iran and supported by several delegations in the Board of Governors. At the same time, we have urged Iran to demonstrate some flexibility so that its friends can help in evolving a satisfactory outcome within the IAEA itself.”⁷⁷

In response to India’s second vote against Iran in the IAEA resolution on February 4, 2006, India clarified that the Indian vote “should not be interpreted as in any way detracting from the traditionally close and friendly relations we enjoy with Iran. It is our conviction that our active role, along with other friendly countries, enabled the tabling of a resolution that recognises the right of Iran to peaceful uses of nuclear energy for its development, is consistent with its international commitments and obligations, while keeping the door open for further dialogue aimed at resolving the outstanding issues within the purview of the IAEA.”⁷⁸ India also made a request to “Iran to respond positively to the requests from the IAEA Board to restore the confidence building measures it had voluntarily adopted in the Paris agreement, and continue to cooperate with the IAEA

75. n. 74.

76. *Ibid.*

77. Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, Press Releases, “Briefing by Official Spokesperson on Draft Resolution on Iran in IAEA”, September 24, 2005, URL: <http://www.mea.gov.in/>, accessed on: August 31, 2010, 5:59:54 pm.

78. Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, Press Releases, “In response to questions on India’s vote on the Iran nuclear issue at the IAEA Board meeting in Vienna,” February 4, 2006, URL: <http://www.mea.gov.in/>, accessed on: August 31, 2010, 6:06:07 pm.

in resolving any outstanding issues related to its nuclear programme.”⁷⁹

In its third vote against Iran in the IAEA on November 27, 2009, India reiterated that this vote was consistent with its declared position that it opposed Iran’s alleged quest for nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, the vote did “risk some heartburn”⁸⁰ with Iran. Like the Chinese sponsorship, the Indian vote was the result of intense US diplomacy, which included a special conversation between the National Security Advisers of India and the US.⁸¹

Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki criticised India for voting against Iran in the IAEA resolution. He said, “It was not expected that despite cordial relations (between Iran and India) and facts about Iran’s nuclear activities, New Delhi would adopt a stance contrary to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and give a yes vote to an anti-Iran resolution by the International Atomic Energy Agency Board of Governors.”⁸²

India’s explanation on its vote on the resolution was consistent with its earlier stand. According to this explanation, the November 16, 2009 report⁸³ of the Director General of the IAEA concludes that “while the Agency has continued to verify the non-diversion of declared nuclear material in Iran, there has, however, been no movement on remaining issues of concern which need to be clarified for the Agency to verify the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran’s nuclear programme.”⁸⁴ Although India supports Iran’s right to peaceful nuclear energy, Iran is also expected to observe its obligations under the NPT of which it is a signatory. Since the conclusions of the Director

Although India supports Iran’s right to peaceful nuclear energy, Iran is also expected to observe its obligations under the NPT of which it is a signatory.

79. Ibid.

80. n. 44.

81. Ibid.

82. “Iran Deplores India’s Yes Vote on IAEA Resolution,” *Tehran Times*, Online Edition, December 2, 2009, URL: http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index_view.asp?code=209828, accessed on: September 4, 2010, 11:24:56 pm.

83. Reference to the IAEA Report, GOV/2009/74, see n. 41.

84. Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, “India’s Explanation of Vote at IAEA, Vienna,” Press Release, November 27, 2009, Official Website of Ministry of External Affairs, India, URL: <http://www.mea.gov.in/>, accessed on: July 19, 2010, 1:58:13 pm.

General are “difficult to ignore,” India has supported the resolution against Iran “based on the key points” of that report.⁸⁵

India was hopeful about the continuation of the dialogue for the resolution of the issue and added, “This resolution cannot be the basis of a renewed punitive approach or new sanctions.”⁸⁶ The UN Security Council, however, went ahead and imposed the fourth round of sanctions on Iran largely based on this resolution.

Indo-US Relations

Numerous accusations had been levelled on India that it came under pressure from the United States while voting against Iran in the IAEA resolutions for the first time. However, India has categorically denied that Indian support for the IAEA resolution of September 24, 2005, had a linkage to the Indo-US nuclear deal. The Indian position on this issue was, “Nothing could be further from the truth. India takes decisions on issues based on its own independent assessment and in consonance with the country’s national interests. The Indo-US nuclear cooperation agreement stands on its own based on India’s energy needs, global impact and on the acknowledgement of India’s impeccable record on non-proliferation.”⁸⁷

Regarding the delay in the completion of the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline project, the official explanation is, “Such multilateral projects involve protracted discussions, as all aspects have to be carefully examined and deliberated upon to the satisfaction of the participating countries to protect each country’s interests and to avoid problems in the future for the successful operation of the pipeline.”⁸⁸

In order to appreciate the real implications of India’s actions in the IAEA, rather than evaluating the validity of the grounds of these refutations, it would be a more worthwhile exercise to analyse the dichotomy of the Indo-

85. Ibid.

86. Ibid.

87. n. 77.

88. Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question, “Q. 2393 India-Iran gas Pipeline Project,” Asked by Shri Naveen Jindal and answered on July 22, 2009, by the Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs, Smt. Preneet Kaur, URL: <http://www.mea.gov.in/>, Accessed on: July 19, 2010, 1:50:11 pm.

US nuclear deal and the Indian vote in terms of cost-benefit analysis under the broad paradigm of India's 'national interest.' This process first demands an answer to the question: Why did the US seek the nuclear deal with India?

The United States sought the nuclear deal with India mainly for two reasons: to contain China and to tap the huge Indian nuclear market.⁸⁹ R. Nicholas Burns, the US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs emphasised that among the main objectives of the Indo-US civil nuclear agreement included creating "new opportunities for US businesses in India"⁹⁰ and "ensuring that China's rise is peaceful."⁹¹

India and the US signed the civilian nuclear cooperation agreement on October 10, 2008. This agreement paves the way for American companies to enter the multi-billion-dollar⁹² Indian nuclear market. Since its first atomic test in 1974, India had been facing a ban on nuclear trade with the US. This agreement would allow American companies to sell nuclear fuel, reactors and technology to India.

This agreement, which took almost three years to be completed, has reversed the American position on the Indian nuclear status, ending 34 years of US sanctions. While the deal is important for India as a strategic partnership with the US and for energy supply for its fast-growing economy, it is equally important for the US, since it provides the American nuclear companies a huge market.

While the deal is important for India as a strategic partnership with the US and for energy supply for its fast-growing economy, it is equally important for the US, since it provides the American nuclear companies a huge market.

89. Presently, only 3 percent of Indian electricity needs is supplied by nuclear power and the projection for 2050 for the same is 25 percent. India lacks oil and natural gas production and has limited coal and uranium reserves. See *BBC News*, "US and India Sign Nuclear Accord," BBC Online, October 10, 2008, URL: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7663017.stm, accessed on: August 8, 2010, 3:09:45 pm.

90. R. Nicholas Burns, "America's Strategic Opportunity With India: The New US-India Partnership," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2007, vol. 86, no. 6, pp. 131-146, p. 137.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 139.

92. "US, India Sign Unprecedented Nuclear Deal," *Associated Press, The Msnbc Digital Network*, Website, October 10, 2008, URL: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/27122378/>, accessed on: August 2, 2010, 2:47:18 pm.

Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, the Indian Foreign Minister said just before signing the accord: "We look forward to working with the US companies on the commercial [steps] that will follow to implement this landmark agreement."⁹³ The same week, before the signing of the accord, the US President George W. Bush had signed the accord into law after its approval from the US Congress. By this time, and due to the US' efforts, the Nuclear Suppliers' Group (NSG) had already lifted the nuclear trade ban on India, enabling it to have access to the international nuclear market. Effectively, India could now expand its nuclear power industry without signing the NPT.

Evidently, the prospects of the Indo-US strategic alliance far outweigh the losses (if any) incurred due to the risk taken by India while voting in the IAEA against Iran. However, this is not to suggest that India has undermined its relationship with Iran in any way. The Indian position on the issue is well founded and the way India has attempted to balance its relationship with the US and Iran in an extremely tough situation is commendable.

CHALLENGES BEFORE INDIA

The unfolding saga of the Iranian nuclear dispute and the Indian position in the IAEA has posed some serious challenges to India. Prominent among them are the loss of strategic autonomy and the increasing weight of China in the West Asian region.

Loss of Strategic Autonomy

Under its new found relationship with the sole superpower of the globe, maintaining its strategic autonomy of the NAM era would be a difficult task for India. While a loss of strategic autonomy results in a shrinking space for diplomatic manoeuvring, overemphasis on the same limits the growth of Indo-US rapprochement. In such a situation, India finds itself doing a tight-rope walk. One way to achieve the twin objectives of 'global ambition' (as promised by the Indo-US strategic partnership) and increased influence in Central Asia (along with the imperatives of energy security), is for India

93. n. 89.

to look for a solution in “multifaceted diplomacy”⁹⁴ with Iran along with Russia and China.

Increasing Weight of China

One important question, having a great impact on India’s stature in absolute terms, relates Indo-Iranian relations to Sino-Iranian relations. Since 9/11, a very clear trend is seen where Iran’s distancing from the US is bringing it closer to the erstwhile USSR and China. Iran’s closeness to China, at the cost of India’s worsening relations with Iran, is a matter of grave concern. So the most important question to be answered is: to what extent will Iran’s distancing from India have repercussions on India’s regional power status vis-à-vis China? If this intensity is high, then what are the correcting measures that India can opt for?

Perhaps the biggest irony of the Iranian nuclear issue is that while the Indo-US nuclear deal was primarily sought to contain a rising China, its linking with the condition of Iran’s isolation has paved the way for increasing the weight of China. With the Iranian nuclear issue having given birth to a new type of power play⁹⁵ in the Gulf, China is happy to see its weight increasing there. In such circumstances, India faces a daunting challenge of how to come out of the sidelines to counter the Chinese weight in the region.

CONCLUSION

India has responded to the Iranian nuclear issue in a measured manner, maintaining its consistent stand that while Iran has the right to civil nuclear energy, it is also bound by its obligations under the NPT. So Iran should respect its international commitments. Further, India has maintained that another nuclear armed state is not in its national interest, implying that it

Iran’s closeness to China, at the cost of India’s worsening relations with Iran, is a matter of grave concern.

94. Guillem Monsonis, “India’s Strategic Autonomy and Rapprochement with the US,” *Strategic Analysis*, July 2010, vol. 34, no. 4, pp. 611-624, p. 618.

95. C. Raja Mohan, “Nuclear Iran and the Gulf: Can India Make a Difference?,” *The Indian Express*, Online Edition, February 12, 2010, URL: <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/nuclear-iran-and-the-gulf-can-india-make-a-difference/579037/1>, accessed on: July 16, 2010, 3:51:23 pm.

does not support any covert or overt nuclear weaponisation of Iran. Under the prevailing pressure, India has shown great deal of diplomatic acumen by successfully forging a strategic relationship with the United States while, at the same time, offsetting its impact on its relationship with Iran. Nevertheless, India faces some grave challenges in terms of maintaining the balance in its relationship with Iran due to the increased isolation of Iran from the international community caused by its stubbornness in continuing its clandestine nuclear programme and constantly defying the NPT.

INTERPRETING CHINA'S GRAND STRATEGY

J.V. SINGH

China is presenting alternative visions for the world order. It's a vision of strengthened sovereignty rather than collegial, collective, cooperative multilateralism in a 'flat' world in which multilateralism, values, and new economic forces permeate state borders.

— US Ambassador Richard S. Williamson

May 18, 2010

Beijing often has stated its belief that, some time in the middle of the century, it will become the premier economic power on earth and demand a commensurate position in global decision-making, in strategic affairs, in military power. Beijing will reach for its "rightful place in the sun," which in traditional Chinese terms, happens to be the sun itself.

— Annual Report to the US Congress,
Military Power of the PRC, 2007

From the consolidation of China as a unified state under the Han Dynasty (in the 3rd century BC) through the emergence of the present Communist government, Chinese regimes have faced a common set of security problems.

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First, China has an astonishingly long border, more than 10,000 miles in all, to defend against local and distant threats. During the imperial era (from the 3rd century BC until the mid-19th century), raids by nomadic tribes threatened the Chinese periphery. In the early modern era (from approximately 1850), the periphery was threatened by the great imperialist powers, including Russia, Germany, Great Britain, and France. Since World War II, militarily strong, industrialised states like India, Russia, Japan, and the United States have posed new security threats to its periphery.

Second, China's domestic political system has always been marked by a personality-based pattern of rule in which ultimate authority comes from the power and beliefs of individual leaders, not from legal and organisational norms and processes. In such a system, policy content and behaviour, including external security policy, often become tools in the domestic power struggle among senior leaders. This tends to cause volatility within the government and internal political strife.

Third, no matter what its relative geo-political strength at any time, China thinks of itself as a great power. This self-image is based on China's historical role as a central political player in Asia and on its tradition of economic self-sufficiency. During the imperial times, Chinese regimes usually held a deep-seated belief in China's political, social, and cultural superiority over its neighbours. In modern times, Chinese regimes have aspired to economic, technological, and military equality with, rather than superiority over, the other major powers.¹

These three key considerations have shaped China's basic approach to political and military security throughout its long history. Viewed through the prism of time, the security strategies employed by various Chinese regimes converge into an overall "Grand Strategy" that strives for three interrelated objectives namely, to control the periphery and ward off threats to the ruling regime; to preserve domestic order and well-being in the face of different forms of social strife; and to attain or maintain geo-political influence as a major, or even primary, state.

1. Ye Zicheng, "The Inevitability of China's Great Power Diplomacy," *World Economics & Politics*, no. 1, 2001, p. 10.

China's stature in the international political power structure has been rising since the late 1970s, largely because of market reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping. China's ascent could cause a dramatic power transition within the international system, possibly challenging the US' role as the region's preeminent security provider. Therefore, managing the rise of China during the next few decades is critical to the US and all important players in the region, including India. Developing successful policies toward China, however, requires an understanding of China's past and present approach to providing for its security.

This paper examines China's grand strategy from the historical, empirical, and theoretical perspectives, identifies the major features of the strategy and the major factors driving it, and assesses how the strategy likely is to evolve.

GRAND STRATEGY

Grand strategy deals with the causal links between a nation's strategic objectives and the means to achieve them. According to Barry Posen, grand strategy is a theory about how a state can best "cause" security in the light of national resources and international constraints. The making of a state's grand strategy, therefore, is contingent upon the judgement of its leaders about how the world works, which in general parallels the theories of international relations. To formulate a sound grand strategy, leaders must be able to accomplish two tasks: first, they must select a strategy that is appropriate for the power of their country and the shape of the international system; and, second, they must be able to cope with the inevitable and unexpected challenges to that strategy that emerge along

To formulate a sound grand strategy, leaders must be able to accomplish two tasks: first, they must select a strategy that is appropriate for the power of their country and the shape of the international system; and, second, they must be able to cope with the inevitable and unexpected challenges to that strategy that emerge along the way.

the way. It is important to note that grand strategy is not co-terminous with foreign policy. Foreign policy refers to the diplomatic, military, and economic means a state employs to advance and protect its interests. Grand strategy is not a comprehensive description of a nation's foreign policies; it is narrower in scope because it specifically deals with the causal links between these three means and the security objectives of the state. This focus on causal logic and security interests is a distinctive feature of grand strategy. To study grand strategy, international relations scholarship has put forth a useful framework, succinctly summarised by Christopher Layne: "Grand strategy is a three-step process: determining a state's vital security interests; identifying the threats to those interests; and deciding how best to employ the state's political, military, and economic resources to protect those interests." In practice, however, the grand strategies of states are rarely crafted with such precision, but this conceptualisation provides a useful guide to "ferret out" the grand strategy of a state.

OVERVIEW

China's impact on world affairs is growing and is poised to grow further in the coming decades. Whether the People's Republic of China (PRC) continues to prosper and maintain a strong measure of domestic stability and control, or encounters severe crises and founders amid the many obstacles that could pull it apart, the waves originating in Beijing will wash across the world.

Discerning China's grand strategy then becomes a must. Beijing has often stated its belief that, some time in the middle of the century, it will become the premier economic power on earth and demand a commensurate position in global decision-making, in strategic affairs, and in military power. Beijing will reach for its "rightful place in the sun," which in traditional Chinese terms, happens to be the sun itself.

The strong persistence of an imperial ideology, increasingly divested of its Communist rhetoric and baggage, the reassertion of hegemonic status in the broad regions around China and the assumption of the trappings of empire, all point to a strong reassertion of a Chinese self-conception as the

country of the middle of the world around which Mao Zedong not only shaped the political but also the strategic thought of China for decades. Mao's doctrine of "people's war" has been the source and driving force in the victory of Third World guerrillas against Western Armies, prominently so in the case of the two Vietnam Wars, thus, enhancing its fame as an ever victorious doctrine.

China's leaders do not explicitly provide an overarching "grand strategy" that outlines strategic goals and the means to achieve them. Such vagueness may reflect deliberate effort to conceal strategic planning, as well as uncertainties, disagreements, and debates that China's leaders themselves have about their own long-term goals and strategies. Still, it is possible to make some generalisations about the Chinese "grand strategy" based on strategic tradition, historical patterns, statements and official papers, an emphasis on certain military capabilities, and recent diplomatic efforts.

STRATEGY WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS

At the core of China's overall strategy rests the desire to maintain the continuous rule of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). A deep-rooted fear of losing political power shapes the leadership's strategic outlook and drives many of its choices. As a substitute for the failure of Communist ideology, the CCP has based its legitimacy on the twin pillars of economic performance and nationalism. As a consequence, domestic economic and social difficulties make China attempt to bolster support by stimulating nationalist sentiment which could result in more aggressive behaviour in foreign and security affairs than we might otherwise expect. Chinese leaders and strategists rarely use a Western "ends-ways-means" construct to discuss strategy. Rather, they discuss strategy in terms of two central concepts: "Comprehensive National Power (CNP)" and the "strategic configuration of power." These concepts shape how Chinese strategic planners assess the security environment, gauge China's relative position in the world, and make adjustments for prevailing geo-political trends. China's strategic planners use CNP scores to evaluate China's standing in relation to other nations based on qualitative and quantitative measures of territory, natural resources, economic prosperity,

It is a matter of great importance to strive to construct a military force that is commensurate with China's status and up to the job of defending the interests of China's development.

diplomatic influence, international prestige, domestic cohesiveness, military capability, and cultural influence. Since the early 1980s, China's leaders have described their national development strategy as a quest to increase China's CNP, with stress on economic growth and innovation in science and technology.

A key assumption of this strategy is that economic prosperity and stability will afford China greater international influence and diplomatic leverage as well as a robust, modern military. A commentary in the official *Liberation Army Daily* in April 2006 shed some light on the relationship among CNP, military modernisation, and China's international status: "As China's comprehensive strength is incrementally mounting and her status keeps on going up in international affairs, it is a matter of great importance to strive to construct a military force that is commensurate with China's status and up to the job of defending the interests of China's development, so as to entrench China's international status."

STRATEGIC CONFIGURATION OF POWER

Chinese strategic planners continuously assess the "strategic configuration of power for potential threats (e.g., potential conflict over Taiwan that involves the United States) as well as opportunities (e.g. the collapse of the Soviet Union) that might prompt an adjustment in national strategy." China's leaders describe the initial decades of the 21st century as a "20-year period of opportunity," meaning that regional and international conditions will generally be peaceful and conducive to economic, diplomatic, and military development and, thus, to China's rise as a great power. Closely linked to this concept is the "peaceful development" campaign to assuage foreign concerns over China's military modernisation and its global agenda by proclaiming that China's rise will be peaceful and that conflict is not a necessary corollary to the emergence of a new power

In the early 1990s, former paramount leader Deng Xiaoping gave guidance to China's foreign and security policy apparatus.² Elements of this strategy have often been quoted by senior Chinese national security officials and academics, especially in the context of China's diplomacy and military strategy. Certain aspects of this strategy have been debated in recent years, namely, the relative emphasis placed upon "never claim leadership" or "make some contributions." China's increased international profile, especially since the 2002 16th Party Congress, suggests that Beijing is leaning toward a more assertive, confident diplomacy.

China has settled territorial disputes with many of its neighbours in recent years. However, disputes with Japan in the East China Sea, with India along their shared border, and with the Southeast Asian nations in the South China Sea remain. Although China has attempted to prevent these disputes from disrupting regional relations, occasional statements by PRC officials underscore China's resolve in these areas. For example, on the eve of President Hu's historic October 2006 visit to India, PRC Ambassador Sun Yuxi told the Indian press, "The whole of what you call the state of Arunachal Pradesh is Chinese territory, we are claiming all of that, that's our position."

RESOURCE DEMANDS AND STRATEGY

As China's economy grows, dependence on secure access to markets and natural resources, particularly metals and fossil fuels, is becoming a more urgent influence on China's strategic behaviour. At present, China can neither protect its foreign energy supplies nor the routes on which they travel, including the Strait of Malacca through which some 80 percent of China's crude oil imports transit and the vulnerability of which President Hu refers to as the "Malacca Dilemma." In 2003, China became the world's second largest consumer and third largest importer of oil. China currently imports over 40 percent of its oil (about 3.5 million barrels per day). By 2025, this figure could rise to 80 percent (9.5-15

2. Deng Xiaoping, *Deng Xiaoping Wenxuan Vol. 3* [Selected Work of Deng Xiaoping] (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1993), p. 321.

million barrels per day). China's reliance on foreign energy imports has affected its strategy and policy in significant ways. It has pursued long-term energy supply agreements in Angola, Central Asia, Chad, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Nigeria, Oman, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Venezuela. China has also offered economic assistance to, and military cooperation with, the countries located astride the key maritime transit routes. Concern over these routes has also prompted China to pursue maritime capabilities that would help it ensure the safe passage of resources through international waterways.

OTHER FACTORS INFLUENCING CHINESE STRATEGY

Economic Reform

Economic success is central to China's emergence as a regional and global power and is the basis of an increasingly capable military. However, underlying structural weaknesses threaten economic growth. Demographic shifts and social dislocations are stressing an already weak social welfare system. Economic setbacks or downturns could lead to internal unrest, potentially giving rise to greater reliance on nationalism to maintain popular support.

Political Reform

In an October 2008 White Paper on Political Democracy, China's leaders reaffirmed the "people's democratic dictatorship," and declared that China is "against the anarchic call for 'democracy for all.'" However, internal pressures for political liberalisation persist. Party leaders criminalise political dissent, censor the media and internet, suppress independent trade and labour unions, repress ethnic Tibetan and Uighur minorities, and harass religious groups and churches not recognised by the regime. The Party is wary of any unsanctioned organisation in China, even if non-political, fearing that these organisations could facilitate organised opposition.

PILLARS OF BALANCING THE GRAND STRATEGY

Internal Balancing: The first pillar of China's grand strategy is internal balancing. Because hard, external balancing is difficult in a unipolar world, the primary means that Beijing is employing to close the power gap with the US is through internal efforts to increase China's capabilities. Whether China will be able to rise to the rank of "world great power" and become the leading state in Asia will ultimately depend on its economic wealth, technological prowess, and military might. Accordingly, Beijing is setting economic development as its principal task, and, in the meantime, embarking upon a military modernisation programme with an emphasis on asymmetric capabilities. In short, Beijing hopes to find an optimal balance between "guns" and "butter."

Soft Balancing: The second pillar of China's grand strategy is to maintain a peaceful international environment by soft balancing. Beijing views certain aspects of the US preponderance as menacing to Chinese security interests and believes that the US is taking measures to constrain China's rise. Therefore, Beijing needs to build a coalition of friendly states to "minimize Washington's ability to contain or constrain China in the region." Importantly, such diplomatic coordination efforts must not appear to be outright balancing against the US. The rationale is straightforward: military alliances with the purpose of hard balancing would provoke a vigorous US response, whereas soft balancing by diplomatic coordination could frustrate American policy objectives detrimental to Chinese interests without drawing the "focused enmity" of the US' preponderant power. To soft balance American power, Beijing is currently engaging in multilateral diplomacy and building bilateral partnerships in an effort to construct an international environment favourable to China's development of CNP.

Great Power Diplomacy and Partnerships: In addition to its relatively new interest in multilateral fora, China has continued to cultivate bilateral relationships in the form of "partnerships." These partnerships allow China to find a middle ground between traditional allies and adversaries. Through the partnerships, Beijing seeks to maximise leverage by linking economic benefits with bilateral relations. The concept of partnership is open to potential allies

Russia is the main supplier of China's arms, accounting for 85 percent of China's total arms imports since the early 1990s and a significant enabler of China's military modernisation.

and adversaries and does not necessarily assume cooperative outcomes. It recognises national differences in culture, ideology, and interests and seeks to build a mechanism to manage the areas of potential conflicts.

Russia is the foremost example of this type of relationship. It is the main supplier of China's arms, accounting for 85 percent of China's total arms imports since the early 1990s and a "significant enabler of China's military modernisation." US military operations in the Balkans during the 1990s gave rise to concerns in Beijing. Against this background, and in the light of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) expansion and the strengthening of US alliances in Asia, China and Russia moved to strengthen bilateral ties by forging a "strategic cooperative partnership" in 1996. Subsequent developments have driven Moscow and Beijing closer together. In 2000, US plans to build a missile defence system and to abrogate the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty led Russia and China to issue a joint statement voicing their opposition to what were considered strategically destabilising moves by Washington. The next year, the Sino-Russian partnership took another step forward with the Treaty of Good Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation. In 2005, China and Russia conducted their first ever joint military exercise, involving 10,000 air, land, and naval forces.

China is also deepening its relations with the European Union (EU) in general, and is cultivating partnerships with France, Britain, and Germany. Chinese analysts argue that the Sino-Russian partnership is not enough to constrain US power, and to expedite the arrival of multipolarity, the key is to win over Europe. China now holds regular summit meetings with the EU, and the two are now each other's largest trading partner. The China-EU strategic partnership is largely the result of shared concerns over US power:

Beijing has also sought to deal more directly in its bilateral relations with Washington. Despite some internal voices calling for a more confrontational

policy of resisting American hegemony, China moved to establish a “constructive strategic partnership” with the United States in 1997, during the Clinton Administration. Beijing’s offer was conditional; however, Washington could expect cooperative behaviour as long as China’s core security interests were not infringed upon. Beijing recognises that such a partnership is probably “the best of a bad lot of options” for a rising China to live with US primacy.

CHINA’S REGIONAL AND GLOBAL GRAND STRATEGY

Background

After winning the Chinese Civil War and controlling most of the terrain of Mainland China, Mao Zedong proclaimed the establishment of the PRC at the First Plenary Session of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference on September 21, 1949. Between 1949 and 1978, the strategic purpose of the PRC government focussed heavily on the political movement; economic strategy was seriously flawed, consisting of a series of badly focussed programmes. Although the PRC worked hard on development during these thirty years, the serious political and economic mistakes made it a poor country. During the Great Leap Forward, all the data regarding their products was fake. Every method they used contributed to the destruction of the economy, agriculture, and environment. The PRC launched so much manpower into steel production in the last period of the Great Leap Forward movement, that there was not enough manpower for agriculture. The result of this movement was the Great Chinese Famine, from 1958 to 1961.

In 1978, the Government of the PRC under Deng Xiaoping selected a different way of ruling, separating its economic development from its political management. This was the opportunity for Deng to introduce his ideas about economic reform. After the era of Deng, all his successors, of course, followed the direction that Deng had set of economic development being the main goal of the country. They set as their national future goal the building of a moderately prosperous society. The PRC thus attained economic power and is still developing that power today.

With this decision, Mainland China's economy took off, stimulating the country's comprehensive national power. Today, China is not only well on its way to becoming an economic superpower, it is also strengthening its political and military presence in the international arena. The PRC's effective manoeuvring of its economic, political, military, and diplomatic power to obtain its interests from the world is driven by a coordinated strategic objective of becoming more than just a regional power.

Assessing China's Grand Strategy

Because economic development is taken as the only way for tackling all the pressing challenges that China's is facing and will face, China's grand strategy must serve the central purpose of development. Therefore, the central objective of China's grand strategy in the past two decades (which may well last till 2050) can be captured in just one sentence: to secure and shape a conducive environment (security, economic, and political) so that China can concentrate on its development (economic, social, and political).³

The Conceptual Foundation of China's Grand Strategy

Four core concepts underpin China's current grand strategy. The root of the first can be traced back to Sun Yat-sen, the father of modern China. Chinese leaders and elite have always believed that China rightly belongs to the great power club because of its size, population, civilisation, history, and, more recently, its growing wealth. And even if China has not been a great power in the past two centuries, its goal now is to become one.

Secondly, Deng Xiaoping realised early on that China needs a stable and peaceful international environment for its "Four Modernisations" programme to succeed. However, when he toured several Southeast Asian countries in 1978, Deng was surprised to find that not many of China's neighbours trusted it; China's political system, its earlier policies of exporting revolution, and the sensitive issue of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia

3. "The Diplomatic Face of China's Grand Strategy: A Rising Power's Emerging Choice," *China Quarterly*, no. 168, December 2001, pp. 835-864.

had made many countries in the region suspicious of China's intentions. This made Deng realise that China's security conundrum in the 1960-70s had not been the work of external forces alone, but rather was due to the interaction between China and the outside world. Deng's realisation was a momentous shift. In essence, he grasped the existence of the security dilemma. From then on, this realisation has exerted a profound influence on China's strategic thinking and behaviour.

The third concept is "self-restraint," embodied in Deng's famous doctrine of "do not seek leadership". In his numerous speeches from 1990 to 1992, Deng repeatedly warned his successors against actively seeking leadership in global or regional affairs and shouldering responsibilities that China could not bear.

The fourth concept began to take shape under Deng, but developed more fully under Jiang Zemin, especially after the 1997 Asian financial crises. Living in an increasingly interdependent world, many Chinese analysts and policy-makers gradually came to realise that both China's economic welfare and security depend heavily on its interaction with the outside world; therefore, China has to participate in world affairs more actively. Yet joining the world not only means that China has something to gain, but also that China has to shoulder certain burdens and responsibilities; thus, China has to behave as a "responsible great power."

The Practice of China's Grand Strategy

Four features distinguish China's current practice of grand strategy. First, in accordance with its self-image as a great power; China has maintained an active "great power diplomacy." Its goal is to maintain a workable relationship with all major great powers and project an image of China as a great power both abroad and at home. In particular, recognising that the US is the world's sole superpower and one of China's key providers of capital, technology, and market, China cannot afford to have an irreparable rupture in its relationship with the US. Accordingly, China's great power diplomacy is still very much US-centric. Chinese policy-makers have worked hard to maintain a workable relationship with the US. This policy has continued

An aggressive strategy is simply not in China's interest, no matter how powerful China becomes.

despite strong domestic opposition against being too soft with the US, especially after incidents like the 1995-96 crisis in the Taiwan Strait, the 1999 bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, and the 2001 EP-3 incident.

Second, in close connection to its recognition of the security dilemma and understanding that Sino-US relationship will always have its ups and downs, China has pursued a strategy of maintaining amicable relationships with its neighbours to hedge against the bad times in Sino-US relations. With China located in a geographical environment with more than fifteen neighbouring countries, Deng Xiaoping and now his successors understand clearly that an aggressive strategy is simply not in China's interest, no matter how powerful China becomes. If, however, China adopts a moderate approach, most regional countries would be reluctant to adopt a policy of hard containment, and, thus, China will likely enjoy a benign regional security environment. To this end, China has made strenuous efforts to improve its relationships with its neighbouring countries, sometimes by making significant concessions against strong domestic opposition.⁴

Third, China began to take a more active stand in regional and global multilateral institutions and initiatives since the early 1990s, even though its embrace of multilateralism has been gradual and incomplete. Moreover, understanding the difference between cooperation in the economic and security arenas, China has been more active in multilateral economic institutions than in security institutions. Therefore, while China has taken the lead in pushing forward some regional multilateral economic cooperation initiatives, it has been less enthusiastic about moving from consultations and Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) to more codified and institutionalised security arrangements in the security arena.

Fourth, while China has gradually become more willing to shoulder certain international responsibilities deemed necessary by the international

4. Lee Kuan Yew, "Deng's Understanding" in *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story 1965-2000* (Singapore: The Straits Times Press and Times Media, 2001), pp. 663-668.

community, it has been highly selective of the responsibilities that it wishes to shoulder. China not only chooses what kind of responsibility to shoulder carefully, but also cares very much about what the responsibility demands.

OVERRIDING OBJECTIVES: THE SECURITY-ECONOMIC-POLITICAL AXIS

In the security sphere, China realises that Asia is a region with the world's highest concentration of major power interaction; as a country in this region, the first goal of China's regional security strategy is to maintain at least a workable relationship with all the major powers in the region (the US, Russia, Japan, India) so that China will never become isolated and encircled by great powers again. Because it sees the region as a shield from pressure exerted by other great powers, the second security goal of China's regional strategy is to maintain, whenever possible, a cordial relationship with regional states in order to prevent a hard containment coalition led by any combination of the external great powers.⁵

Economically, China understands that it is already a regional economic power, and its weight will continue to grow if its economy continues its growth. The challenge confronting China is how to make China's economic growth not a threat but an opportunity for the region, so that regional states will not coalesce together to thwart China's economic growth. With the prevalent perceptions that Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) formerly going to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries is now being sucked into China, it has to alleviate the ASEAN countries' fear of economic challenges from China. Increasingly, taking neo-liberalism's core belief that economic interdependence creates common interests and lessens the probability of conflict, China has decided that the best strategy is to eventually make China a locomotive for regional growth by serving as a market for regional states and a provider of investment and technology.

5. "Development of China's Security Thinking in the Post-Cold War Era," *World Economics & Politics*, no. 10, 1999, pp. 11-15.

Politically, China's regional strategy seeks to establish the country as "indispensable" for regional issues. Since political influence can only be effective when other states not only respect your power but also your opinion, China reasons that the best way for regional political influence is through cultivating an image of "a responsible great power."

THE FUTURE OF CHINA'S GRAND STRATEGY

Since the end of the Cold War, Beijing has successfully managed possible challenges to its grand strategy. First, it was able to overcome the threat of US economic sanctions over human rights concerns during the Clinton Administration due to Beijing's brutal crackdown on the Tiananmen demonstrations in 1989. Such sanctions would have adversely affected China's internal balancing strategy, which emphasises economic growth. Beijing got what it wanted: thanks to the lobbying efforts: human rights were delinked from trade policy and Congress voted in 2000 to extend Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) to China. Such an extension paved the way for China's accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) membership and came as a major boost for China's economic prospects because it makes the country more attractive to foreign trade and investment partners.

Second, Beijing was able to stem what it perceived as a separatist trend in Taiwan from both threatening the regime's legitimacy and raising the spectre of war with the United States. Should war occur in the Taiwan Strait, China's hopes for a peaceful international environment would be dashed not just in the short-term, but well beyond the duration of the actual hostilities. China realised that its sabre-rattling during the Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1995-96 demonstrated that military coercion would likely harden Taiwan's determination for independence and would draw powerful US forces into the area. Slowly but steadily, Beijing learned to take a more nuanced approach toward Taiwan, especially after the 2000 Taiwan presidential election that put the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party in power. It pursued a "hearts and minds" strategy to win over public opinion. Internationally, Beijing was able to get most countries to recognise

and reaffirm its “one-China” position, and to paint Taiwan as the trouble-maker whenever tension rose over the Strait.

Third, Beijing exercised its leverage to compel North Korea to enter multilateral negotiations with the United States, thus, reducing the danger of a full scale war on China’s border. Washington views North Korea’s nuclear aspirations as a threat to regional peace and demands that Pyongyang completely dismantle its nuclear programmes. Apparently, Beijing took note of President Bush’s doctrine of preventive war after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and was instrumental in reaching the six-party joint statement in September 2005 in which Pyongyang agreed to terminate its nuclear programme in return for economic, security, and energy benefits. The six-party talks are currently stalled and may be under threat from recent North Korean missile tests, but Beijing continues to play a crucial role in attempting to end the impasse through diplomatic means.⁶

Beijing’s current non-confrontational strategy is a rational, calculated response to China’s relative weakness and US preponderance. The best way to balance American power is to develop national capability through internal efforts and meanwhile engage in diplomatic coordination with other countries to constrain US actions harmful to Chinese interests. China needs a stable, non-confrontational external environment for the development of its comprehensive national power.

But will China continue to behave in a restrained, non-coercive way once it becomes rich and powerful? Not likely, according to the realist theory, which expects that a strong, prosperous China would likely adopt an offensive grand strategy by expanding its political, economic, and military interests abroad and establishing a sphere of influence in East Asia. Such an expansionist tendency is a natural outgrowth of increased capability. China has been a practitioner of *realpolitik* since its imperial past. When China

But will China continue to behave in a restrained, non-coercive way once it becomes rich and powerful? Not likely, according to the realist theory.

6. Zhuang Liwei, “Hu Jintao: Critical Trip,” *Nanfeng Chuang* [Southern Wind], no. 239, June 2006, pp. 12-14.

enjoyed power advantages over adversaries, its grand strategy in general would emphasise offence, launching more attacks against the threatening powers. When China was in a relatively disadvantageous position, it would adopt a defensive posture and initiate fewer conflicts. Put in this context of realist theory and Chinese history, Beijing's current grand strategy emphasising "peace and development" can be explained by its relative weakness in the US dominated unipolar system. But as China gains more power in the future, it may be tempted to use coercive or non-peaceful means to advance security interests or resolve disputes. In other words, the current grand strategy is not likely to be sustainable when China's relative power has improved significantly.

CHINA'S REGIONAL GRAND STRATEGY

In the past few years, both Chinese and foreign analysts began to reach the conclusion that China has developed a fairly consistent and coherent grand strategy in the past decade, even though they may disagree somewhat on the nature and content of that grand strategy. Assuming that China's regional strategy reflects and supports China's grand strategy, the following will offer an assessment of China's regional grand strategy because China is a regional power with a grand strategy.

Strategic Thinking and Practice of China's Regional Strategy

Like its grand strategy, China's regional strategy is also underpinned by several important ideas. Taking a direct cue from its definition of interest encompassing security, economic, and political dimension, the first idea underpinning China's regional strategy is to seek full-fledged cooperation and partnership relationships with all regional states, whenever possible. For instance, China's initial close interaction with ASEAN was through the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which remains quite security oriented. Lately, however, China has elevated its relationship with ASEAN to a strategic partnership by further developing its economic and political relationship with the ASEAN countries through the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) and Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast

Asia (TAC-SEA). Likewise, China's relationship with Russia and the Central Asian states used to be heavily security-oriented too; but China has again been actively pursuing closer economic integration with Russia and the Central Asian states under the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

In contrast, China's relationship with South Korea was mostly economic at the beginning, yet China has now developed a rather close, if not cordial, relationship with South Korea in the security and political arenas too. Similarly, participation in regional and sub-regional initiatives is also aimed to improve China's security and political relationship with regional countries like India and Vietnam, even though these initiatives are mostly about economic cooperation.

The second idea is that the most effective way to show that China is a responsible power is to shoulder responsibilities demanded upon China and to demonstrate benign intentions by exercising self-restraint and displaying willingness to be restrained. This idea leads directly to behaviour such as upholding the RMB during the 1997 Asian financial crisis, joining the TAC-SEA, and largely letting the ASEAN states dictate the norms regarding the South China Sea dispute.

The third idea is that as long as the US does not threaten China's core interests, China can live with a "hegemonic power." Therefore, there is no need for China to counter the United States simply because the US is powerful. It merely needs to restrain US hegemonic behaviour when America acts against international norms. Following this logic, many have argued that as long as Washington acts like a responsible power, it is in China's interest to integrate into the system, rather than remain an outsider. By rising inside the system, China will not only have more say and influence in reshaping the future of the system but will also be more likely to make its rise a peaceful one. Fundamentally, China wants a "peaceful rise" and most Chinese elites believe that only an intra-system rise can be a "peaceful rise."

China realises that the US presence in the region is irreplaceable to some extent, and the US security umbrella may have made regional states more comfortable in dealing with China.

More importantly, China realises that the US presence in the region is irreplaceable to some extent, and the US security umbrella may have made regional states more comfortable in dealing with China. The result is that China has now gradually acknowledged and accepted the utility of the American presence in the region, indicated by Chinese officials' repeated assurances to US officials that "China does not wish to push the US out of the region": it merely wants US presence to be "constructive".

The fourth idea derives from the fact that China's economy is highly open in nature. As its economy continues to expand, China will be more integrated with the region; China has to choose between two alternative approaches for integrating with the region: the approach taken by Japan (by investing in the region, but keeping its domestic market largely closed), or the approach taken by the US (by opening its market and creating interdependence). China has decided that the US approach is more appropriate and effective so, is opening up its own market and letting regional states enjoy the growth opportunity with China,

The fifth idea is regionalism plus multilateralism. The utility of multilateralism for demonstrating China's benign intentions and willingness to be restrained is increasingly appreciated; regional multilateralism is now taken as one of the keys for China and the regional states to co-manage the rise of China and the best choice for China to shape international politics. China's experience in the ARF and in making the initially bilateral relationship between China and Russia/Central Asian states into the multilateral Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) also gave China more confidence in playing a more active role in regional multilateral platforms. By embracing the regional multilateral initiatives and channeling its growing power into a more regionalised and institutionalised setting, China also hopes to make its closer relationship with the regional states less alarming to the US.

Finally, because of China's growing confidence in its ability to shape the regional environment, it is becoming more active in international politics, even in the multilateral and security arenas. With a new generation of leadership taking the reins, the early indication has been that this new

activism will continue, if not actually increase somewhat.

Practices and Outcomes

Following the ideas and strategic thinking behind its regional strategy, China's practice of regional strategy is now far more active, flexible, and comprehensive than ever before, and it can be summarised as: participate actively, demonstrate restraint, offer reassurance, open markets, foster interdependence, create common interests, and reduce conflict. Clearly, there is general satisfaction with China's regional strategy and its largely positive outcomes among Chinese leaders and elite. This general satisfaction is also reflected among international affairs experts' writings: more analysts agree that China's security environment is improving, instead of deteriorating.

In Southeast Asia, the interactions between the ASEAN countries and China have led to a reduction, rather than an exacerbation of the security dilemma between them. Most ASEAN countries have explicitly rejected a hard containment approach toward China, and emphasise that the ARF is not intended to contain China, but merely to socialise it. China, on the other hand, while aware of ASEAN's intention of constraining China through socialisation, has actually come to recognise the utility of this approach because it can serve as a credible signal of reassurance to the ASEAN states.⁷

Of real importance, by signing the TAC-SEA and actively consolidating a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea with the ASEAN states as a group, China has renounced the option of force for settling the South China Sea dispute. And if ASEAN is indeed moving toward a security community, China has signalled that it may be interested in being part of that security community too. By initiating a Free Trade Area (FTA) agreement with the

China has dramatically improved its relationship with Russia, South Korea, and Mongolia, and has managed to largely repair its estranged relationship with North Korea.

7. "China in the ASEAN Regional Forum: Organization Process and Domestic Models of Thought," *Asian Survey*, vol. 38, no. 5, May 1998, pp. 425-440.

ASEAN countries, China has indicated that it desires a more integrated regional economy. The result is that the ASEAN countries and China are more likely to be heading toward constructive cooperation and coexistence rather than confrontation.

In Northeast Asia, China has dramatically improved its relationship with Russia, South Korea, and Mongolia, and has managed to largely repair its estranged relationship with North Korea. Even on the more difficult Sino-Japanese relationship, China has consistently pursued an accommodative relationship with Japan despite strong domestic opposition. The recent hotly contested debate about China's policy toward Japan, the continuing interest in a China-Japan-South Korea FTA, plus the call for letting ASEAN and South Korea bring China and Japan together, all underscore that China understands that the future of the region critically depends upon a constructive relationship between China and Japan. Therefore, while Japan and China are far from reaching a complete reconciliation for now, and their uneasy relationship remains a critical source of uncertainty for the region, the probability of conflict between the two countries remains slim.

Toward Russia and Central Asia, China is adopting an approach similar to what it has adopted toward East Asia: develop a comprehensive relationship with regional states. By working closely with Russia and the Central Asian states, China has successfully brought the SCO to a much better shape than most would have predicted. By pushing for economic integration in Central Asia, China has again signalled its willingness to let the Central Asian states share the opportunity associated with China's development, especially with its "Western Development" policy.

In South Asia, China has yet to reach a breakthrough in its difficult relationship with India, with the latter continuing to view China warily. Even in this aspect, however, progress has been made and we have reason to be cautiously optimistic. First of all, the Himalayas render the security dilemma between India and China less severe. Second, while it still values its ties with Pakistan, China has not allowed Sino-Indian ties to be held hostage by Sino-Pakistan ties. Third, India now recognises that China's challenge to India is more about economics than about security. With trade

between India and China increasing rapidly in recent years, it is possible to imagine that the two countries will find their shared interest to be substantial enough for more efforts toward reaching an accommodation in the next couple years.

On the central question of US-China relations, after the rocky period when the Administration of George W. Bush took over power, the relationship is now back on track, partly thanks to 9/11. While it will be difficult to argue for a qualitative shift in the relationship, there is a qualified optimism about the near-term prospects of the relationship in both capitals. With the US deep in its war against terrorism, and China taking some of the load off America's shoulders for managing the North Korean crisis, both governments seem ready to sit back and let things play out for a little while so that both can gain a better feel about the other side's intentions. The danger with this arrangement for now is, of course, that neither Washington nor Beijing has much control over developments inside Taiwan.

THE CALCULATIVE STRATEGY

In the last few decades, a hybrid strategy of regional and global concerns has coalesced into what is termed as a "calculative" strategy, that is, a strategy calculated to protect China from external threats as it pursues its geo-political ascent. The purpose of the calculative strategy is to allow China to continue to reform its economy and thereby acquire comprehensive national power without having to deal with the impediments and distractions of security competition. If successful, the strategy will buy China the breathing space it needs to improve domestic social conditions, increase the legitimacy of the governing regime, expand the nation's economic and technological capabilities, strengthen its military, and enhance its standing and influence in the international political order, all of which are important elements in achieving its long standing security objectives.

The calculative strategy is designed to allow China to increase its power in a variety of areas in as non-provocative a fashion as possible. This strategy relates in action to four issues.

- In its policies toward the United States and other powers, the calculative strategy aims to win support for China's expansion, while preventing any efforts that may frustrate its growth. To this end, the strategy focusses on developing and maintaining friendly relations with the major powers and convincing them that the rise of China will be a stabilising force in Asia. By garnering this cooperation, the strategy aims to forestall a US defensive counter-response that could widen the gap in power between China and the other major players. Continued friendly relations also improve China's access to the world's wealthiest economic markets.
- In its policies toward military modernisation, the calculative strategy aims to reduce China's existing vulnerabilities while increasing the ability of its military forces to secure diplomatic and political leverage. The modernisation in both nuclear and conventional forces is going forward slowly and steadily because a rapid military build-up might alarm China's neighbours and the major powers. Further, a sudden build-up would detract from China's current emphasis on civilian economic development.
- In its policies toward territorial claims, the calculative strategy aims to avoid using force to settle territorial disputes. Rather, it dictates that China pursue a good-neighbour policy designed to strengthen or mend ties with its neighbours and to delay resolving disputes, at least until the regional balance of power shifts in favour of China.
- In its policies toward international regimes, the calculative strategy aims to secure advantages without incurring losses. Therefore, China's level of participation in international regimes in such areas as economic development, trade, technology transfer, arms control, and the environment is determined on a case by case basis.

Taken together, these policies display the "calculating" aspect of the calculative strategy. They illustrate how the strategy has encouraged foreign collaboration in underwriting China's rise to power, while temporarily removing external threats that could distract Beijing from its uninterrupted ascent.

If the calculative strategy is not knocked off course by some catastrophic event, it is likely to remain China's guiding strategy for at least the next few decades, until Beijing has completed its ascent into a position of economic, military, and political strength. When this occurs, certainly not before 2015-20 a more assertive China is likely to emerge.

Asserting their new power, rising nations can precipitate a range of political, economic, and military tensions that draw the other world powers into conflict.

This conclusion comes from the analysis of China's past behaviour and current strategy, as well as a comprehensive historical analysis of the behaviour of newly powerful nations. This view suggests that rising states tend not to simply accept the prevailing global political order and peacefully integrate themselves into it. Nor, however, do they rush out to topple that order. Rather, by asserting their new power, rising nations can precipitate a range of political, economic, and military tensions that draw the other world powers into conflict. Like other rising nations throughout history, a rising China is likely to assert its power.

THE FUTURE OF CHINA'S REGIONAL STRATEGY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Two external factors, dynamically linked with the debate on "peace and development" inside China, will shape China's regional strategy in the future.⁸

Because the US remains at the centre of China's strategic calculus, the first external factor that is going to influence the future of China's regional strategy is the US' long-term strategic intentions toward China and how Washington views China's interaction with regional countries. What the United States is doing, plans to do, or even is rumoured to do, will influence China's behaviour.

In dealing with the US, however, China faces a conundrum that cannot be easily overcome. Because there will always be voices inside the United

8. Shi Yinhong, "Reassess China's International Environment," *Strategy & Management*, no. 4, 1999, pp. 103-105.

States arguing that China will become an inevitable foe, and they continue to view any perceived or real increase of Chinese influence in the region as detrimental to US interest through the zero-sum prism, China faces a difficult balancing act in dealing with regional states and building a regional order. If China remains an outsider, these people in the US will take it as a sign that China is a challenge to international norms and order. If China actively participates in regional affairs and norms, they will again take it as a sign that China aims to challenge US dominance, this time through building a regional sphere of influence. Either way, China is in a no-win situation. At the same time, international politics is becoming more regional, and this again puts China in a difficult situation in front of a US audience in three possible scenarios.

The first scenario is that even though many regional initiatives are not China's idea originally, China has to actively participate in them for fear of being left out. Second, there are some regional programmes that did come from China's initiatives, but these initiatives are actually designed to assure the regional states of China's benign intention (e.g. ASEAN-China FTA, and the recent proposal to form an East Asian military dialogue). Nonetheless, because these initiatives came from China, they will arouse US suspicion. Finally, there are initiatives like the SCO that do have more flavour of limiting the US influence.

On the other hand, China over the years has come to recognise that regional states are more qualified to comment on the "China threat" because of their geographical proximity and relatively smaller size, yet it is exactly in these countries that the "China threat" theory is losing its audience.⁹ On the contrary, as the global hegemon, the US tends to exaggerate other countries' capability and hostility, and China should pay less attention to rhetoric about the "China threat" coming out from the United States. The rationale is that as long as regional states do not take China as a clear and present danger, and China and the regional states can manage the region well, the US will be hard-pressed to forge a coalition of hard containment. This means that

9. Herbert Yee and Ian Storey, eds., *The China Threat: Perceptions, Myths and Reality* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2002), p. 187.

the regional states are becoming more important to China, and the weight of the US in China's strategic calculus may face a reevaluation.

**CHINA AND REGIONAL STATES: FROM
UNEASY COEXISTENCE TO SECURITY
COMMUNITY**

China's confidence in making the right moves and obtaining positive policy outcomes are generating a self-reinforcing virtuous cycle propelling China's regional strategy. Positive policy outcomes from the ARF, ASEAN and SCO have all strengthened the voice of integrationists in China, leading them to call for more active participation in regional multilateral initiatives. Likewise, the regional countries have mostly been reluctant to adopt a hard containment policy and continue improving their relationships with China; most regional states are giving China more confidence in their goodwill, and this, in turn, calls for more reassurance, self-restraint, and bolder initiatives.

One can expect that after all that China has done in the past twenty years in improving its relations with its neighbours, the "China threat" theory would have lost some of its audience in the region. That is indeed the case, and in some areas, the transformation of attitude has been remarkable. Because assurance cannot be absolute among states and it is always difficult to gauge the regional states' confidence in China's benign intentions, the question is one of how many regional states have come to appreciate that China can also be a benign power, and how much these states trust China's benign intentions.¹⁰

India

China has long seen India as a regional rival and even fought a war over the disputed border in 1962. Despite the 2005 and 2010 visits to India by Premier Wen, in which principles were agreed to guide a final settlement,

10. Wang Gungwu, "China's Place in the Region: The Search for Allies and Friends," *The Indonesia Quarterly*, vol. 25, no. 4, Winter 1997, p. 421.

the People's Liberation Army (PLA) still looks upon India as a threat.¹¹ This perception was heightened after the 1998 nuclear tests, especially when there were noises from within India about them being aimed at China.¹² Economic conflict seems likely, with the world's two largest countries with the two fastest growing economies competing globally for the same resources. Some commentators argue that it will be India that will outstrip China in the long run. ¹³Another bone of contention are the sea lanes of communication in the Indian Ocean and Strait of Malacca, along which 80 per cent of China's external commerce and the majority of its oil are carried. President Hu Jintao has called this China's "Malacca Dilemma," a point that was emphasised with the recent Indian deployment of a carrier group into the Malacca Strait. This has fuelled China's desire for its own carrier capability. It has also prompted China to seek naval bases in Pakistan and Myanmar that could provoke tensions in the future. The PLA has also looked on enviously as India's armed forces have modernised and worked through many of the issues that China is currently struggling with, particularly the Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) and refuelling aircraft, for example. India also enjoys the advantage of being able to buy Western as well as Russian equipment. As with its concerns with Japan, China is also concerned at increasing US-Indian military ties, which some in the PLA have begun to view as increasingly aimed at containment.¹⁴

Distrust of China persists in Asia. Whether this persisting distrust of China is due to academic inertia or simply because it is profitable to keep China off-balance is not the question; the crucial point is that this persistent doubt about Chinese intentions undercuts the psychological support for China's current benign strategy toward the region. Many inside China believe that most regional states have been so intoxicated by the "China threat" myth that is hopeless to convince them otherwise; thus, China

11. C. R. Mohan, "India and the Balance of Power," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 85, no.4, July/August 2006, pp.21-22.

12. Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military* (Los Angeles: University of California Press), p. 306.

13. L. Johnson, "India will Outpace China in the Long Run," *Sunday Telegraph*, April 23, 2006.

14. Crane, et al., *Modernizing China's Military*, 2005 Published by RAND Corporation, RAND url:<http://www.rand>, p. 197.

should not try to appease them. Instead, these Chinese analysts argue that China should take every opportunity to take advantage while it still enjoys robust growth, because no matter what China does, the Asian states will never come to like China

This distrust is creating a new kind of “victimhood syndrome” and playing into the hands of pessimists inside China. If the regional states continue to view China through coloured lenses despite China’s persistent effort to appease and assure its neighbours, the Chinese leadership may well reach the same conclusion eventually. The outside world must try to understand that too much distrust of China’s benign intentions may lead to a disastrous scenario of a China running out of patience and desire for good behaviour. This disastrous scenario is something that China and the regional countries must work together to prevent.

CONCLUSION

Twenty years ago, many observers would have agreed that China was still searching for a coherent national identity, thus, not sure of its proper role in the region. Today, we can perhaps argue that China has largely completed its painful search for a national identity, thus, becoming more confident of its relationships and position in the region. Today, China no longer sees itself as a country facing imminent external danger or on the verge of an internal implosion. Instead, it sees itself as a country with more resources for managing its grand transformation and growing ability to shape its environment. One would expect that as long as China’s optimistic assessment of external environment and its self-identity of “a responsible great power” continue to hold, China’s current grand strategy and regional strategy will continue. If that is so, the world and the region can take a more relaxed posture toward this “fourth rise of China” phenomenon and behave accordingly, and this will, in turn, reinforce the domestic support for China’s current grand and regional strategies.

The logic of balancing is still relevant in the post Cold War world. Balancing includes both alliance formation and the internal efforts states undertake to offset the power advantage of the dominant state. The temporary

The Chinese are aware that India has transformed itself, over the decades, into a modernising, emerging power.

absence of hard balancing does not necessarily imply that states have abandoned efforts to change the balance of power in their favour—they may be engaging in internal balancing or soft balancing. The behaviour of soft balancing, moreover, is not simply “policy bargaining” or “normal diplomatic frictions,” as critics have argued. The key difference is that policy bargaining or diplomatic frictions do not necessarily aim to mitigate the power gap and constrain a dominant power’s behaviour, which, as documented above, is often stated as objectives by Chinese strategists.

China is attempting to balance American power through both domestic and diplomatic efforts. An outright balancing coalition is too costly and risky at the moment. China will do better by concentrating on economic development and striving to maintain a peaceful international environment. Internal balancing and external soft balancing are the two pillars of China’s grand strategy. China’s efforts to balance American power started well before the 2003 Iraq War, and had more to do with its dissatisfaction with the US dominated system than with the Iraq War. Furthermore, hard balancing can still occur when China has substantially closed the power gap with the US or when powerful allies become available, regardless of US intentions.

With respect to India, the Chinese are aware that India has transformed itself, over the decades, into a modernising, emerging power. The greatness and sophistication of India’s achievements and the worldwide recognition of it essentially stemmed from the contemporary relevance of Hindu civilisation. It’s vast plurality and tradition of tolerance has particularly found compatibility with modernity and liberal democracy. That is why India gains more acceptability than China internationally. Despite all odds, India has survived as a single entity, and lived up to a level of functional democracy for over six decades. On the other hand, China is still afraid of opening up and that it has to rely on oppressive methods to survive is a glaring fact. China continues to be seated on a powder keg, with simmering tensions in Tibet, Xinjiang, inner Mongolia and host of other

minority regions which have been contesting Beijing's right to control them for decades. The recent ethnic violence in Xinjiang, which left at least 197 Han Chinese and ethnic Uighur's dead, was the worst since the end of the Cultural Revolution. And it came a year after the violence in Tibet in March 2008 had exposed China's internal vulnerabilities.

China's current grand and regional strategies do not have much of the element of pushing the US out of Asia, not only because China lacks the capacity to do so but also because China does not deem this to be in its own or the region's interest. The Chinese leaders now appreciate that some of the constructive roles played by the US in the region are indeed irreplaceable. This recognition has led China to repeatedly assure the US that China does not want to expel it from the region—rather, China seeks constructive US presence in the region. All these moves signal China's commitment to engagement. Moreover, the approach may actually gain the US more respect in the region, because, while regional states do want the US to stay engaged in the region, they do not want an unwarranted confrontation between the US and China because of an active containment policy pursued by Washington.

CHINESE SPACE PROGRAMME: INFLUENCE OF CHINESE STRATEGIC CULTURE ON ITS DEVELOPMENT

MANU MIDHA

Know the enemy and know yourself: in a hundred battles, you will never be in peril.

— SunTzu

In recent times, the rapid growth of China and its 'arrival' on the international arena has attracted widespread attention. China's assertive rhetoric has led many observers to identify it as a looming strategic threat to the current world order. Since the Chinese decision to undertake an Anti-Satellite (ASAT) test in January 2007, China's space programme has attracted increasing international attention. China's journey from being a non-participant status to a state operating at the highest level of space activities in the span of a few decades has increased Chinese prestige and status across globe, while raising anxieties amongst some. The question of China's intentions in space has become a subject of worldwide scrutiny and there is considerable speculation regarding its objectives. The Chinese space programme has been described as shrouded in mystery until recently.¹ Although the Chinese government has issued White Papers on its activities in space, due to the opaqueness of the Chinese society in general and the space programme

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1. Quoted in Joan Johnson-Fresse, *The Chinese Space Program: A Mystery Within Maze* (Florida: Krieger Publishing Company, 1998), p. 2.

in particular, there is very little appreciation of 'why' the Chinese space programme has developed the way it has. In large part, the difficulty in appreciating the 'why' is a lack of understanding and appreciation of the influence of the Chinese strategic culture on its space programme. While it is acknowledged that culture has traditionally influenced the way strategists in a particular country think about matters of war and peace, especially in a country like China, with an ancient civilisation and strategic tradition dating back thousands of years, very little attempt has been made to view the Chinese space programme from a strategic cultural perspective.

This essay is an attempt to understand the motivations behind the Chinese space programme to appreciate the influence of Chinese strategic culture on its development. The essay will first encapsulate the prevalent Chinese strategic culture and evidence of its impact on Chinese strategic decision-making post the revolution in 1949. After that, the essay will examine the Chinese space programme through its inception till the present day to find evidence of the influence of the Chinese strategic culture on its development. In the author's opinion, the development of the Chinese space programme has been to a large extent influenced by the *parabellum* strategic culture mediated by flexibility. The motivations behind China's space programme are deeply influenced by a desire to shake off the humiliation inflicted on it by foreigners and attain its rightful place in the world. At the same time, it would be incorrect to apportion any predicative value on the influence of strategic culture on the future direction of the development of the Chinese space programme.

STRATEGIC CULTURE

The idea that culture could influence strategic outcomes was first captured in classic works, from Sun Tzu's *Art of War*, through the writings of Kautilya in ancient India and to Thucydides' commentary of the Peloponnesian Wars. The importance of strategic culture, if not the term itself, was expressed by Sun Tzu when he wrote, "Know the enemy and know yourself: in a hundred battles you will never be in peril." In the 19th century, Clausewitz also acknowledged the importance of culture by identifying war-fighting

strategy as a “test of moral and physical forces.” In modern times, since Jack Snyder brought culture into modern security studies by developing the theory of strategic culture, a growing number of analysts have come to accept that national attitudes and behaviour with respect to the threat and use of force are products of distinct cultures. While attempting to understand Soviet nuclear decision-making, Snyder had argued that “it is useful to look at the Soviet approach to strategic thinking as a unique ‘strategic culture’.”² In his work, Snyder suggested that elites articulate a unique strategic culture related to security-military affairs that is a wider manifestation of public opinion, socialised into a distinctive mode of strategic thinking. He, thus, defined strategic culture as the sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behaviour that members of a national community share with each other with regard to nuclear strategy ³

Although a lot of debate has taken place on the aspect of strategic culture since its inception, the literature lacks consensus on the concept.

Although a lot of debate has taken place on the aspect of strategic culture since its inception, the literature lacks consensus on the concept and some writers use the term in radically different ways from others. Gray defines strategic culture as “modes of thought and action with respect to force, which derives from perception of the national historical experience, from aspiration for responsible behaviour in national terms and even from the civic and cultural way of life.”⁴ Johnston considers strategic culture is an “ideational milieu that limits behavioural choices” from which “one could derive specific predictions about strategic choice” and, thus, “provides the milieu within which strategy is debated.”⁵ For Duffield, the overall effect of national security culture is to predispose societies in

2. Jack Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation Report, 1977), p. v.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

4. Quoted in Jeffery S. Lantis and Darryl Howlett, “Strategic Culture,” in John Baylis, James Wirtz, Colin Gray and Eliot Cohen, eds., *Strategy in the Contemporary World*, Second edition (Oxford: Oxford Press, 2007), p. 86.

5. *Ibid.*

Within China, there seems to be widespread recognition that 'deep' history and culture are critical sources of strategic behaviour.

general and political élites in particular toward certain actions and policies over others. Some options will simply not be imagined while some are more likely to be rejected as inappropriate or ineffective compared to others.⁶

One such definition identified and used in this essay is *a distinctive and lasting set of beliefs, values and habits regarding the threat and use of force, which have their roots in such fundamental influences as geo-political setting, history and political culture*. These beliefs, values and habits constitute a *strategic culture* which **persists over time**, and exerts some influence on the formation and execution of **strategy**.⁷

A study of the literature identifies various sources of strategic culture, encompassing both material and ideational factors. Geography, climate and resources have long been key elements in strategic thinking throughout the millennia and remain important sources of strategic culture today. Scholars agree that **history and experience** are important considerations in the birth and evolution of states, and, hence, the strategic cultural identities that comprise them. Many analysts also regard key texts (like Sun Tzu's *Art of War*; Kautilya's *Arthshastra*) as important factors that shape strategic thought and action. Traditional analyses of peace and conflict have long pointed to the influence of such texts throughout history and in different cultural settings.

Within China, there seems to be widespread recognition that 'deep' history and culture are critical sources of strategic behaviour. Scholars, analysts, and policy-makers in the People's Republic of China (PRC) have frequently asserted that past and present policy and behaviour are conditioned by a distinctive traditional Chinese philosophy of international relations. Some Chinese scholars have used the term "military culture" (*junshi wenhua*) to describe a consistent thread of strategic thought and practice that

6. Ibid., p. 90.

7. Alan Macmillan, Ken Booth and Russell Trood, "Strategic Culture," in Ken Booth and Russell Trood, eds., *Strategic Cultures in the Asia-Pacific Region* (Great Britain: Macmillian Press Ltd, 1999), p. 8.

was historically developed and inherited. Some Chinese analysts have also suggested that the term strategic culture is best seen as the predominant “strategic value system” (*zhanlue jiazhi guan*) at a particular point in history. This value system provides a society and its military with definitions of interests, and, thus, also places limits on the methods and scope of war. The strategic value system also reflects culturally rooted “thought processes” or “cognitive processes” (*si wei fangshi*) that affect strategic choices.⁸ One influential military thinker, Lt Gen Li Jijun, former Vice President of China’s Academy of Military Sciences, reasons that:

Culture is the root and foundation of strategy. Strategic thinking, in the process of its evolutionary history, flows into the mainstream of a country’s or a nation’s culture. Each country’s or nation’s strategic culture cannot but bear the imprint of cultural traditions, which in a subconscious and complex way, prescribes and defines strategy making.⁹

CHINESE STRATEGIC CULTURE

Culture has long been considered a critical dimension in China’s approach to strategy and warfare and the Chinese society has nurtured a distinctive strategic culture. The country possesses the largest land area in Asia, the largest population in the world, some 5,000 years of continuous history of civilisation, and the conviction of the Chinese occupancy of the Middle Kingdom has had a profound influence on the Chinese approach to life. The enormity of the fact makes it difficult to appreciate the depth of its cultural heritage. The complexity which has characterised China for more centuries than most countries have known histories is compounded by a total lack of understanding and appreciation of the Chinese culture and way of life by the rest of the world. The lack of understanding of language adds an additional layer of difficulty in trying to study China and invariably whatever literature is available is from Western sources—in itself clouded by inherent

8. Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 25.

9. Andrew Scobell, “China and Strategic Culture” (Monograph, Strategic Studies Institute, 2002), p. 1.

prejudices and miscommunication, either deliberate or unintentional.¹⁰ The complexity of studying China has often been compared to the Chinese strategic game of *Wei Qi*.¹¹ With the handicaps that it produces, it is very difficult to understand the issue from the correct cultural prism; however, a view through the prism is certainly possible. At the same time, any attempt to understand strategic decision-making of an 'alien' culture must be treated with caution, as Johnston warns.

Done well, the careful analysis of strategic culture could help policy-makers establish more accurate and empathetic understandings of how different actors perceive the game being played... "Done badly, [it] could reinforce stereotypes about the strategic predispositions of other states and close off policy alternatives deemed inappropriate for dealing with local strategic cultures."¹²

Chinese strategic culture can be traced back to classics such as the *Art of War* by Sun Tzu and the *Seven Military Classics*, which stipulate the relationship between political ends and military strategies, the efficacy of use of force and specific military tactics. Some authors claim that China has exhibited a distinctive "cultural style" in war, rooted in the strategic thought of Sun Tzu with a predisposition for stratagem over combat and psychological and symbolic warfare over head-to-head combat on the battlefield. While the term "strategic culture" was not used, conventional thinking was that China's Confucian tradition was a key determining factor in Chinese strategic thinking. There appeared to be an accepted consensus till recent times amongst scholars that the Chinese strategic tradition is uniquely anti-militarist and that Chinese strategic culture stresses non-violent political or diplomatic means to deal with adversaries, or—when force is absolutely necessary—the controlled, defensive use of violence due to heavy reliance on Sun Tzu's oft cited phrase "not fighting and subduing the enemy."

10. There are increasing instances of documents or information being misinterpreted as indicating government views, when they do not, and with mistranslations that confer very different meanings to those intended. Joan Johnson-Fresse, "China's Space Ambitions" (Proliferation Papers, IFRI, Summer 2007), p. 24.

11. In *Wei Qi*, a player has 256 pieces with which to strategise to manoeuvre towards victory as against 16 pieces in the more traditional and common game of chess.

12. Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," *International Security*, vol. 19, no. 4, Spring 1995, pp. 63-64.

Over the past decade or so, China has been perceived as increasingly belligerent, a perception in direct conflict with its earlier image. Further, the Chinese history is literally a history of war—from the Western Zhou (1100 BC) through to the end of Qing Dynasty (1911), as many as 3,790 wars and rebellions can be identified, and since its inception in October 1949, the PRC has resorted to force as an instrument of foreign policy ten times.¹³ The threat and use of force by China cannot be explained by the ‘non-militarist’ and pacifist image. Recently, analysts have argued that China’s strategic disposition cannot be accurately characterised as either pacifist or bellicose. Rather, the country has a dual strategic culture and the main strands are Confucian-Mencian, that is conflict averse and defensive minded; and a *realpolitik* one which favours military solutions and is offensively oriented.

Whereas the Confucian-Mencian view sees the world as harmonious, orderly and hierarchically structured in which conflicts are regarded as largely deviant phenomena rather than the nature of things and should / can be managed through means other than use of brute force, the *realpolitik* view which has come to be called the *parabellum* view of the world, holds that conflicts are perennial and zero-sum, and regards the use of force as the only effective means to ensure security, stability and peace.

Confucian-Mencian Perspective

The Confucian-Mencian perspective forms the core of what is called the *yin* approach to China’s external relations, which views the world as harmonious rather than conflictual. The Confucian-Mencian paradigm, assumes essentially that conflict is aberrant or at least avoidable through the promotion of good government and the coopting or enculturation of external threats. When force is used, it should be applied defensively, minimally, only under unavoidable conditions, and then only in the name of the righteous restoration of a moral-political order.

13. Shu Guang Zhang, “China: Traditional and Revolutionary Heritage,” in Booth and Trood, eds., n.7, p. 29.

In the Confucian-Mencian view, harmony and order can be maintained through virtuous behaviour. There is a strong aversion to emphasis on, and the immediate application of, purely military means. Since order can be achieved through benevolence, the use of force is unnecessary and should be ranked lower in a statesman's inventory of instruments. There is an understanding that *wu* (warfare or the use of force) and *bing* (soldiers and weaponry) should be subjected to the control of *wen* (civilian rule) and seldom expended. "The resort to warfare (*wu*) was an admission of bankruptcy in the pursuit of *wen*. Consequently, it should be the last resort." When the use of force becomes inevitable, it is *famou* (attack strategy) rather than *fabin* (actual fighting), defensive rather than offensive, that should be preferred. The Confucian-Mencian perspective draws heavily on Sun Tzu's view that the aim of war is to subdue an opponent, to change his attitude and induce his compliance. Hence the idiom: *buzhan er querenzhibing* (subduing the enemy without fighting).¹⁴

The Confucian-Mencian paradigm of placing virtue, benevolence and accommodation over coercion, violence and confrontation was underlined by a world view that assumed China, "the Middle Kingdom," at the centre of the universe. One of the first Jesuit missionaries to China explained the notion of the Middle Kingdom as follows:

"One must realise that the Chinese, supposing as they do that the Earth is square, claim that China is the greatest part of it. So to describe their empire, they use the word *t'ei-hia*, 'Under the Heavens.' So, with this admirable system of geography, they were able to confine the rest of humanity to the four corners of their square."¹⁵

This Sino-centric view was reinforced by the fact that from the Xia Dynasty until the mid-19th century, China virtually dominated and reigned over what is now East and Southeast Asia. Being in the centre of the world then inherently meant that everyone else was on the periphery, not as important, significant only in terms of their relation to China. Embedded in centuries of history and generations of thought, the Chinese have described

14. Jing-Dong Yaun, "Culture Matters: Chinese Approaches to Arms Control," in Keith R. Krause, ed., *Culture and Security* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), p. 89.

15. Johnson-Fresse, n. 1, p. 12.

themselves as the “first civilisation on Earth,” the father of the “noblest people,” and “the most fully human people on earth.”¹⁶

Parabellum Perspective

The non-violent characterisation of Chinese strategic culture has been challenged by scholars arguing that there is a deep-rooted *realpolitik* hard core in Chinese strategic culture. This Chinese realism reflects the *yang* approach to external relations that emphasises diversity over uniformity, conflict over harmony, and economic/military power over moral persuasion.¹⁷ Alastair Iain Johnston refers to this as the *parabellum* or hard *realpolitik* strategic culture that, in essence, argues that the best way of dealing with security threats is to eliminate them through the use of force. This preference is tempered by an explicit sensitivity to one’s **relative capacity** to do this...this is consistent with what Vasquez calls an “opportunity model” of *realpolitik* behaviour, where “states need no special motivation to threaten or use force; rather, they are always predisposed to do so, **unless restrained** by contextual variables.”¹⁸

Parabellum stands for the concept *si pacem parabellum* (if you want peace, prepare for war). Linguistically, the phrase has a parallel in Chinese terms, “thinking about danger and threat while residing in conditions of peace” (*ju and si wei*).

The *parabellum* perspective of Chinese strategic culture views the world as conflictual rather than harmonious and that it is due largely to the threatening nature of the adversary. In the zero-sum context, the application of violence is not a choice but rather an imperative for the advancement of the state’s interests and survival. The best way to ensure security is to eliminate sources of insecurity which, in most cases, are potential as well as actual adversaries. Since the use of force is inevitable,

The non-violent characterisation of Chinese strategic culture has been challenged by scholars arguing that there is a deep-rooted *realpolitik* hard core in Chinese strategic culture.

16. Ibid.

17. Yaun, n. 14, p. 89.

18. Johnston, n. 8, p. x.

its offensive rather than defensive application becomes paramount. These assumptions generally translate into a preference for offensive strategies.

The *parabellum* paradigm comes closest to Western notions of hard *realpolitik* in statecraft and assumes that the military destruction of the adversary is essential for state security. However, the paradigm is also mediated by the *concept of absolute flexibility (quan bian*¹⁹) that suggests that the offensive application of violence is likely to be successful only if the strategic conditions are ripe. The strategist cannot be constrained by self-imposed political, military or moral limits on strategic choices. As Johnston argues, the notion of *quan bian* in effect results in interpreting the axiom of “not fighting and subduing the enemy” to “respond flexibly to the enemy and thus create conditions for victory.” Whereas “not fighting and subduing the enemy” as a decision rule implies a strategic preference in which non-violent methods are preferred, the notion of *quan bian* lifts this restriction.

Scholars lack consensus on the relative impact of the two strands on Chinese strategic thought though most agree that the two paradigms do not have separate and equal influence on Chinese strategic thinking and that the *parabellum* paradigm has been, for the most part, predominant in practice, with military power playing a great role in influencing Chinese strategic thought. Alastair Iain Johnston’s analysis of the *Seven Military Classics* shows a consistent emphasis on offensive action mediated by flexibility since ancient times in China.²⁰ Some authors like Tiejun Zhang argue that Chinese strategic culture is not “realist” but “moralist;” however, even he agrees that use of force is central to Chinese strategic thought although the rationale for it may be “defensive.”²¹ While studying the Chinese strategic culture, some themes that can be distinctively identified, have played a major role in shaping the Chinese strategic thought: ‘*place under heaven*’, ‘*mistrust of foreigners and sense of ‘inviolability*’.

19. Ibid., p. 102.

20. Ibid.

21. See Tiejun Zhang, “Chinese Strategic Culture: Traditional and Present Features,” *Comparative Strategy*, 21, 2002.

History is the primary source of strategic culture but the influence of different historical periods varies. The question, as raised by Michael Hunt, is: which part of the history is more likely to be remembered? It could be argued that “the only past that was meaningful was the recent one, defined...in terms of oppression and struggle over the last century and a half.”²² The experience with foreigners has had an important impact on the development of modern China’s perceptions of security and attitudes toward the threat and use of force. The decline of the Qing Dynasty and the onset of “a hundred years of humiliation” when Western cannons opened China’s door in 1840 and rendered China from a “Middle Kingdom” to a semi-feudal and semi-colonial vassal state whose very survival was on the line. This shift of status and the consequent struggle for its restoration have created a strong sentiment for, and sensitivity to, independence and sovereignty in the collective Chinese mindset. The “humiliating years” firmly implanted the feeling among Chinese leaders that “internal instability and backwardness invite foreign invasions” and a strong will to ensure China’s national interests. As conceived by Xiao Gongqin, “The profound sense of humiliation, including all the setbacks and frustrations that the Chinese have experienced, has planted in the Chinese people a certain complex that is accumulated and settled in the deepest recesses of the Chinese mentality. This complex can be called ‘the dream of becoming a strong nation.’”²³

The “humiliating years” firmly implanted the feeling among Chinese leaders that “internal instability and backwardness invite foreign invasions.”

As suggested by Rosita Dellios, China’s strategic philosophy, past and present, may be interpreted to address two essential needs: one is the attainment of China’s ‘rightful place under heaven’—the closest approximation in Western understanding being ‘destiny’ or ‘proper place’— and the other is ‘inviolability.’²⁴ National unification is a core value in China’s national

22. Yaun, n. 14, p. 92.

23. Zhang, n.21, p. 81.

24. Rosita Dellios, “Chinese Strategic Culture: Part 1 The Heritage from the Past” (Research Paper, Bond University, 1994), p. 6.

security calculus on which no compromise is possible. It is an immutable principle in part because of China's inability to stop exploitation and oppression by foreign powers. According to Li Jijun,

The most important strategic legacy of the Chinese nation is the awareness of identification with the concept of unification, and this is where lies the secret for the immortality of . . . Chinese civilisation . . . [s]eeking unification . . . [is] the soul of . . . Chinese military strategy endowed by . . . Chinese civilisation.²⁵

PEACE IS PRECIOUS

While humiliation and 'barbarism' taught China to pay attention to the necessity of acquiring a formidable physical force, the rhetoric of moral order was never relinquished. A deeply-held belief among the Chinese elite is that China possesses a pacifist strategic culture and has never been an aggressive or expansionist state. Although striving for peace is a near universal human desire, what is striking in the case of China is the degree to which this is stressed—to the extent that the Chinese civilisation is viewed as being uniquely pacifist, totally distinct from other strategic traditions of the world.²⁶ One of the official articulations of this appears in China's 1998 Defence White Paper which states:

The defensive nature of China's national defense policy springs from the country's historical and cultural traditions. China is a country with 5,000 years of civilization, and a peace-loving tradition. Ancient Chinese thinkers advocated "associating with benevolent gentlemen and befriending good neighbors," which shows that throughout history, the Chinese people have longed for peace in the world and for relations of friendship with the people of other countries.²⁷

25. Quoted in Scobell, n. 9, p. 11.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

27. People's Republic of China, Defence White Paper 1998, *China's National Defense*, www.china.org.cn/e-white/5/5.2.htm, accessed 27 April 2010.

Military researchers have traced this stated preference for peace and harmony to history. According to the GenXingShizhong, Commandant of the National Defense University:

The Chinese people have always dearly loved peace. . . . This historical tradition and national psychology have a profound influence on the national defense objectives and strategic policies of the new socialist China.²⁸

Johnston's analysis of the *Seven Military Classics* suggests that the regime must be prepared militarily to seize the initiative, act offensively and preferably through preemptive attack.

ACTIVE DEFENCE

Coupled with the belief of a pacifist strategic tradition is the belief that China's employment of force is always for 'defensive' purposes. Some military scholars insist that virtually all of the approximately 3,790 wars that China has fought in more than 4,000 years (till the collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1911) have been civil wars or wars to unify the country. The Great Wall is regularly cited by Chinese scholars as an illustration of this defensive tendency.²⁹ There is widespread belief that, whenever China goes to war, it does so only in "self-defence" and all "military actions" since 1949, have been waged in "self-defence."³⁰ Chinese scholars argue that whenever Chinese forces have ventured abroad, they have done so for a limited time and for non-expansionist purposes.³¹

This 'defensive' proposition of Chinese military actions may be attributed to cultural or linguistic underpinnings. The Chinese character *wu* (martial art) is a combination of two other characters that is *zi* (stop) and *ge* (weapon). This implies a deeply-embedded wish of using force for stopping aggressiveness.³² The principle of active defence is central to

28. Quoted in Scobell, n. 9, p. 5.

29. *Ibid.*, 9.

30. Yaun, n. 14, p. 95; Allen S. Whiting, "China's Use of Force, 1950-96, and Taiwan," *International Security*, vol. 26, no. 2, Fall 2001.

31. Examples often cited to support this interpretation include the voyages of Ming Dynasty Admiral Zheng He.

32. Zhang, n. 21, p. 86.

Chinese strategic thinkers. Johnston's analysis of the *Seven Military Classics* suggests that the regime must be prepared militarily to seize the initiative, act offensively and preferably through preemptive attack.³³ Most thinkers believe this is central to Chinese strategy even today. According to the PLA's officers' handbook, "All military experts, ancient and contemporary, Chinese and foreign, recognise the importance of active defence."³⁴ In a book edited by Zhang Wannian, Vice Chairman of the Central Military Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, active defence is considered as the basic military strategy for the present China—with emphasis on "offensive defense" and "deterrence" ("...foundation for deterring war is the capacity of winning war."³⁵)

Coupled with this is the tendency of researchers and policy-makers in China to broadly define defence as virtually anything, including a pre-emptive strike. China has been able to justify its own initiation of hostilities as 'defensive' by placing itself in the position of the aggrieved party and calling those aggressions "defensive counterattacks." Conflicts, are labelled "self-defence wars" or "self-defence counterattacks" [*ziwei zhanzheng*, *ziwei fanjizhan* or *ziwei huanjizhan*].³⁶ Although China invaded Vietnam in February 1979 (triggered by Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia), Beijing officially labelled this war a "self-defensive counterattack" [*ziwei huanji*]. The same reasoning is applied to China's border wars with India (in 1962) and with the Soviet Union (in 1969). The rationale for developing nuclear weapons by China was also described in "defensive" terms.³⁷

RIGHTEOUS WAR

The notion of righteous war is prevalent in the Chinese's military texts and seems to be a crucial element of China's traditional approach to war. Chinese strategic analysts tend to stress that Chinese thinking about

33. Johnston, n. 8, p. 105.

34. Scobell, n. 9, p. 12.

35. Zhang, n. 21, p. 85.

36. Scobell, n. 9, p. 12.

37. Zhang, n. 21, p. 43.

just or righteous war (*yizhan*) dates back thousands of years. In Chinese thinking, 'just' wars are those that are fought by oppressed groups against oppressors; unjust wars are the wars waged by oppressors against the oppressed. The righteous use of force meant "sending forth armor and weapons to punish the unrighteous." Once the ends of war are deemed righteous, then any and all means become righteous by themselves. Under the banner of righteousness, the destruction of the enemy is considered both necessary and desirable. In contemporary Chinese thinking, China has been a weak, oppressed country fighting against powerful imperialist oppressors. Thus, for many Chinese, any war fought by their country is by definition a just conflict—even a war in which China strikes first. This might include any war fought to "restore or protect national territory or to maintain national prestige."³⁸

The righteous war doctrine mandates that whether one resorts to use of force or not depends on the adversary. It is the enemy's disposition that decides whether one faces a security threat. This disposition to war is, by definition, unrighteous. One's own behaviour, on the other hand, is a reaction to a dangerous situation created by the adversary, hence, one's own use of force, is not only legitimate and necessary, it is also not bound by any moral limits. The use of force under these conditions is considered as 'defensive' and of complete necessity.

CHINESE STRATEGIC CULTURE AND CONTEMPORARY PRACTICE IN PRC

Before proceeding to analyse the impact of the Chinese strategic culture on its space programme, it would be prudent to examine if Chinese strategic policy in the post-1949 period reflects traditional patterns of thought and practice that have been inherited from earlier periods in history. Is it wise to assume an unbroken chain between historical strategic preferences and contemporary policy? Or did the revolution mark a radical departure from the past, with Mao and the Chinese Communist Party bringing a unique approach to Chinese strategic thought?

38. Scobell, n. 9, p. 11.

Tiejun Zhang says it would be incorrect to disconnect linkages between the traditional and present Chinese strategic culture.³⁹ The traditional strategic culture has, to a large extent, influenced contemporary Chinese decision-making, with the literature often drawing connections between the thoughts of Sun Tzu and Mao Zedong. However, due to fundamental changes in international and domestic circumstances, the contemporary version of the Chinese strategic culture, while retaining certain elements of its traditional counterpart, has adapted itself.

Mao took to heart the *parabellum* strand of the strategic culture and believed that since the enemy can never be expected to *fangxia tudao, lidi chengfu* (lay down arms and become pacifist monks), the possession of force and a readiness in its execution comprise the only insurance for self-preservation. Mao was quite explicit that war was “the politics of human bloodshed,” the objective of which was to “preserve oneself and destroy the enemy.” He insisted that “whoever wants to seize state power and intends to preserve it, must have a strong military... We are for the abolition of war, we do not want war. But only through war can we abolish war...” This corresponds very closely to the axiom in one of the *Seven Military Classics*, *Si Ma Pa*, “To use war in order to prevent war, even though it is war, it is permissible.” Given that Mao had a virtual monopoly over strategic decision-making in the post-1949 period, and the fact that his strategic thought was largely embraced by his successors, the Chinese security policy post 1949 is largely influenced by the *parabellum* strategic culture.

What Mao most clearly borrowed from traditional strategic thought was the concept of absolute flexibility. While at the perceptual level, Mao’s strategic thinking is steeped in the *parabellum* paradigm, at the operational level, it demonstrates sufficient flexibility (*quan bien*). In two of Mao’s essays on strategy,⁴⁰ he has made explicit reference to the concept of gauging the nature of changing circumstances and exploiting changes in strategic opportunities, i.e., *quan bian*. The dialectic approach to relative capabilities manifested itself in the concept of people’s war and a strategy of

39. See Zhang, n. 21.

40. “Problems of Strategy in China’s Revolutionary War” (1936) and “On Protracted War” (1938a) quoted in Johnston, n. 8, p. 255.

jiji fangyu (active defence). Mao displayed a superb sense of maintaining balance between culture and pragmatism. For him, the exact application of one or the other depended on the *relative balance of capabilities*—the rhetoric need not always be carried out if the conditions are not right; however, actions should in all possibilities be justified in rhetorical terms or *just cause*.

The *realpolitik* theme of the Chinese strategic culture has continued to influence China's post Cold War threat perceptions and guide its security policy. Geo-politics, ideology and the historical consciousness of foreign dominance all have played a crucial role in Beijing's threat perception post 1949. Anti-interventionism and 'anti-hegemonism' as defined by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) have governed the way Beijing has continued to perceive threats to the state. The Chinese have also regarded the use—not merely the demonstration—of force as a resort to international conflicts. According to the data set generated by Wilkenfeld, Brecher and Moser, the PRC has resorted to violence in 72 percent of foreign-policy crises it has been involved in since 1949⁴¹ and all have been described as *defensive*, *deterrent* and *constrained*. There seems to have been a tendency of Chinese leaders to define even political/diplomatic issues as a high threat, where force was a legitimate response. Before deciding to shell Jinmen and Mazu in 1958, Mao asserted that the reason why "Dulles looks down upon us [is] that we have not yet completely shown and proven our strength."⁴² So the best way to deal with fearsome US imperialists was "to demonstrate our boldness." The features most readily identifiable from China's response to crisis situations post 1949 are that China is very sensitive to the issue of territorial integrity and that the use of force appears to have been related to improved relative capabilities. Indeed, there can be a number of competing reasons as to why China has readily tended to resort to force in crises but if one were to try

Geo-politics, ideology and the historical consciousness of foreign dominance all have played a crucial role in Beijing's threat perception post 1949.

41. Ibid., p. 256.

42. Zhang, n. 13, p. 40.

Mao and his comrades were determined that “a new China” should assume “her rightful place” among nations.

to make a strategic-culture argument to explain the frequent use of force, then these outcomes are more consistent with the *parabellum* paradigm than with the Confucian-Mencian paradigm.

China under Mao took as its primary goal the complete liberation of the nation from “imperialist” dominance. Mao and his comrades were determined that “a new China” should assume “her rightful place” among nations. China’s development of the nuclear bomb is argued to be aimed at breaking the nuclear monopoly of the superpowers. In a letter to Khrushchev, dated June 6, 1963, Mao declared that, “the Chinese people will never accept the privileged position of one or two superpowers because of their monopoly of the nuclear weapons in today’s world.” Leaders like Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin have repeatedly argued the need for China to maintain self-reliance as the core in its pursuit of Comprehensive National Power (CNP), especially in the domain of defence strategy. China’s self-reliant defence strategy “requires the country ...to self-reliantly make decisions and strategies; and to depend mainly on ourselves to develop our defense industry.”⁴³ Some authors have drawn links between the ancient stratagem of “victory without war” and the concept of CNP—the term preferred by the Chinese elites to describe national power. Although the term in itself did not come into existence until the 1980s, it is argued that the concept has ancient cultural roots and “evolved from concept of ‘power,’ ‘actual strength’, to ‘national power.’” This phrase, as Wu Chunqiu views it, means, “Under certain military pressures, one can coordinate a political and diplomatic offensive, to psychologically disintegrate the enemy forces and subdue them.” According to Wu, “victory without wars” does not mean that there is no war at all. The wars one must fight are political wars, economic wars, scientific and technological wars, diplomatic wars, etc. In short, it is a war of *comprehensive national power*.

43. Zhang, n. 21, p. 81.

UTILITY OF USING STRATEGIC CULTURE TO EXPLAIN CHINA'S SPACE PROGRAMME

There are interesting parallels between the Confucian-Mencian (*yin*) and the *parabellum* paradigms (*yang*) of Chinese strategic culture, on the one hand, and the Western approaches to international relations, on the other. To some extent, the *yin-yang* dichotomy is matched by the idealistic (liberalism) and the pragmatic (realist) approaches in the West. It is evident that the *parabellum* paradigm of the Chinese strategic culture does not differ radically from key elements in the Western *realpolitik* tradition. Indeed, the Chinese case might be classified as a hard *realpolitik* sharing many of the same tenets about the nature of the enemy and the efficacy of violence as the advocates of the realist school of thought. If the predictions made by the *parabellum* strategic-culture model, mediated by the notion of *quan bian*, and those made by a structural *realpolitik* model in which historical or cultural assumptions and perceptions are excluded, do not differ much, then, as Johnston argues, can we assume that the elites think of, or perceive, the world in *realist terms*, and that the key determinant of strategic choices is dependent upon the changes in the relative balance of capabilities?

Huiyun Feng says the determinants of a state's grand strategy are not limited to material capabilities, as many realists argue.⁴⁴ Just as strategists and their institutions cannot be acultural and continuously perceive and interpret the material realm culturally,⁴⁵ a state's grand strategy is also dependent upon how its leaders look at the world through the cultural and historical prisms they represent. Strategic decisions rest on the acquired political and philosophical views and beliefs of leaders over the issues of war and peace. In the Chinese case, a long-term, deeply-rooted, persistent, and consistent set of assumptions about the strategic environment and the best means for dealing with it. The Chinese realism is different because of its unique cultural and historical underpinning. It has developed from a

44. Huiyun Feng, "The Operational Code of Mao Zedong: Defensive or Offensive Realist?" *Security Studies*, 14:4, 2005, p. 640.

45. Stuart Poore, "What is the Context? A Reply to the Gray-Johnston Debate on Strategic Culture," *Review of International Studies*, 29, 2003, p. 282.

cultural hegemony that was Sino-centric and continues a desire to return to, and restore, its supremacy and cannot be merely explained in material terms.

CHINESE SPACE PROGRAMME

China has a history of interest in rocketry going back several centuries. Between 300 BC and 1000 AD, “fire arrows” were used in China and by 1045 AD, gunpowder rockets were important weapons in China’s military arsenal. China perceives itself having initiated and once dominated the field of space exploration; with China’s Space White Paper 2000 mentioning that China had invented gunpowder, the “embryo of modern space rockets.” In modern times, China’s interest in space related affairs began even before the dawn of the space age with the launch of the Sputnik.⁴⁶ What ultimately emerged as its space programme began in 1956, with the setting up of its first Missile and Rocket Research Institute on October 8, 1956. Hindered by what China calls “technical blockades put in by the imperialist countries,”⁴⁷ there was little development until the 1960s, when experiments with liquid-fuel rockets picked up momentum. However, since then, China has made scores of satellite launches, has well-developed launch facilities, carried out ASAT tests and has sent *taikonauts* into space. The difficulty of appreciating China’s motivations for its space programme with its unique complexities is further compounded by the inherent ‘grey’ nature of most space technologies. There are analysts who feel that the pursuit of space technology can be benign and development oriented; others perceive it as inherently nefarious. That China is so large and complex that one can look for proof of any thesis, and find it,⁴⁸ complicates the situation.

46. Chen Yanping, “China’s Space Policy—A Historical Review,” *Space Policy*, May 1991, p. 117; Roger Handberg and Zhen Li, *Chinese Space Policy* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 57.

47. Daphne Burleson, *Space Programs Outside the United States* (North Carolina: Mcfarland & Company, 2005), p. 53.

48. Joan Johnson-Fresse, “Scorpions in a Bottle: China and the US in Space,” *The Nonproliferation Review* 11:2, 2004, p. 171.

Thinking About Danger and Threat While Residing in Conditions of Peace

In the modern era, Chinese interest in rocket development owes its origin to military imperatives. While deciding on their space programme, the Chinese did not view space as a goal other than as a medium through which missiles would travel toward their targets.⁴⁹ World War II and the Chinese civil war had made Mao and other Chinese leaders aware of the huge military gap between China and the West. China's experience had included a threat by President Eisenhower of a nuclear attack towards the end of the Korean War⁵⁰ if a truce was not established. Mao initiated China's nuclear programme in 1955 which, in turn, generated a requirement⁵¹ for long range missiles that could reliably deliver China's warheads to their targets. The missile development programme was inaugurated in May 1956 when the Ministry of Defence established the Fifth Academy for Missile Research. The superpowers' nuclear arms race at that time further accentuated China's sense of isolation and threat. Due to external security threats which China perceived to be credible⁵² the development of the space programme was accelerated and placed directly under the leadership of the Party chief and head of government.⁵³ In March 1956, the State Council passed the Long-Term Plans for Scientific and Technological Development, 1956-1967, in which missile technology was included as a major national priority under the direct leadership of the Central Committee.

Despite major upheavals that tore the Chinese society in the 1950s (the Anti-Rightist campaign and the Great Leap Forward) and 1960s (the Cultural Revolution), the missile and space programmes were insulated due to military and prestige considerations.⁵⁴ In both the Anti-Rightist Campaign and the Great Leap Forward, the rocket programme was spared the purges and dismissals⁵⁵ that affected intellectuals and scientists in other areas, and during the Cultural Revolution, the space programme was placed under

49. Handberg and Li, n. 46, p. 46.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

51. Unlike the two superpowers who had long range bombers to deliver nuclear weapons, China lacked any delivery mechanism capable of threatening the US or USSR.

52. Handberg and Li, n. 46, p. 56.

53. *Ibid.*

54. Michael Sheehan, *The International Politics of Space* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 161.

55. Yanping, n. 46, p. 118.

Under Deng Xiaoping's "four modernisations," pursuit of nuclear deterrence remained the driving force, invigorating China's efforts to build ballistic missiles.

martial law.⁵⁶ Although those working in the programme were mainly civilians, the authority of the programme was placed in the hands of the military, which treated the missile programme as a military project and ensured that the civilian staff came under military discipline. During the famine years (1959-61) when an estimated 15-30 million people died due to malnutrition in China, the missile programme continued to receive state support due to the perceived external threats,⁵⁷

first from the US and later from the Soviet Union.

Under Deng Xiaoping's "four modernisations," pursuit of nuclear deterrence remained the driving force, invigorating China's efforts to build ballistic missiles. The priority articulated was clear—defence first over all other uses⁵⁸—and the military/space community focussed on the development of reliable Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) and Sea-Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM) technology. The military rationale has remained central to China's space programme since then. Key Chinese space launchers have been derived from modified long range ballistic missiles, rather than from developments arising out of civilian sounding-rocket programmes. The Long March launcher was originally designed as an ICBM (Dong Feng 4 and 5) unlike as a rocket, as the French Ariane was developed. It was the perceived threat from the Soviet Union that prompted China to build its second launch centre, the Xichang Launch Centre.⁵⁹ The first White Paper on Space issued by China in 2000 states that the "aims and principles of China's space activities are determined by their important status and function in protecting China's national interests..." The Space White Paper 2006 further elaborates that the aims of China's space activities are "... *national security*...protect China's national interests and rights, and build up the *comprehensive national strength*."

56. Sheehan, n. 54, p. 160.

57. Handberg and Li, n. 46, p. 62.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

The Chinese Space White Paper 2006 states that “in light of the country’s actual situation and needs, China will focus on certain areas while ignoring less important ones. It will choose some limited targets; concentrate its strength on making key breakthroughs...” It would not be incorrect to assume that this rationale of choosing limited targets to concentrate its strength would have guided the development of the space programme since its inception, so it is fair to assume that the choices made by the Chinese leadership should provide a reliable measure of the motivations and intentions behind the Chinese space programme. The rationale for choosing development of communication satellites over other application satellites during the “four modernisations” is argued to be a requirement for reliable long range military communications for command and control over the large and mountainous country and the ability to use the satellites to target long range weapons.⁶⁰ In recent times, for space programmes with military applications, China has made most progress in developing satellite reconnaissance capabilities that are crucial for building information superiority.⁶¹ It was only after the articulation of the White Paper that China demonstrated its capability for targeting satellites in orbit by carrying out ASAT tests in January 2007 and 2010.

Having once experienced nuclear blackmail, the chief strategic rationale for China’s space programme today is perceived to be the threat posed by the US and its perceived Asian “allies”⁶² to China. The Chinese are understood to have appreciated the importance of space in any future conflict and the present US dominance of it.⁶³ In response to the stated goal of the US for effective space control,⁶⁴ the Chinese White Paper 2006 states that “given the unpredictable security situation in outer space in the 21st century,

60. Sheehan, n. 54, p. 168.

61. James A. Lewis, “China as a Military Space Competitor” Center for Strategic and International Studies, August 2004, http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/040801_china_space_competitor.pdf, accessed January 07, 2010), p. 4.

62. China considers Japan and India to be co-conspirators of the US to contain China; see “Journey to the Moon,” *Business China*, vol. 33, issue 21, 2007, p. 4.

63. Joan Johnson-Fresse, “China’s Manned Space Program: Sun Tzu or Apollo Redux?” *Naval War College Review*, vol. LVI, no. 3, 2003, p. 52.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 52; See US National Space Policy, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/national-space-policy-2006.pdf>, accessed March 29, 2010.

By the year 2040, China's space force is set to have become fully operational as an independent service directly under the national military command.

China will make efforts to protect its legitimate interests. It will also pay more attention to space security..." China has formed a military research centre whose mission is to study military space technologies and space wars with the long-term aim articulated as "by the year 2040, China's space force is set to have become fully operational as an independent service directly under the national military command."⁶⁵

Overcoming the Superior with the Inferior

Not wishing to leave the US unchallenged in the event of a conflict, Chinese military analysts assert that what the Chinese seek, while upgrading their military capabilities, is an asymmetric advantage—to find areas where the US and its style of warfare is more vulnerable to attack, an approach sometimes captured in a phrase used in PLA writings: "overcoming the superior with the inferior."⁶⁶ China seems to have identified space as an area where it could erode the US military advantage.⁶⁷ One of the most plausible motivations assumed for the Chinese ASAT test is argued to be building up the capability to neutralise US advantage in space in any future conflict by targeting its space assets. China has also warned that it might consider using micro-satellites to deny the US the use of space in a crisis or conflict.⁶⁸ The Chinese recognise the importance of information dominance in a conflict, and their writings articulate that "the securing of information dominance cannot be separated from space dominance. It can be said, gaining space dominance is the root of winning informationalised war."⁶⁹ Chinese military writings indicate that the current Chinese concept of space operations is to exploit space for their own ends, while denying it to their adversaries. The Chinese seem to be focussing on damaging and disrupting the adversary's

65. Handberg and Li, n. 46, p. 115.

66. Lewis, n. 61, p. 2.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

68. Johnson-Fresse, n. 63, p. 64.

69. Davis M. Finkelstein, "China's Space Program: Civilian, Commercial & Military Aspects" (Conference overview, Project Asia, October 2005), p. 11.

decision processes in order to slow their opponents down.⁷⁰ The importance placed on space assets in any future conflict can be gauged from the fact that “disabling the more powerful navy by attacking its space-based communications and surveillance systems and even attacking naval units from space” has become a well-accepted strategy⁷¹ in China. The Chinese have tried to convince others that China would be too difficult to defeat and would inflict excessive damage on the aggressor in the process. Although, presently, Chinese space activities are being portrayed as emblematic of its rising power and influence, the military undertones regarding China’s ability to inflict damage in any future military conflict are implicit rather than explicitly stated.

Some of the analysts suggest that China does not currently possess a structured, coherent military space programme⁷² and that China’s militarily space efforts are often more a demonstration of technological prowess across a range of space activities rather than an effort to build an operational military space capability⁷³ but the number of observers holding such a view is in a minority. There is little disagreement among the majority of analysts on the capabilities and development stage of the Chinese space programme. The Chinese Space White Paper itself states that China considers space “as a strategic way to enhance its economic, scientific, technological and national defence strength.”⁷⁴ Since their inception, Chinese space activities have fallen under the general rubric of national security. The threats perceived; the choices made by the Chinese leadership in choosing the direction of the development of their space programme; and the strategies employed by Chinese clearly reflect the large influence of the *parabellum* strategic thought. The mistrust of foreigners has led the Chinese leadership to perceive others’ space activities as threatening and a resolute belief in self-help has led China to develop space capabilities to protect its national interests.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

71. Handberg and Li, n. 46, p. 115.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

73. Lewis, n. 61, p. 2.

74. People’s Republic of China, Information Office of China’s State Council, *China’s Space Activities in 2006*, October 2006, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/book/183672.htm>, accessed December 21, 2009.

Even though there is widespread agreement that the Chinese space programme is primarily motivated by the 'realist' or '*parabellum*' considerations, some analysts do not find any uniqueness in it. As Dolman suggests, it was the "perceived military necessity shouldered for fear of growing power of a potential enemy that ultimately drove development of space programs"⁷⁵ during the 'Golden Age' of space. It is often argued that the general pattern of China's military space use is similar to that of Russia and the US, especially with reference on the development of navigation and communication satellites,⁷⁶ and that in launch technology, China has followed the same pattern as the United States,⁷⁷ initially converting missiles into rockets. Also, the Chinese reasoning for seeking to minimise a space-technology gap with the US is much on the same lines as that of the US subsequent to the Space Commission Report—each feeling that it would be imprudent *not* to prepare and respond.⁷⁸ While it is not denied that the general pattern of the development of all the three space programmes has a lot in common, it does not in any way reduce the importance of the realist (or *parabellum*) motivations on the development of the Chinese space programme. It is argued by some analysts that the relationship among space, technology, economics and domestic policies and the political, economic and military benefits to the Chinese in pursuing space activity validate their course of actions as rational policy decisions in terms of theories on state behaviour.⁷⁹ As Joseph Nye says, since there is nothing inevitable in how a state would respond to international developments and is largely dependent on the choices made by its leaders, the Chinese space programme *need not* have followed a militaristic path in its development like that of Japan or Europe but the fact that it did can be attributed to the cultural impact on the Chinese strategic thought. While it is beyond the scope of this essay, research into the cultural aspects affecting the development of the US and Russian space programmes may

75. Everett Dolman, *Astropolitik* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), p. 91.

76. Sheehan, n. 54, p. 168.

77. Johnson-Fresse, n. 10, p. 9.

78. Johnson-Fresse, n. 63, p. 66.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

also help to determine the influence of their respective strategic cultures on their space programmes.

Rightful Place Under Heaven

In spite of a lack of clear articulation coming from China as to the motivations behind the Chinese space programme, analysts are near unanimous in their opinion regarding the space programme being strongly influenced by prestige considerations. As discussed in the earlier section, China's perception of itself is based on the belief of a "great civilisation that had been robbed of its status by well-armed barbarians."⁸⁰ The introduction to the first ever White Paper on space issued by the Chinese government reminds the readers of the "glorious [Chinese] civilization in the early stage of mankind's history."⁸¹ 'Face', as in any Asian culture, is important in the Chinese culture.⁸² China is driven by the desire to shake off the memory of its imperialist humiliation and be recognised as a sophisticated and technologically advanced state to regain its place of distinction. The Chinese see "high technology, and particularly the aerospace and nuclear industries, as the key to ... recapture of the international position and status that they felt was their national birthright."⁸³ Conquering space represents an opportunity in what China refers to as mankind's "fourth frontier" to recapture its lost legacy of technological mastery and innovation.⁸⁴ Driven by this rationale, China's space programme has the desire to "gain national prestige, and to signal wealth, commitment and technological prowess."⁸⁵ Following the launch of the Sputnik in 1957, Mao had declared that "we also want to make artificial satellites." The rationale for launching the first satellite, Dong Feng Hong ("The East is Red") in April 1970 (which broadcast a revolutionary song of the same name for the duration of its 26 days in orbit), was partially believed to demonstrate deterrent ability

80. Rosita Dellios, "China's Space Programme: A Strategic and Political Analysis," *Culture Mandala*, vol. 7, no. 1, December 2005, <http://www.international-relations.com/CM7-1WB/ChinasSpaceWB.htm>, p. 2.

81. n. 74.

82. Johnson-Fresse, n. 1, p. 35.

83. Sheehan, n. 54, p. 162.

84. Johnson-Fresse, n. 63, p. 52.

85. Lewis, n. 61.

Deng believed that “if it were not for the atomic bomb, the hydrogen bomb and the satellites we have launched since the 1960s, China would not have its present international standing as a great, influential country.”

and, thus, to enhance China’s national prestige. The Chinese practice of naming elements of the space programme, like the Great China Wall Industry Corporation (the Chinese corporation for marketing its launch capacity) and the Long March rocket, to establish mental linkages with heroic or impressive elements of China’s past reflects the centrality of national recovery and prestige as drivers of the space programme.

Deng believed that “if it were not for the atomic bomb, the hydrogen bomb and the satellites we have launched since the 1960s,

China would not have its present international standing as a great, influential country.”⁸⁶ In the effort of striving to become a major power, the space programme has helped change the backward image of the Chinese in the minds of other people and concurrently enhanced Chinese national pride and self-confidence.⁸⁷ China now speaks openly of its ambition to compete at the highest level “to obtain a more important place in the world in the field of space science...”⁸⁸ and “has set the strategic goal of building itself into a well-off society in an all-round way, ranking it among the countries with the best innovative capabilities in the first 20 years of the 21st century.”⁸⁹

There is a small minority of analysts who tend to disagree that prestige considerations have a major influence⁹⁰ in the development of the Chinese space programme, however, as mentioned earlier, the majority agree that prestige has played an important role in shaping the development of China’s space programme as the capability to launch any time provides large influence in terms of diplomacy at the United Nations and military affairs.⁹¹ The July 2002 Annual Report on the Military Power of the People’s Republic of China, by the US Department of Defence (DoD), stated, “One of

86. Handberg and Li, n. 46, p. 99.

87. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

88. People’s Republic of China, *China’s Space Activities*, November 2000.

89. People’s Republic of China, *China’s Space Activities in 2006*.

90. Finkelstein, n. 69, p. 21.

91. Johnson-Fresse, n. 10, p. 7.

the strongest immediate motivations... appears to be political prestige...."⁹² Some analysts have so far gone to suggest that China's space programme is not about competition with the US or any other country but it is in a race with itself,⁹³ the end goal of which reaches beyond the US—a manifestation of finding its 'rightful place'."

Learning the Superior Barbarian Technique with Which to Repel the Barbarians

The lessons of the history of the 'betrayal' by foreigners have left a deep impact on both the Chinese leadership and the population. The deep mistrust of foreigners led the Chinese to develop the space programme to the extent possible by indigenous methods and become self-reliant or to at least pronounce it to the world as their own. The successful launch of its first satellite in April 1970 was hailed as a victory for the CCP and the evidence that the Party was "achieving greater, faster, better ... preparedness against war with concrete action."⁹⁴ China's Foreign Minister insisted that the post launch communiqué include the words, "We did this through our own unaided efforts."⁹⁵ The withdrawal of Soviet assistance in the middle of 1960 had come as a big setback to the Chinese space programme; however, the Chinese immediately decided to go it alone, since achievement of self-reliance had always been the goal. Vice Premier Nie (in the October 15, 1956 Report) had stated that while foreign technical assistance should be employed whenever possible, the fundamental thrust of the programme should be self-reliance.⁹⁶ The Chinese resolve to develop the space programme can be gauged from the comment of the Chinese Foreign Minister Chen Yi, "We will have to do what it takes to support the missile and nuclear programme, even if this means that we can't afford to wear pants."⁹⁷

92. Johnson-Fresse, n. 63, p. 52.

93. Eric Hagt, "China Space Program: the Quiet Revolution," *Defense Monitor*, vol. 34, issue 6, 2005, p. 6.

94. P.S. Clarke, "The Chinese Space Programme," 200 quoted in Sheehan, n. 54, p. 162.

95. Brain Harvey, "China's Space Programme: Emerging Competitor or Potential Partner?," Centre of Non Proliferation Occasional Paper, no. 12, 50, quoted in Sheehan, n. 54, p. 162.

96. Yanping, n. 46, p. 119.

97. Ibid.

**To set up an
independently
operated satellite...”
and “to establish
an independent
satellite navigation
and positioning
system.”**

The continued Chinese resolve to achieve self-reliance is manifested in the Space White Paper 2000 which stated that “upholding the principle of independence, self-reliance and self-renovation ... China shall rely on its own strength to tackle key problems and make breakthroughs...” The development targets articulated in the paper amongst others, are, “to set up an *independently operated satellite...*” and “to establish an *independent satellite navigation and positioning system.*” The level of emphasis placed on attaining self-reliance in the space programme is to such an extent that it has led some observers to comment that “China appears to build a satellite in order to show that it can do it rather than to meet an operational need.”⁹⁸

There is an argument that a part of the Chinese desire for indigenous development is due to the recognition that true innovation requires understanding the science behind the technology. While the Chinese programme has to a large extent developed through indigenous efforts, whether as a part of a design or due to reasons beyond control, the Chinese have had help in their initial forays into space primarily from the Soviets and subsequently (covertly) from some Western companies.⁹⁹ The Chinese have not been shy of accepting help from the outside world to accelerate the development of their space programme. As one observer describes it, the Chinese programme has benefitted from using a three-pronged approach of “borrowing, building and buying.”¹⁰⁰ In contrast to Mao’s closed door world view for reasons of ideological purity, China had started breaking out of its isolation by opening its doors to the Western world in the 1970s. The purpose was to acquire technologies and training –there was no official interest in Western political values or views.¹⁰¹ Deng viewed this opening of China as a

98. Lewis, n. 61, p. 2.

99. Jeffrey Logan, “China’s Space Program: Options for US-China Cooperation ” (CRS report, Congressional Research Service, September 29, 2008), p. 1.

100. Finkelstein, n. 69, p. 5.

101. Handberg and Li, n. 46, p. 84.

necessary short-cut to updating China's science and technological endeavours. This flexibility shown by China in interacting with 'foreigners' as a short-cut to develop what it perceives to be "a strategic way to enhance its economic, scientific, technological and national defense strength"¹⁰² is a reflection of the cultural impact of the notion of *quan bien* on the strategic thought guiding development of the space programme. This Chinese willingness to be *flexible* on issues which are considered to be strategic and in China's benefit makes it difficult to predict the future direction with any reasonable assurance.

China desires to be treated either as an equal partner or a competitor—it is unwilling to accept a second-tier status.

The unwillingness of the Chinese state to acknowledge assistance¹⁰³ in developing the space programme can once again be attributed to its apprehension of the assistance being perceived as a superior-inferior relationship reminiscent of European semi-colonialism rather than an exchange between equals. For a state that suffered much under colonial status, being the inferior was politically unacceptable. China's opening up in the 1970s was to some extent attributed to its growing confidence to develop technologies, if required, on its own. China was willing to accept cooperation as an equal or not at all.¹⁰⁴

Forming a United Front Against Foreign Invasions

Chinese disdain for 'foreigners' (especially the West) and the legacy of its space exploration and dominance have had a significant influence on its desire to shape the international space regime. The current international regime reflects a dominant influence of the original (modern age) space participants and China has no intention of ceding outer space to Russian control or to accept America's self-appointed hegemonic dominance of space.¹⁰⁵ China desires to be treated either as an equal partner or a

102. n. 89.

103. The 2006 Space White Paper states that "for half a century China had worked independently in this field."

104. Handberg and Li, n. 46, p. 84.

105. Johnson-Fresse, n. 63, p. 55.

competitor—it is unwilling to accept a second-tier status. The 2006 Space White Paper states “that international space exchanges and cooperation should be strengthened on the basis of equality...” However, rather than directly confronting the US space hegemony, China has sought to negate it through a policy of encouraging multipolar modifications to the international space regime. The 2000 Chinese White Paper on Space Policy stresses the importance of the UN in shaping the international regime and China’s visible efforts at the Conference on Disarmament (CD) represent its desire to participate in it.¹⁰⁶

The deep antagonism against the West in the Chinese psyche is evident in its approach to promote space cooperation with other developing countries and in its attempt to assert itself as their leader in space activities. The 2006 Space White Paper states that international space cooperation should adhere to the fundamental principles stated in the “Declaration on International Cooperation in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space for the Benefit and in the Interest of All States, Taking into Particular Account the Needs of Developing Countries” and that while developing international cooperation, China will follow the policy of “reinforcing space cooperation with developing countries ...” China has signed cooperative space arrangements with a number of countries¹⁰⁷ and is collaboratively working with some of them.

China has continued to pursue the possibility of joining the International Space Station (ISS) and in the opinion of Luan Enjie, Director of the China National Space Administration, without China’s participation, the ISS “is not a true international program.” However, till now, China has not been invited to be a partner in the programme whereas Brazil, which has significantly less to offer either in terms of technology or finance has been invited. The US’ dominance of the ISS and the perceived politics¹⁰⁸ of the partnership have prompted China to declare its intention to develop a *second* international space station in partnership with other countries. The

106. Eric Hagt, “China’s ASAT Test: Strategic Response,” *China Security* Winter, 2007, p. 33.

107. China has signed cooperative space agreements with a number of countries, including Canada, Germany, Italy, France, Britain, Russia, Pakistan, India, and Brazil.

108. Johnson-Fresse, n. 63, p. 64.

motivation behind this seems to be to permit states to use space in a way which reduces the American dominance and also provides a role in shaping future international space developments, rather than simply participating in an environment shaped by others. China's development of its own navigation system—Beidou—already operational with three satellites as a regional navigation system (with plans for upgrade to a global system), is also considered as evidence of its disdain for US efforts to sustain sole control through its Global Positioning System (GPS) navigation system. It is likely that the US desire to dominate space and enforce its will on others is perceived by the Chinese as 'oppression' and, thus, any attempt to fight is not only *yizhan* (righteous) but also desirable. The "righteous war" is not only legitimate and necessary but also removes any moral limits on means to be employed.

Some authors contend that there is nothing unique about the desire of the Chinese leadership to counter US dominance. As Kenneth N. Waltz has argued, "As ever, dominance, coupled with immoderate behaviour by one country, causes others to look for ways to protect their interests."¹⁰⁹ It is suggested that the European decision to build Galileo—a satellite navigation system independent of the US—and the growing cooperation within Europe and with China in regard to space technology is driven to some degree by a common wish to 'balance' against the power of the US and is a purely 'rational' decision. While not discounting the realities of relative capabilities and the desire of states to safeguard their interests, the motivations and the choices made must be assessed in the broader context of both structural constraints and cultural aspects. The choice to adopt a confrontationist rather than an accommodationist approach by the Chinese in exploitation of space is a reflection of the impact of the *parabellum* strategic culture.

Anti-Satellite Test

Respond flexibly to the enemy and, thus, create conditions for victory.

109. Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed* (New York: WW Norton, 2003), p. 149.

The ASAT test laid to rest a lot of the speculation with respect to the way the programme was developing and the level of its sophistication.

Perhaps the most visible and noted event in the development of the Chinese space programme has been the ASAT conducted by China on January 11, 2007.¹¹⁰ When China blew up its ageing satellite in orbit, it caused mild panic and concern amongst the US, UK and other circles. The test was perhaps, in more ways than one, representative of the Chinese space programme. If there was a bit of uncertainty about Chinese space activities prior to January 2007, due to lack of transparency and reliance on externally many verifiable indicators to gauge intentions, the ASAT test laid to rest a lot of the speculation with respect to the way the programme was developing and the level of its sophistication. However, even though the test was a clear indicator of the direction of development of the space programme, the motivations behind adopting that path are still being debated. Most observers agree that while effectively conceding that its conventional ground, air and naval forces do not yet challenge the US military, China is looking for vulnerabilities where a strategy of asymmetric warfare might be brought into play.¹¹¹ One area where the US is clearly asymmetrically vulnerable is its heavy reliance on space assets. Chinese analysts have speculated that “for countries that can never win a war with the US by using the methods of tanks and planes, attacking the US space system may be an irresistible and most tempting choice”¹¹² (*fighting the superior with the inferior*). Most speculate that China wanted to demonstrate that dominating space through technology was not going to be as easy¹¹³ as implied in the 2006 US National Space Policy. Further, analysts agree that the test was a demonstration of China’s unwillingness to lock itself in a position of permanent vulnerability¹¹⁴ and a clear message that it could not

110. Since then, China has conducted one more ASAT test, in January 2010.

111. Lewis, n. 61, p. 1.

112. Philip C. Saunders, “China’s Future in Space: Implications for US Security,” *adastra: The Magazine of the National Space Society*, www.space.com/adastra/China_implications_0505.html, accessed April 21, 2010.

113. Johnson-Fresse, n. 10, p. 20.

114. Xinhua News Agency, “China Crusades to Leading Position in Aerospace,” Xinhua General News Service, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1P2-18417040.html>, accessed May 11, 2010.

be ignored ¹¹⁵(*its rightful place in the world*).

Although, the Chinese ASAT test was conducted in January 2007, the Chinese ABM programme has its origin in the “640 Project” set up by Mao Zedong in 1964 to develop defensive measures against a nuclear attack and later Deng Xiaoping’s call for a Chinese answer to President Reagan’s Star Wars Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) in 1986 (the “863 Project”). The ABM programme was initiated in the 1990s and divided into two branches in 2002, “863-801” and “863-805”. 863-805 was the Kinetic

Chinese analysts have speculated that “for countries that can never win a war with the US by using the methods of tanks and planes, attacking the US space system may be an irresistible and most tempting choice.”

Kill Vehicle programme (KKV) which went into the test phase after three years of development and after two unsuccessful attempts in July 2005 and February 2006; the third test on January 11, 2007, was successful. Although, the technology employed was similar to the US technology, some analysts believe that China decided to target a satellite rather than a missile due to the comparatively lower level of difficulty.¹¹⁶ According to some analysts, China is unlikely to match US space capability and, hence, unlikely to openly challenge US dominance in space in the near future. Although, this would appear to be the most rational argument for any state, it is important not to view these decisions as made by a “generic, rational” man but by a “national (in this case, Chinese), rational” man and once again bears resemblance to the cultural aspect of “*respond flexibly to the enemy and, thus, create conditions for victory*” on the strategic calculus for creating conditions till relative capabilities are favourable.

Most of the analysts agree that motivations for the test were likely multifaceted, including the technical and political objectives. Although most dismiss the argument that the test was to encourage the US to enter negotiations on space weapons, there is an argument that China believes

115. Logan, “China’s Space Program: Options for US-China Cooperation,” *CRS Report*, Congressional Research Service, September 29, 2008; Gregory Kulacki and Jeffrey G. Lewis, “Understanding China’s Anti-Satellite Test,” *Nonproliferation Review*, vol. 15, no. 2, July 2008, p. 342.

116. Kulacki and Lewis, *Ibid.*, p. 337.

that the US negotiates based primarily on strength, and without strength of its own, China cannot bring the US to the negotiating table¹¹⁷ which reveals a strong strain of realism running through Chinese strategic thinking. Kulacki and Lewis¹¹⁸ have tried to present the argument that the Chinese test was not as a result of strategic requirements to offset US dominance or improve their missiles but more as an experiment to validate a 20-year R&D programme.¹¹⁹ If a country is developing a capability, sooner or later, it needs to be tested. However, the mere fact that the Chinese leadership had embarked upon the path to develop an anti-satellite capability twenty years earlier is testimony to the impact of the *parabellum* strategic culture on the space programme and the Chinese resolve not to accept any foreign domination. Also, the decision to subsequently undertake one more ASAT test on January 11, 2010, clearly demonstrates China's resolve to enhance its (anti)space capabilities rather than it being solely a "technology demonstrator." The Chinese are also believed to have developed "parasite satellites"¹²⁰ that attach themselves to enemy spacecraft for detonation when deemed necessary and are understood to be developing ground-based lasers to target satellites in orbit. Even Kulacki and Lewis agree that the test was a demonstration of Chinese strategic deterrence and that the Chinese desire to *match* US capabilities (as against *counter*¹²¹); also, that they are looking for assurance to their right to access space and be treated like any other space-faring nation.¹²²

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the ASAT test was terming of the same as "*defensive*" by the Chinese government. The statement by the Chinese Foreign Ministry called the test "defensive in nature and targeted at no country."¹²³ In a way, ASAT weapons could be regarded as defensive in nature, in that they may prevent China from becoming vulnerable to a

117. Hagt, n. 106, p. 36.

118. See Kulacki and Lewis, n. 115.

119. *Ibid.*, p. 341.

120. Johnson-Fresse, n. 63, p. 341.

121. Hagt, n. 106, p. 341. Emphasis in original.

122. *Ibid.*, p. 344.

123. Xinhua General News service, "China Reaffirms its Missile Interception Test Defensive," Xinhua General News Service, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2010-01/12/content_12797459.htm, accessed January 14, 2010.

potential attack but, once again, an employment of an offensive capability may be understood as a “defensive” measure culturally by the Chinese (*‘wu’ and active defence*) rather than the conventional acceptance of the word.

NATIONAL MISSILE DEFENCE

Internal instability and backwardness invite foreign invasions.

In recent years, the factor perceived to be influencing the direction of Chinese space development most is the National Missile Defence (NMD) programme of the United States. China has adamantly opposed the missile defence programme. From its perspective, NMD poses a fundamental challenge to the viability of its strategic nuclear deterrent and alters the balance among nuclear powers,¹²⁴ destabilising the international security structure. As per China, when missile defence is joined with US strategic nuclear offensive capabilities, the “shield and sword” created will vastly complicate the objective of reunifying Taiwan with the Mainland. In the PRC’s view, the NMD will facilitate the ability of the US to promote its own interests, with little or no regard for the legitimate national security interests of others. China harbours the suspicion that the US seeks not only to dominate the region but to “Westernise” and “split” Chinese territory and weaken PRC influence.¹²⁵ The mistrust of foreigners held by the Chinese, coupled with the fact that the US has demonstrated in the past that it does not see itself constrained by treaties and agreements it has signed, if it decides that they no longer serve American interests,¹²⁶ has led the Chinese to view assurances by the US that it wishes to deploy only a minimal capability suitable for intercepting launches from ‘rogue’

The US Strategic Defence Initiative and European Eureka Plan had reinforced Deng’s belief that if China did not participate in high-tech R&D at the beginning, it would become very difficult for it to catch up later.

124. Tom Sanderson, “Chinese Perspectives on US Ballistic Missile Defense” (Fellowship Report, Stimpson Centre, 2001), p. 17.

125. *Ibid.*

126. Sheehan, n. 54, p. 166.

states as not credible. The US Strategic Defence Initiative and European Eureka Plan had reinforced Deng's belief that if China did not participate in high-tech R&D at the beginning, it would become very difficult for it to catch up later. He believed that if China did not develop its own high-tech capabilities, it would be left behind by the Western countries. China's 100 years experience as a semi-colonial society has made the leaders believe that "*internal instability and backwardness invite foreign invasions*" and alert to the possibility of being left behind internationally. Hence, China has guided its space programme so as to not be the victim of 'barbarians' again. Becoming a hostage to another state is an option totally rejected by China. Although the Chinese decision may be viewed as a strategic decision taken by "rational" men, it cannot be denied that these decisions bear a strong cultural imprint of "*learning the superior barbarian technique with which to repel the barbarians.*"

Manned Programme

Of all the endeavours of the Chinese space programme, the one on which there is near unanimity amongst the analysts for the Chinese motivation and, to a large extent, in concert with the official Chinese proclamations, is the Chinese manned space flight programme. For most of its history, the Chinese space programme had not emphasised exploration for its own sake, or a manned programme. Human space flight is not militarily or economically relevant¹²⁷ and no state at this point of time needs to be involved in it. Military, scientific and commercial space activities can be well accomplished by employing robotic spacecraft. The manned programme was seen as a low priority by the Chinese leadership initially as it did not make a direct contribution to defence development. Although prestige had been an important driver of the Chinese space programme, it was dwarfed by considerations like defence and economics in the initial stages of development. The Chinese leadership considered that diverting human and economic resources necessary for human flight very early would be contrary to China's long-term economic and national interests. But with

127. Handberg and Li, n. 46, p. 56; Lewis, n. 63, p. 1; Johnson Fresse, n. 63, p. 56.

China having 'arrived' as an important player on the international stage in recent years, the Chinese government is seeking to consolidate its position in meaningful ways and to acquire the trappings of great power status. Of all the human endeavours, manned space flight remains the most dramatic symbol of a vigorous and technologically advanced country and remains the crowning feat of all space programmes. Though instrumented flight has prestige value, the attention and interest of the world are captured much more by manned flight. The international prestige, along with the technological cachet associated with manned space flight, justified forays into it for the Chinese, regardless of the immediate economic and technological benefits.

Although President Reagan (in the 1980s) and then Soviet Leader Gorbachev had extended an offer to fly a Chinese astronaut (on a space shuttle mission and to the Mir space station, respectively), there is no evidence that the Chinese seriously considered their offers; their focus remained on achieving independent human space flight. China wanted to come to the table as an equal¹²⁸ and initiated its human space flight programme in 1996 with the first *Shenzou* (divine vehicle) launched in 1999. The Fifth *Shenzou* carried a *yuhangyuan* (traveller of the universe) to space for the first time on October 15, 2003. The launch was reported by the official news agency as it would "strengthen the nation's *comprehensive national strength*, promote the development of science and technology, enhance *national prestige*, boost the nation's sense of pride and cohesiveness." It said, "China deserves a *place in the world* in the area of high technology."¹²⁹ Interestingly, official pronouncements made little mention of the benefits of the launch to economic development.

Some observers have questioned the uniqueness of China's motives as they are similar to those that drove Russia and the US¹³⁰ to undertake manned missions—to gain national prestige, and to signal wealth, commitment and technological prowess. However, it would be prudent to understand what motivates states to engage in human space flight. Japan

128. Handberg and Li, n. 46, p. 128.

129. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

130. Lewis, n. 61, p. 1.

The United States Department of Defense Annual Report imputes military motives also to the Chinese space flight and states that “China’s manned space efforts could contribute to improved military space systems in the 2010-2020 time-frame.”

and Europe have either significantly slowed down their earlier efforts or have effectively stopped development for the present.¹³¹ It is evident that political considerations—which to a large extent are culturally influenced—for a state must significantly outweigh the economic and scientific benefits (as these can be achieved by robotic means). The very strong desire of the Chinese to wipe out the humiliation of “hundred years” and regain their lost place in the world seems to outweigh all economic or scientific benefits. The United States Department of Defense Annual Report to Congress on the Military Power of the People’s Republic of China (2000)¹³² imputes military motives also to the Chinese space flight and states that “China’s manned space efforts could contribute to improved military space systems in the 2010-2020 time-frame. In addition to scientific and technical experiments, Chinese astronauts, for instance, could investigate the utility of manned reconnaissance from space.” While the Chinese programme is opaque in almost all respects and the military is certainly involved in the civilian-manned space programme, as well as undertaking space efforts of its own, it would be incorrect to see its manned space programme as primarily motivated by military interests.¹³³ The Chinese manned programme represents prestige considerations for the Chinese space programme and is about its determination to regain what it considers its deserved place in global, and by default, regional, politics.

Lunar Exploration

Chinese motives for moon exploration are also to large extent driven by the same factors as the human space flight (including parallels between earlier

131. Handberg and Li, n. 46, p. 4.

132. Available at <http://www.defense.gov/news/Jun2000/china06222000.htm>

133. Not likely since both the US and USSR considered it but found robotic remote sensing more useful and less costly: Handberg and Li, n. 46, p. 116.

US and present Chinese decision-making for lunar exploration). The launch of the lunar probe on October 24, 2007, provided a big boost to national pride and observers speculate that China's next aim¹³⁴ is to become only the second country (after the US) to pull off a manned moon landing. The Chinese announcement of a planned lunar landing by 2017—ahead of the US plans for a 2018 landing—are seen by some analysts as a direct challenge to the US and an assertion of China's growing confidence and achieving its "*rightful place*."

THE CULTURAL DIMENSION

Most analysts—primarily from the West—tend to concur on the direction of development of the Chinese space programme i.e. guided by external threats, asymmetric response, means for active defence, opposition to US dominance, prestige considerations, attempt to shape the international space regime and opposition to missile defence. However, most attempt to explain the motivation behind the path chosen in terms of rational strategic decisions, in part influenced by a tendency to view it from their own prisms. While attempting to understand the development of the Chinese space programme without considering the influence of culture on Chinese strategic thought, we would be making the same mistake Snyder had first cautioned about while introducing the concept of strategic culture—to assume that others will act like some "generic, rational man" would. As Fresse argues, it might be possible to grasp the mechanics of the Chinese space programme without the benefits of historical information, but the likelihood of understanding the policy aspects without it is significantly less.¹³⁵ Alexander Wendt argues that there is nothing intrinsic within the anarchical structure of the international environment to produce self-help behaviour exhibited by states. While there may be many valid reasons for states to acquire certain identities and to act in a self-help manner, this is not preordained by some unseen force.¹³⁶ If there is nothing preordained in how states would react in any strategic

134. "Journey to the Moon," *Business China*, vol. 33, issue 21, 2007, p. 4.

135. Johnson-Fresse, n. 1, p. 11.

136. John Glenn, "Realism versus Strategic Culture: Competition and Collaboration?," *International Studies Review*, 11, 2009, pp.523-551.

environment, it is important to view it from the Chinese perspective to understand why the Chinese space programme developed the way it did. Several observations can be made from the preceding discussion on China's space programme as it relates to the influence of Chinese strategic culture. First, the way in which Chinese decision-makers define their national security interests remains strongly influenced by the *parabellum* conception of threats, inter-state conflicts and national security, and their historical and social experience. This has, in turn, has guided the evolution of the Chinese space programme, especially in the initial phases, towards an emphasis on military aspects. The experience of humiliation and exploitation by foreigners has shaped China's desire to be a strong nation and the same manifests in its plans for the development of its space capabilities to reach a sufficient level of competency so as not to "invite foreign invasions". A situation where China may be exploited again or suffer a loss of 'face' is not acceptable. Mistrust of foreigners—although China is flexible enough to use 'foreign' assistance to further national interests—a sense of pride and a strong belief in self-help as the only reliable assurance for nation's fundamental security interests have shaped the Chinese desire to be develop their space programme indigenously and be self-reliant.

Second, although the Chinese space programme has its origin in military requirements, it is strongly influenced by the holistic approach to national strength. China's development of the space programme seems to be a part of a larger strategy to "protect China's national interests and build up the *comprehensive national strength*."¹³⁷ The Chinese believe that the next war need not be a military conflict—it could be in any sphere. Science and technology is an important aspect of a nation's power and the potential of the space programme to generate advances in cutting-edge technology has shaped the development of the space programme to achieve a position which is not inferior to anyone. The impact of deep-rooted strategic beliefs also has a clear influence on the Chinese strategy to counter space-dominance by others. Realising that China cannot challenge others' dominance in space by similar means only and, hence, the choice of developing offensive capability and

137. n. 88.

giving priority to the development of satellites with military applications over others shows a preference for a strategy of “fighting superior with inferior” and “to respond flexibly to the enemy and, thus, create conditions for victory.”

Third, the impact of Sino-centric cultural prominence on the Chinese strategic culture and a desire to return to, and restore, its supremacy in space, which China believes it initiated and once dominated, has had a large impact on the direction in which the Chinese space programme is developing. The pursuit of prestige and a position of eminence in space have guided the development of the Chinese space programmes like manned space flight and lunar exploration. China wishes to attain what it believes is its “*place under heaven*”. It is a measure of the significance attached to the symbolic value of prospective domestic, regional and international prestige that flows from a successful space programme by the Chinese that a country that faced daily challenges to keep its population fed contributed significant resources in the development phase of the programme, even when the pay-offs were questionable.¹³⁸ The prestige and its contribution to military capabilities that would prevent a return to imperialist exploitation have been central to the government support for the missile and space programmes right from their inception.

Fourth, China’s attempt to lead the developing world to counter the dominance of space by some and shape the space regime to address the interests of all not only shows a deep mistrust of the West but is perhaps perceived as a weak, oppressed country fighting against powerful “imperialist oppressors”. The “just war” against an “oppressor” seeking to impose its will on others removes political, military or moral limits on strategic choices and the use of force is considered legitimate. The Chinese attempts to change

The impact of Sino-centric cultural prominence on the Chinese strategic culture and a desire to return to, and restore, its supremacy in space, has had a large impact on the direction in which the Chinese space programme is developing.

138. Yanping, n. 46, p. 128.

While it is true that the development of the Chinese space programme may have been influenced by geo-political realities and pragmatic strategic choices, what matters is the impact of culture in shaping those choices.

the space regime either through multilateral negotiations via the UN or by demonstrating offensive capabilities is a reflection of the nature of changing circumstances, and exploiting changes in strategic opportunities (*quan bien*). The just war also provides for justification for all actions in rhetorical terms. Further, the Chinese belief in the righteousness of the cause and interpretation of even a preemptive use of force (active defence), especially in a “just war” as “defensive” can explain the development of offensive capabilities by the Chinese in space.

CONCLUSION

The emergence of China onto the world stage and its perceived assertive behaviour has brought the motivations of the Chinese leadership behind their decisions into sharp focus. The anti-satellite test conducted by China in 2007 focussed the world’s attention on the Chinese space programme and many analysts have attempted to explain the rationale behind the Chinese actions in pure strategic, rationale terms. For a country as vast and complex as China, it would be incorrect to underestimate the influence of culture on strategic thought. The Chinese strategic culture has been shaped by a long, continuous civilisation, centrality of the “Middle Kingdom,” recent historical experiences and ideology. The strategic culture shaping the Chinese strategic choices comprises a realist world-view and willingness to use force as a policy option.

While it is true that the development of the Chinese space programme may have been influenced by geo-political realities and pragmatic strategic choices, what matters is the impact of culture in shaping those choices. A brief look into the Chinese space programme from the cultural prism makes it evident that the programme bears an indelible impression of the *parabellum* strategic culture. The initial development of the Chinese space programme shows distinct characteristics of the realist strategic thought

shaped by the threat perceptions of the Chinese elites and influenced by their deep mistrust of foreigners. The programme has shown a remarkable resilience, regardless of political, economic, or social forces operating at different times in history. The major underlying theme of the development of the Chinese space programme in the present times is national prestige, to shake off the memory and image of a humiliated China and to achieve its rightful place in the community of nations. The space programme represents the rebirth of China as "*the Celestial Kingdom*," this time in the practical as well as figurative sense and its emergence as a space power cements its status in the post-modern age. The Chinese belief in self-help has led the Chinese space programme to be a strategic part in developing its *comprehensive national power*. While the Chinese space programme does show distinctive impressions of the various factors influencing the Chinese strategic culture, it is not the argument that the future development of the Chinese space programme can or should even be attempted to be predicted on the basis of purely cultural influences, for the one thing that has the most influence on the Chinese strategic culture is the concept of absolute flexibility.

DEFEATING PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR STRATEGY

MANPREET SETHI

Nearly three thousand years ago, Sun Tzu had said that in order to defeat a country, it is not necessary or even enough to defeat its armed forces. The key to the adversary's real defeat lies in trouncing its strategy. While this dictum has stood the test of time, it becomes even more applicable when nuclear weapons enter inter-state relations. In such a situation, it is practically impossible to *defeat* the adversary's military *without suffering grave consequences yourself* and, hence, the need to address the adversary's strategy in such a manner that one's objectives are met without allowing the adversary's threat of use of nuclear weapons to come into play.

It is natural that once a country acquires nuclear weapons, it strives for establishing credible deterrence that can allow it to pursue its national interests without the fear of nuclear coercion or blackmail. At the same time, it is also true that nuclear weapons enable a more risk prone state to undertake provocative acts against a status quo nation by projecting the threat of escalation to the nuclear level. It is for this reason that the latter class of nuclear weapons possessing nations are cautious, sometimes overly so, in the use of military force, lest the situation spins out of control and leads to an inadvertent and unwanted escalation.

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Gen Mirza Aslam Beg, former Chief of the Army Staff wrote, "Oxygen is basic to life, and one does not debate its desirability... nuclear deterrence has assumed that life-saving property for Pakistan."

In order to avoid, or at least minimise such risks, the country that faces the threat of being provoked by a nuclear armed state must devote careful consideration to the manner in which the *strategy of the adversary can be defeated*. All elements of state power, including the military component, have to be intelligently employed in order to make the 'use' – both political and military – of the adversary's nuclear weapon redundant.

This challenge stands starkly before India that faces an adventure prone and hostile nation in a nuclear armed Pakistan. Resentful since its independence of the fact that it "started its independent career as a weak nation,"¹ and for which it blames India, Pakistan has spent the last six decades looking for ways to equalise the perceived power asymmetry with India. This has been done in three ways: one, through alliance building with the USA and China and exploiting their equation with India to enhance Pakistan's own strategic relevance; two, through the acquisition – overtly or clandestinely – of modern conventional and nuclear weaponry; and third, through the use of proxy actors to wage terrorism against India to cause greater and greater damage to the Indian political and socio-economic fabric to keep the nation unsettled.

However, it is in the acquisition of nuclear weapons that Pakistan has found the best guarantee of meeting its objective of 'cutting India down to size', without having to run the risk of confronting a superior conventional military even while indulging in acts of proxy terrorism. It is no secret that Pakistan holds its nuclear weapons as the ultimate guarantor of national survival. Tellingly, in fact, Gen Mirza Aslam Beg, former Chief of the Army Staff of Pakistan had avidly brought this out in one of his writings in 1994. In an article appropriately entitled "Pakistan's Nuclear Imperatives," he

1. Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, *The Armed Forces of Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 34.

wrote, "Oxygen is basic to life, and one does not debate its desirability... nuclear deterrence has assumed that life-saving property for Pakistan."²

This article examines how Pakistan's nuclear strategy is used to provide the nation with 'oxygen' while seeking to debilitate India. Only by understanding the country's strategy, can India hope to craft its own set of measures that can defeat it. In fact, given the presence of nuclear weapons in both nations, a decisive military defeat cannot be envisaged without a huge loss to own self. How best, then, can India secure its national interests and bring about a change in Pakistan's policy behaviour? What kind of actions must India take? What type of military operations are possible in the presence of nuclear weapons? New Delhi is required to make a cost benefit analysis, sooner rather than later, while answering these questions to address the challenge posed by a nuclear Pakistan. The article is an attempt in this direction.

UNDERSTANDING PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR STRATEGY

Pakistan's long-standing hostility against India and the sub-conventional conflict through terrorism that it has waged now for the last nearly two decades is not a secret. Its intentions and the concomitant build-up of nuclear and conventional military capability, as also the terrorist infrastructure meant for waging the proxy war against India, is today openly acknowledged by its military leadership as also by the United States.³ In fact, while Pakistan has followed a strategy of covert warfare from the time of its creation in 1947, the acts of terrorism acquired a new lease of life, pace and intensity once the Pakistan Army became confident of its nuclear weapons capability.

The use of terror is an accepted strategy in Pakistani military thinking. Brig S. K. Malik (Retd), in his *Quranic Concept of War*, a book for which Gen Zia, then the Chief Martial Law Administrator, wrote the foreword,

2. Gen Mirza Aslam Beg, "Pakistan's Nuclear Imperatives", *National Development and Security*, vol. 3, no. 10, November 1994, pp.29-41.

3. Former Pakistani President and Chief of Army Staff accepted this in an interview in November 2010 and US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, too acknowledged the fact in the same month.

Pakistan uses this very risk of escalation to achieve two objectives: one, to deter India from using its superior conventional military capability in response to the proxy acts of terrorism executed by groups and, two, to magnify the fears of the international community.

identified terror as a basic tenet of Quranic military strategy. According to him, the Holy Quran “enjoins us to prepare ourselves for war to the utmost in order to *strike terror into the heart of the enemies*, known or hidden, while guarding ourselves from being terror-stricken by the enemy.”⁴ It is his advice that “during peacetime, our ‘Will’ must find its expression through ‘Preparation’. The war of preparation being waged by us during peace is vastly more important than the active war.” And creating terror to destroy the ‘will’ of the adversary is part of this preparation strategy. As Malik says, “We should enter upon the ‘war of muscles’

having already won the ‘war of will’... Once a condition of terror into the opponent’s heart is obtained, hardly anything is left to be achieved. It is the point where the means and the end meet and merge. Terror is not a means of imposing a decision upon the enemy; it is *the decision* we wish to impose upon him.”⁵ Premised on such logic, Pakistan seeks to use proxy actors to wreak physical havoc and terror in India, while also using the threat of use of nuclear weapons to psychologically terrorise the decision-making processes.

Clearly, therefore, Pakistan’s nuclear weapons are less for ‘nuclear’ deterrence and more for providing immunity to the country to wage other modes of conflict. Deterring the nuclear weapons of India is the least important function of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons. They are meant more for deterring a conventional attack which could possibly escalate from a border skirmish, given the unsettled border issues between India and Pakistan or might be triggered by a terrorist incident. The escalation of such a conflict to the nuclear level also remains theoretically possible since deliverable nuclear weapons are available with both nations.

4. Brigadier S. K. Malik, *The Quranic Concept of War* (New Delhi: Himalayan Books, 1986), p. 58. Emphasis added.
 5. *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59. Emphasis in original.

Pakistan, in fact, uses this very risk of escalation to achieve two objectives: one, to deter India from using its superior conventional military capability in response to the proxy acts of terrorism executed by groups sponsored and trained by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI); and, two, to magnify the fears of the international community by suggesting the possibility of a nuclear exchange in the region. The Pakistan military works on the assumption that a 'concerned' international community (especially the USA) would restrain India from using military force. Therefore, its nuclear weapons, in Pakistani perception, give it the immunity to execute its strategy of bleeding India through a thousand cuts, while curbing India's response to merely dressing its wounds without being able to strike at the hand making the injuries.

By pursuing such a strategy, Pakistan is engaging in a policy of brinkmanship. It tries to deter not a nuclear but a conventional response from India by projecting the risk of loss of control over the situation. Thomas Schelling explained this as the suggestion of "a threat that leaves something to chance." In his words, "If brinkmanship means anything, it means manipulating the shared risk of war. It means exploiting the danger that somebody may inadvertently go over the brink, dragging the other with him."⁶ He graphically described this with the analogy of two cars coming towards an intersection from different directions. As one of the drivers accelerates his vehicle, he gives a signal to the other of his determination to cross first. This places the onus of the decision on the other side to either slow down to let the other pass, or to ignore the signal and carry on at the same speed even at the risk of a collision that could be equally harmful to either side. If the second driver slows down, the first has successfully managed to deter him by his threat of collision.

It is easy to apply this to the Pakistan-India equation in order to understand the working of deterrence. Pakistan may be compared to the first driver who accelerates his speed (or indulges in provocative acts of sub-conventional conflict) and then seeks to deter India from speeding ahead (or launching a military response) by suggesting the possibility of collision

6. Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 98-99.

if both continue to head in the same direction at the same pace. Finding the cost of collision too high, India has, in the past, slowed its vehicle or refrained from a military response. This has led to the impression, certainly in the Pakistan Army and also in some circles in India, that a bigger and stronger country has been deterred.

Herman Kahn explained this behaviour of Pakistan through his theory of “rationality of irrationality.”⁷ An irrational threat, such as of a collision or a war, can become rational and, hence, successful in imposing deterrence, if it achieves its objective. Pakistan employs the threat of an all-out nuclear war, which is irrational because of the damage that it would cause to itself in the process, if India was not deterred. But when Pakistan’s irrational threat achieves its aim, it apparently comes to be perceived as a rational act.

This is a strategy of deterrence that nations use in a situation where both have a credible second strike capability. In fact, this concept of deterrence came up precisely to answer the dilemma that nuclear armed states faced when they felt that their nuclear weapons would be of no use since the availability of the same capability with the other side cancelled out the possibility of imposing deterrence by threatening the use of the weapon. The answer to this problem was then found in following a policy of brinkmanship. And, Pakistan is putting this to good use by suggesting that any response from India to the ‘proxy’ acts of terrorism would automatically lead to an escalatory spiral and result in a nuclear exchange.

The international community appears to accept this theory, and Pakistan’s behaviour, at face value. Consequently, it urges restraint on India and presses for the resolution of the points of discord between the two as the only long-term means of establishing strategic stability in the region. For instance, in one of the many recent assessments of the danger from Pakistan’s nuclear stockpile, one analyst concludes that while the arsenal is “largely safe and secure during peacetime,” the greater danger lies in when Pakistan “might place its nuclear forces on alert *during a crisis with India.*”⁸

7. Herman Kahn, *On Thermonuclear War*, pp. 291-295.

8. Jeffrey Lewis, “Managing the Danger from Pakistan’s Nuclear Stockpile”, *National Security Studies Program Policy Paper*, New America Foundation, November 2010. Emphasis added.

In analysis, such as this, and several such abound, especially in Western writings, greater emphasis is placed on averting a crisis with India. Interestingly, the onus for this is assumed to be on 'rational' India to resolve the issues that bedevil the bilateral relationship so that 'irrational' Pakistan does not have the pretext to push the region over the nuclear brink. The point that is missed in this interpretation is that there is great rationality in Pakistan's irrationality. Pakistan holds out its threat of nuclear use after a careful calculation

that its ability to successfully deter is actually derived from its image of being a determined deterrer, as viewed by those being deterred.

Of course, it must be conceded that the dangers from a mated, ready to use arsenal are enormous. But, the assumptions underlying the belief that Pakistan will ready its nuclear arsenal at the very outset of a crisis and reach quickly for the nuclear trigger are questionable on at least three grounds. The first issue to be debated is that every crisis with India will lead to Pakistan automatically making its nuclear arsenal ready for use. This is the impression that Pakistan has managed to create amongst the international community. It plays up the risk of automatic escalation to deter India, as explained earlier in the paper. The second notion that must be questioned is that Pakistan's hostility for India will end with a resolution of all issues of discord. This may not be true given that for the Pakistan Army, which is the primary and only decision-maker on the nature of relationship with India, the *idea of the issues* of conflict rather than their resolution, is more useful. Nothing, except a change in its own thinking, perceptions, ideology and purpose can reduce its apparent sense of discomfort with a geographically larger, economically buoyant, religiously secular and pluralist society. These are the real issues that are in conflict with the idea of Pakistan. Therefore, unless Pakistan changes its view of India, the points of conflict remain only symptoms of the problem, not the problem itself. The third debatable assumption is that Pakistan is 'irrational' enough to use the

The assumptions underlying the belief that Pakistan will ready its nuclear arsenal at the very outset of a crisis and reach quickly for the nuclear trigger are questionable.

nuclear weapons in easy, early use and thereby bring upon itself a sure state of nuclear decimation. Pakistan's military, that exercises complete control over the country's nuclear strategy, is a professional, rational force. In fact, it is rational enough to understand the benefits or uses of irrationality for enhancing the credibility of deterrence. The consequences of a possible first use of its nuclear weapon against India would be well known to the Pakistan Army. However splendid it might make its first strike, it is a certainty that it could neither be disarming nor decapitating for India. Nuclear retaliation, therefore, is an assured certainty and the consequences cannot stand up to any test of a rational cost-benefit analysis. Well aware of this reality, but yet keen to use the shield of the nuclear weapon to carry out proxy acts of terrorism against India, Pakistan has found the perfect foil in the use of 'rationality of irrationality.' As was stated by one analyst, "Islamabad is convinced that the mere *threat of approaching the nuclear threshold* will prevent India from seizing the strategic initiative and military dominance of events, permitting Pakistan to escalate the crisis at will without the fear of *meaningful Indian retribution.*"⁹ Even amidst the fighting in Kargil, Pakistani military leaders were convinced that nuclear deterrence afforded the country near-assured immunity against a forceful conventional response because of the risk of nuclear conflagration. By suggesting this linkage, the army was sure it could continue its strategy of proxy war to raise the military and economic costs for India without endangering its own security.

THE DILEMMA BEFORE INDIA

In the face of such a nuclear strategy, the impression gaining ground within India is that New Delhi is being deterred from responding to the threat from Pakistan. The lack of tangible results from the response to the attack on the Indian Parliament in 2001, and the lack of response to the many acts of terrorism since then, especially the Mumbai attack in November 2008, have added to this sense of failure of Indian strategy in contrast to a successful use of Pakistan's nuclear weapons for furthering its objectives.

9. Yossef Bodansky, "Pakistan's Nuclear Brinkmanship," Freeman Centre for Strategic Studies, Israel. Available at <http://www.freeman.org>. Emphasis added.

The challenge before India, therefore, is to defeat the Pakistani nuclear strategy, certainly not by the use of nuclear weapons, but by making these weapons useless for Pakistan. Indian execution of diplomatic, and if necessary military moves, has to be undertaken in such a manner that the nuclear weapons of Pakistan are not allowed to enter the equation. Pakistan claims that this is not possible. But India has demonstrated in the case of Kargil that this is viable. More such options, and if necessary, demonstration of these would be needed to dispel the notion that Pakistan has managed to create of immunity against use of force.

India can respond to Pakistan's strategy of covert warfare under the nuclear shadow in three ways.

India can respond to Pakistan's strategy of covert warfare under the nuclear shadow in three ways. One of these, which has largely been followed since 1989, is to remain defensive and respond to the terrorist strikes by fencing borders to block the entry of terrorists, who are increasingly well trained and well equipped, into the country or intercepting as many of them as possible on Indian soil. Sometimes, timely intelligence inputs and necessary action have been able to prevent a terrorist strike, but at other times, innocents in different cities and locations have borne the brunt of surprise and brutal attacks.

A second way of handling the situation would be to reach out to those constituencies in Pakistan that are willing to be reasonable, that harbour no animosity nor perceive an existential threat from India and are willing to change the course of Pakistan's behaviour from a largely negative to a positive line of action. Unfortunately, these do not hold much sway in national decision-making and, hence, despite India's attempts in this direction, no great results are evident and not much can be expected unless there is substantive change in the domestic polity of the country.

A third way of dealing with the situation for India would be to act more proactively in order to impose punishment not merely on the proxy actors but on the manipulators of these proxies. This would inevitably mean striking at the hand that feeds the terrorists. It is well established today that this involves the highest seats of military authority in Pakistan. Can

India punish them and if yes, how? This question needs to be carefully considered and answered before another 26/11 type of attack takes place again on India.

As is evident, the Indian government has been engaged in the first and the second types of responses in dealing with Pakistan's nuclear strategy. While these have to necessarily continue, there are limits to the success that can be obtained by purely following these approaches. Fighting terrorism defensively can never bring about a change in Pakistan's behaviour. For Rawalpindi, the seat of military power in Pakistan, proxy war is a low cost strategy that pays sufficient enough dividends for the country. It certainly falls in the category of 'preparation' that Brig Malik referred to in his book and which he emphasised was necessary to weaken the adversary by breaking its faith – in the system, in the government and in the country's capability and will. Meanwhile, by officially exercising deniability, Pakistan is able to shake off any responsibility for the acts of terrorism. At the same time, by projecting a low nuclear threshold, it averts the possibility of a conventional conflict with India. It is a win-win situation for Pakistan either way and India's muted response can never hope to make a dent in Pakistan's strategy of covert war. In fact, given that it can now execute it from behind the skirt of its nuclear weapons, the strategy can continue into eternity.

How, then, must the Pakistani strategy be defeated? Greater thought needs to be invested to put into action the third response strategy listed above which has been ignored because of the fear of entering into a conflict that may result in inadvertent escalation. To avoid being self-deterred, it is imperative that the military and political leadership in India is absolutely cognisant with the nature of the shadow that the presence of nuclear weapons casts on the use of military force.

It must firstly be acknowledged that nuclear weapons do impose constraints on the range of military options and the nature of coercive force that adversaries can indulge in. Obviously, weapons of such enormous devastation potential should only be expected to have a deep impact on warfare. And, not in ways that armies are traditionally used to, which is by integrating new weapons into war-fighting strategy. The integration of

nuclear weapons into military strategy is required to be undertaken with a different sensibility and understanding. In fact, the very nature of the weapon – its ability to inflict such high damage – becomes a limiting factor on its own use since nations are forced to recalculate the value of the objective of war and the potential cost to be borne in the process. Every rational cost-benefit analysis of a nuclear war, especially when both sides have such weapons, weighs against nuclear use. In the times when nuclear weapons had not yet entered inter-state equations, nations could go to war if they attached enough value to something they were willing to risk damage and destruction for.

But with the kind of destruction that nuclear weapons promise, nations are compelled to recalculate whether anything could qualify as being valuable enough to risk a nuclear exchange.

Therefore, the high destruction capability of the nuclear weapon becomes a limiting factor for not only its own use in conflict but also for the use of other military capabilities in its presence. Nuclear weapons change the complexion and character of conventional wars. The fact that India had acknowledged this reality was evident in the manner in which it responded to the covert occupation of Indian territory in Kargil in 1999. Even at the risk of incurring higher casualties and severe operational challenges, the Indian political leadership imposed strict constraints on the military to limit its theatre of operations to own side of the Line of Control (LoC). Speaking only a few months after the end of the conflict, on January 05, 2000, at a National Seminar on “The Challenges of Limited War: Parameters and Options”, then Defence Minister George Fernandes made this clear when he said, “Nuclear weapons did not make war obsolete; they simply imposed another dimension on the way warfare was conducted... conventional war

Defence Minister George Fernandes made this clear when he said, “Nuclear weapons did not make war obsolete; they simply imposed another dimension on the way warfare was conducted... conventional war remained feasible, though with definite limitations, if escalation across the nuclear threshold was to be avoided.”

remained feasible, though with definite limitations, if escalation across the nuclear threshold was to be avoided.”

Two major points can be drawn from this statement: one, that war, especially in the case of an unstable relationship such as India-Pakistan, cannot be ruled out. While it may be true that the presence of nuclear weapons has considerably pushed up India's threshold of tolerance, and so many acts of provocation go unanswered, or inadequately so, it remains equally true that even a high tolerance level can be breached and India might be reaching that level. Post-26/11, the voices demanding action were many and loud. In case another such incident was to take place, it would place immense pressure on the Indian government of the day to undertake some sort of retaliation. Pakistan's projection of a low nuclear threshold and the risk of a nuclear exchange might not then deter. Outbreak of hostilities remains a possibility.

The second aspect of the former Defence Minister's statement that deserves attention is his description of the nature of the conventional war that must be executed in the presence of nuclear weapons. It would have to be undertaken with 'definite limitations'. The challenge, then, for India is to conceptually contour and war-game the conduct of such a military operation. This is important for three reasons: one, to disabuse Pakistan of the assumption that its nuclear weapons have tied India's hands and provided Islamabad, or rather Rawalpindi, with a *carte blanche* for provocative acts; two, to turnaround the widely prevalent view within India that the country is unable to exercise credible deterrence against a smaller and weaker nation; and third, to expose the brinkmanship inherent in Pakistani strategy to the international community.

CONVENTIONAL WAR IN THE PRESENCE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

The conduct of a limited conventional war in the presence of nuclear weapons is a challenging proposition demanding adequate thought to operational details as well as the necessary investments in immediate and long-term military capabilities. During the Cold War, it was presumed that the breakout of any conventional hostility between the two superpowers

would rapidly escalate to the nuclear level. Given this presumption, the focus then shifted to the very conduct of *nuclear war* itself and on issues specific to such war-fighting, e.g the use of tactical nuclear weapons, efficacy of first strike or counter-strike doctrines, calculation of numbers of nuclear weapons to prevail and claim victory, etc. Caught in this maze of issues, little attention was paid to the conduct of conventional war in the presence of nuclear weapons. Therefore, the task before India is unique.

India can make the nuclear weapons of Pakistan ineffective and unusable by preparing for the use of military force in a manner that is punitive and yet not threatening enough for Pakistan to reach for its nuclear weapon. Or, in other words, resort to the same tactic of 'salami slicing' that Pakistan uses. Pakistan's plan in Kargil in May 1999 was to seize strategic pieces of territory and then compel the Indian government to negotiate the status of Kashmir. The Pakistan Army assumed that India would find its military options checkmated by the presence of a nuclear overhang and would be compelled to negotiate despite facing the prospect of losing a slice of its territory. In the case of India's use of this strategy, the 'salami' would not be territory but Pakistani assets and infrastructure that are used to inflict damage upon India. Nine caveats, however, need to be kept in mind in the conduct of such operations:

- At the very outset of the conflict, Pakistan will try to cast the shadow of nuclear weapons. Its intention would be to threaten nuclear use to deter India from escalating its conventional strategy while also indirectly summoning international help to bring an early end to the hostilities.
- Pakistan's strategic modernisation – in the numbers and yields of warheads and range and accuracies of delivery systems – is aimed at equipping itself with improved options at each level of warfare and to shift the escalation burden onto India. Therefore, India needs to maintain a high level of conventional capability in order to leave escalation to Pakistan but gain leverage from its superior conventional forces.
- Pakistan's relationship with China does cast another, and indeed a very ominous shadow, on the Indo-Pak equation. Some recent statements of Indian military leaders have referred to the possibility of having to face

Air power provides obvious benefits in this regard while land forces offer little advantage in terms of escalation control.

a two-front war. Theoretically, such a contingency cannot be dismissed and the country's military modernisation must cater for it. However, going by past experience, it is evident that China has not really come to the military aid of Pakistan in an Indo-Pak conflict. During Kargil, in fact, the Chinese advice for then Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was to withdraw from the heights. The Chinese are astute enough to realise the limits of the benefits that

Pakistan can bring to them as far as constraining India is concerned. They would, or should, calculate that providing military and moral support to Pakistan could become counter-productive beyond a point since it would push India towards greater military build-up which would also impinge on China's own threat perceptions. Therefore, the triangular relationship must be carefully examined for a correct assessment of the situation.

- India's response will call for a restrained and calibrated use of military force instead of an all out employment of military capabilities. Militaries the world over loath the idea of the political leadership placing limits on the use of resources available with them. But in the conduct of military operations in the presence of nuclear weapons, the most appropriate instruments of force will have to be chosen by the military through joint planning and execution in order to enable the effective utilisation of those arms of the military that offer maximum possibility of highly calibrated escalation, and even more importantly, the ability to de-escalate. Therefore, use of Special Forces (specially raised and trained for the purpose), or air power, or even maritime power with the requisite capabilities would be preferred options because they enjoy, in varying measure, the advantage of flexibility of employment, calibrated control over military engagement, and, hence, over escalation. Air power provides obvious benefits in this regard while land forces offer little advantage in terms of escalation control. Once engaged in combat, the army cannot be disengaged unless one side either concedes defeat or

a ceasefire is agreed to. Meanwhile, the use of air power demonstrates resolve while simultaneously offering flexibility of disengagement, thereby facilitating retention of control with own self. Therefore, for the effective, precise application of force, it is necessary that an objective analysis be made of the advantages and limitations of every Service in different scenarios. Such issues need to be adequately considered and deliberated upon in peace-time in order to provide rapid and ready options during crisis.

- The contemporary belief gaining ground is that wars of the future would be short and intense. However, this kind of a military operation might actually play out in slow motion, with small gains and long gaps. The idea would be to “affect the opponent’s will, not crush it” as Henry Kissinger had once articulated.
- This will call for precise and well-articulated political and military objectives to be framed at every level of conflict. These must not only be well conveyed to the domestic audience but also to the enemy for two essential purposes: one, to provide a clear indication to the adversary that the goals of the operation are strictly limited and, hence, there are no intentions to breach its stated or perceived nuclear thresholds. This obviously would reduce the potential for miscalculations and misperceptions. Secondly, the clarity in objectives would also enable better management of domestic expectations, thereby providing the much needed legitimacy and support for the operations. Total military victory defined as occupation and conquest is not a possibility and should not be the objective of such an operation.
- The strategy will call for diplomatic and military synergy for its successful execution. For instance, in the case of Kargil, even as the Indian military moved on the ground to oust the infiltrators, attempts were simultaneously mounted to diplomatically isolate Pakistan and expose its offensive designs to alter the status of the LoC.
- It will call for tremendous show of resolve by the political leadership – both in the government and in the opposition. Sophisticated signalling would have to be employed to convey the determination of the political

It is necessary that governments invest enough thought and action during peace-time to raising the awareness and understanding of the public to gain its support and legitimacy for actions during moments of crisis.

leadership to support the military operations. This would essentially enhance the credibility of deterrence. Meanwhile, a lack of resolve would almost certainly lead to deterrence failure. In fact, display of military preparedness in the absence of political resolve sends wrong signals to the adversary, thereby degrading deterrence at every level. Therefore, the politico-military action must together exhibit enough decisiveness from the beginning of the action when conventional operations are still at lower levels so that a miscalculation of resolve by the adversary does not tempt him to take escalatory actions. The

deterred, in estimating the seriousness of the threat made against him, would be looking for signs of hesitation. If he senses any lack of firmness in the deterrers, escalation would be far quicker, and more difficult to control.

- Political resolve in a democracy will be strongly influenced by public opinion. Where public opinion is divided or hesitant about the carrying out of the threat, the hand of the government would be weakened and the threat would lose its effectiveness. On the other hand, where public opinion demands that a threat of use of military force be carried out, the government's hand to take action will be forced. Sensitivity to public opinion is, therefore, liable to limit the government's freedom of action. This makes it all the more necessary that governments invest enough thought and action during peace-time to raising the awareness and understanding of the public to gain its support and legitimacy for actions during moments of crisis.

CONCLUSION

Given the nature of India's relationship with a nuclear-armed Pakistan, the possibility of conventional war cannot be obviated. However, the Indian military faces the challenge of planning the conduct of conventional

operations in the presence of nuclear weapons in such a manner that India's superior conventional capability is not checkmated by the adversary's nuclear weapons.

India will be able to deter and defeat the Pakistani nuclear strategy of fomenting sub-conventional conflict only if it can hold out the threat of executing a limited conventional war with conviction. Projection of determination, at both the military and political levels, would be of utmost necessity to convince the opponent. Meanwhile, the execution of this threat in circumstances that have been envisaged for action such as in case of a Mumbai II would serve two purposes – raise the credibility of deterrence for the future and instill confidence in itself.

To achieve this, the war must follow a different set of rules. A classical war envisaging occupation of large swaths of territory or a *blitzkrieg* to cause high military attrition is sure to breach the adversary's nuclear threshold, especially when it perceives itself as the weaker conventional power. If nuclear deterrence has to be maintained, then the military has to conduct the war in such a manner that the risk of escalation to the nuclear level is minimised.

Engaging in a limited war where the level of destruction is carefully calibrated on the basis of precise and clearly articulated military and political objectives that do not threaten the survival of the state has to be the *sine qua non* of such operations. Military strikes restricted in depth into enemy territory and spread over a geographical expanse, or deeper, narrow thrusts offer one way of staying well away from the enemy's perceived/expressed red lines. Action and attacks must be conducted in a way as to place the onus of escalation of hostilities on the adversary while retaining the initiative with oneself. This obviously calls for meticulous conceptualisation, planning and preparation.

Normally, armies do not like constraints on the use of their resources. They consider achievement of victory in war as the final and singular objective and all their weaponry is to be used as a potent tool in the pursuit of this goal. However, an all out war when both sides have nuclear weapons would be self-defeating, if not downright foolish.

The conduct of a limited conventional war between two nuclear-armed nations of unequal capabilities (conventional, nuclear, and of pain infliction and absorption) would be a new experience for the world. However, the challenge for India lies in nullifying the advantage that the adversary seeks to exploit from the linkage between nuclear deterrence and conventional war.

CHINA'S AIRCRAFT CARRIER AMBITIONS

NAN LI AND CHRISTOPHER WEUVE

This article will address two major analytical questions. First, what are the necessary and sufficient conditions for China to acquire aircraft carriers? Second, what are the major implications if China does acquire aircraft carriers?

Existing analyses on China's aircraft carrier ambitions are quite insightful but also somewhat inadequate and must, therefore, be updated. Some, for instance, argue that with the advent of the Taiwan issue as China's top threat priority by late 1996 and the retirement of Liu Huaqing as Vice Chair of China's Central Military Commission (CMC) in 1997, aircraft carriers are no longer considered vital.¹ In that view, China does not require aircraft carriers to capture sea and air superiority in a war over Taiwan, and China's most powerful carrier proponent (Liu) can no longer influence relevant decision-making. Other scholars suggest that China may well acquire small-deck aviation platforms, such as helicopter carriers, to fulfill secondary

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1. See Ian Storey and You Ji, "China's Aircraft Carrier Ambitions: Seeking Truth from Rumors," *Naval War College Review*, 57, no. 1, Winter 2004, pp. 77-93.

security missions. These missions include naval diplomacy, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and anti-submarine warfare.² The present authors conclude, however, that China aircraft carrier ambitions may be larger than the current literature has predicted. Moreover, the major implications of China's acquiring aircraft carriers may need to be explored more carefully in order to inform appropriate reactions on the part of the United States and other Asia-Pacific naval powers.

This article updates major changes in the four major conditions that are necessary and would be largely sufficient for China to acquire aircraft carriers: leadership endorsement, financial affordability, a relatively concise naval strategy that defines the missions of carrier operations, and availability of requisite technologies. We argue that in spite of some unresolved issues, these changes suggest that China is likely to acquire medium-sized aircraft carriers in the medium term for "near seas" missions and for gaining operational experience, so that it can acquire large carriers for "far seas" operations in the long term.

These four major conditions, or variables, can be either dependent or independent, depending on the circumstances. Generally speaking, central leadership endorsement of the idea of acquiring aircraft carriers may depend on whether the required money and technologies are available and whether an appropriate naval strategy is formulated. There are some circumstances, however, in which central leadership endorsement may, in fact, make money and technologies more readily available and appropriate strategy more forthcoming.³ Because of such variation in the relationship among these four major conditions (variables), each will be discussed separately.

The article has five sections. The first four examine changes in the four major conditions of leadership endorsement, financial affordability,

2. See Andrew S. Erickson and Andrew R. Wilson, "China's Aircraft Carrier Dilemma," *Naval War College Review*, 59, no. 4, Autumn 2006, pp. 13-45.

3. Besides these two types of circumstances, there is one very exceptional circumstance in which the central leadership may endorse a particular naval platform in spite of lack of money and appropriate technologies and naval strategy. An example is Mao Zedong's endorsement of China's strategic ballistic-missile submarine programme in the mid-1960s, which proved to have very little operational value but incurred tremendous cost. This article, however, will discuss necessary and sufficient conditions under more normal circumstances of the first two types.

appropriate naval strategy, and requisite technologies. The concluding section discusses the major implications if China actually acquires aircraft carriers.

LEADERSHIP ENDORSEMENT

Liu Huaqing, the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) commander 1982-88 and a CMC member (and its Vice Chair, 1992-97) from 1988 to 1997, strongly advocated carrier operations;⁴ however, this idea was not endorsed by members of the central civilian leadership, like Jiang Zemin. Lack of funding and requisite technologies may have played a role, as also the relatively low dependence of China's economy on external sources of energy and raw materials. More important, however, the proposal contradicted the "new security concept" Jiang endorsed in 1997, which highlighted "soft" approaches to China's maritime as well as land neighbours. This concept contributed significantly to China's signing of a Declaration of a Code of Conduct over the South China Sea in 2002 and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in 2003 with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members, as well as the founding of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in 2001.⁵ Because of these political and diplomatic initiatives, the primary missions Jiang assigned to the People's Liberation Army (PLA) during his reign were rather narrow and limited, confined primarily to the defence of national sovereignty; the integrity of China's territorial land, air, and waters; and deterrence of Taiwan from declaring formal independence.

Hu Jintao succeeded Jiang as the Chinese Communist Party General Secretary in 2002 and became the CMC chair in 2004. He has required the PLA to fulfill more expansive and externally oriented missions that were absent in Jiang's era: to secure China's newly emerging interests in outer, maritime, and electromagnetic space, and to contribute to world peace through international peace-keeping and humanitarian relief. Hu has also

4. See Liu Huaqing, *Liu Huaqing huiyilu* [Liu Huaqing's Memoirs] (Beijing: Liberation Army Press, 2004), pp. 477-481.

5. This organisation includes China, Russia, and the Central Asian countries that separated from the former Soviet Union.

endorsed a “far seas operations” concept for the PLAN, one that implies some new level of power-projection capability.⁶

Such a change is understandable for two reasons, both due to the recent years of rapid economic growth. First, China has begun to develop a stronger sense of vulnerability stemming from its growing dependence on external energy and raw materials, and it has become more interested in the sea-lanes that bring in these resources. Second, investments overseas and the number of its citizens working there are both growing. These factors should have made the idea of acquiring aircraft carriers more acceptable to the central civilian leadership following Jiang’s retirement.

There are several indicators that this idea has been endorsed by the central civilian leadership. On March 6, 2007, a PLA Lieutenant General revealed to the media at the annual National People’s Congress that a project to develop aircraft carriers was proceeding smoothly. Ten days later, the Minister of China’s Commission of Science and Technology in National Defence, Zhang Yuchuan, stated that China would build its own aircraft carriers and that preparation was well under way.⁷ More recently, a spokesperson of China’s Ministry of National Defence, Maj. Gen. Qian Lihua, claimed that China has every right to acquire an aircraft carrier.⁸ But more important, China’s Defence Minister, Gen. Liang Guanglie, recently told the visiting Japanese Defence Minister, Yasukazu Hamada, that China will not remain forever the only major power without an aircraft carrier.⁹ All of these statements suggest that China has the intention to acquire aircraft carriers. These forthright comments on such a politically sensitive issue would have been impossible had they not been endorsed by the central Party leadership.¹⁰

6. Hu Jintao, as cited in Tang Fuquan and Wu Yi, “A Study of China’s Sea Defense Strategy,” *Zhongguo junshi kexue* [China Military Science], no. 5, 2007, p. 93.

7. See *Wen Wei Po* (Hong Kong), March 7, 2007; and *China Review News*, March 17, 2007, available at chinareviewnews.com.

8. “China Hints at Aircraft Carrier Project,” *Financial Times*, November 16, 2008; “Experts Defend Naval Rights,” *China Daily*, November 19, 2008.

9. See “China Confirms Intent to Build Aircraft Carrier,” *Agence France-Presse*, March 23, 2009.

10. According to informed sources in Guangzhou, at least one high-ranking PLAN officer from the South Sea Fleet was reprimanded and discharged for advocating in front of Jiang Zemin the development of aircraft carriers to handle the Spratlys issue. This had happened during one of Jiang’s inspection tours of the fleet.

FINANCIAL AFFORDABILITY

One major reason for China's past hesitation to acquire aircraft carriers was a lack of funding. When Mao proposed at a CMC meeting on June 21, 1958, to build "railways on the high seas"—ocean-going fleets of merchant ships escorted by aircraft carriers—China's defence budget was a mere Yuan/Renminbi (RMB) 5 billion. Of that, only RMB 1.5 billion could be allocated to weapons acquisition, and out of this share, the PLA Navy (PLAN) received less than RMB 200 million. A 1,600-ton Soviet-built Gordy-class destroyer cost RMB 30 million, and the PLAN could afford only four of them.¹¹

The carrier project was again placed on the policy agenda in the early 1970s, but financial constraints still prevented the initiation of a serious programme. From 1971 to 1982, China's annual defence budget averaged about RMB 17 billion. Out of less than RMB six billion allocated for weapons acquisition each year, the PLAN could expect to receive only several hundred million, whereas one Type 051 destroyer cost RMB 100 million. With the endorsement of Party leader Hua Guofeng in the late 1970s, China planned to acquire an 18,000-ton light aircraft carrier, either through import or co-production, and it was to carry the British Vertical/Short-Take-Off-and-Landing (V/STOL) Harrier aircraft. The project had to be scrapped, because the price asked by British suppliers was too high. Furthermore, Deng Xiaoping, succeeding Hua as the paramount leader, decided to cut defence spending in order to free up resources for the civilian economy.¹²

From the middle to the late 1980s, Liu Huaqing lobbied feverishly for carrier operations. He proposed feasibility studies in the Seventh Five-Year Plan (FYP), for 1991-95; research and development on key aspects of platform and aircraft in the Eighth FYP; and production in the early 2000s. His plan to acquire a medium-sized carrier for limited, air defence-dominant missions

11. See Lu Ting, "China's Finance Is Sufficient to Fulfill the 'Aircraft Carrier Dream,'" *Junshi wenzai* [Military Digest], no. 5, 2008, pp. 12-13.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Taking into consideration the lower labour and material costs in China, the cost of building a medium-sized, conventionally powered, 60,000-ton carrier similar to the Russian Kuznetsov class is likely to be above \$ 2 billion.

was shelved partly because of insufficient funding for air defence.¹³ While the defence budget had been increasing since the early 1990s, its growth could not catch up with the rising cost of aircraft carriers, as modern designs integrated more advanced aircraft, air defence systems, and electronics. Funding priority was instead given to developing submarines. By 2007, however, China's finances had improved remarkably, with government revenues reaching \$750 billion—lower than the \$2.6 trillion for the United States but higher than Japan's \$500 billion.

China's foreign exchange reserves now ranked first in the world, reaching \$1.4 trillion. As a result, China's annual formal defence budget had grown to \$46 billion (RMB 350.9 billion). According to the official estimate, about a third of China's formal defence budget, or \$15.3 billion that year, was used for weapons acquisition. Given that naval modernisation is currently a high priority, the PLAN is probably now receiving several billion dollars a year just for weapons acquisition, and this figure is likely to grow in the coming years.¹⁴ Aircraft carriers come in a wide variety of sizes, costs, and capabilities. Taking into consideration the

13. See, Liu Huaqing's Memoirs, p. 480; "Lay a Good Basis for Naval Arms and Equipment Modernization Construction" (speech delivered to the First Navy Conference on Armament and Technologies Work, on January 11, 1984), in *Liu Huaqing junshi wenxuan, shangjuan* [Selected Military Works of Liu Huaqing, Book One] (Beijing: Liberation Army Press, 2008), pp. 269-70; "Naval Strategy and Future Sea Operations" (report delivered at the National Defence University on April 29, 1986), in Selected Military Works, pp. 473, 477; and "Employ Navy Development Strategy to Guide Arms and Technologies Research and Development Work" (speech delivered to the Fourth Navy Conference on Armament and Technologies Work, on January 10, 1987), in Selected Military Works, pp. 522-23.

14. China's 2008 formal defence budget was \$57.229 billion (RMB 417.969 billion), a 17.6 percent increase from 2007. The figure had risen to \$70.3 billion (RMB 480.6 billion) for 2009, a 14.9 percent increase from the previous year. For 2008, government revenue had reached RMB 6.1317 trillion, or about \$897.76 billion, a 19.5 percent increase from the previous year. China's foreign exchange reserve had grown to \$1.95 trillion for the same year. See "China's Defense Budget to Grow 17.6% in 2008," Xinhua, March 4, 2008; Ministry of Finance, "A Report on 2008 Central and Local Budgetary Execution and Draft Budgetary Plan for 2009" (delivered to the National People's Congress), Xinhua, June 15, 2009; and "2008 Chinese Foreign Exchange Reserve Capital Stays Safe in General," Xinhua, March 13, 2009.

lower labour and material costs in China, the cost of building a medium-sized, conventionally powered, 60,000-ton carrier similar to the Russian Kuznetsov class is likely to be above \$ 2 billion.¹⁵ But that cost is just the start, as a carrier needs aircraft and escorts. A Russian Su-33 carrier-based combat aircraft costs \$50 million, so a carrier air wing of about 50 Su-33s, several Airborne Early-Warning (AEW) planes, and a number of Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) and search-and-rescue helicopters may cost more than \$3 billion. A Russian Sovremenny-class guided-missile destroyer costs about \$600 million, so an escort force consisting of a number of guided-missile destroyers, frigates, and supply ships may cost more than \$4 billion. That makes the likely total cost of one carrier battle group about \$10 billion; the price of two carrier battle groups, which is the number that China is likely to acquire, would be around \$20 billion. That cost, spread over a period of ten years of development, would constitute only a moderate proportion of the projected naval weapons acquisition budget during that time. The annual cost for regular training, maintenance, repairs, and fuel for two carrier battle groups can be estimated at about 10 percent of the construction cost of the carrier, or \$200 million for each of the two battle groups. This is based on a useful rule of thumb derived from US experience. Such a figure can be readily covered by another third of the annual naval budget, which is specifically allocated for such a purpose. This proportion, like the weapons acquisition proportion, is also likely to grow over the years as the defence budget grows because of rapid economic growth.¹⁶

NAVAL STRATEGY

Leadership endorsement and financial affordability are necessary for China to acquire aircraft carriers, but they are not sufficient. A fairly concise naval strategy that defines the missions of the carrier battle groups is also needed.

15. The Kuznetsov class can also be considered a large-sized carrier, comparable to the US Kitty Hawk class but much less capable.

16. For a Chinese estimate of operational cost, see Lu, n.11 pp. 14-15. See also Meng Fansheng, "Budgetary and Management Research on the Operating Cost of Aircraft Carrier," *Shengcanli yanjiu* [Productivity Research], no. 14 (2007). Lu concludes that the cost of operating two Chinese aircraft carrier groups would be more than RMB 10 billion or about \$1.5 billion per year. This number appears high to the American authors of this paper, and we suspect that it includes infrastructure and other factors not usually included in US estimates.

It is, however, more problematic than the two previous conditions.

“Near-coast defence” defined China’s naval strategy from the 1950s until the early 1980s. It highlighted counter-amphibious landing operations earlier against the Taiwan Guomindang government’s attempt to recapture the Mainland and later against a possible Soviet invasion from the seas, and, as a result, it did not require aircraft carriers. In the late 1980s, a “near seas active defence” strategy, largely operationalised by Liu Huaqing, was endorsed to replace near-coast defence. This strategy requires the PLAN to develop credible operational capabilities against potential opponents in China’s three “near seas”—the South China Sea, East China Sea, and Yellow Sea—or the space within and slightly beyond the “first island chain,” which extends from Kurile Islands through the main islands of Japan, the Ryukyu Archipelago, Taiwan, and from the Philippines to Borneo.

According to Liu, at least two major issues within this expanded operational space require aircraft carriers: “to solve the need for struggle against Taiwan [independence] and to resolve the dispute over the Nansha [Spratlys] Archipelago.” In operational terms, Liu believed that “whether the attack type or the V/STOL type, they [aircraft carriers] are for the purpose of resolving issues of [fleet] air defense and sea attack.” Liu particularly stressed that “the objective for us to acquire aircraft carriers is not to compete against the US and the Soviet Union.”¹⁷ This implied that what Liu wished to acquire was a medium-sized, conventionally powered platform for limited, air defence dominant missions, not a large, nuclear-powered one for expansive, sea/land-attack-dominant missions.¹⁸

Of the two major issues, Liu clearly privileged the Spratlys dispute. For instance, he highlighted the need to compare the cost-effectiveness of employing carriers and carrier-based combat aircraft as opposed to land-

17. Liu, n.13, p. 479. Liu also mentioned the role of carriers in sea-lane control operations in times of war. Such a role is not discussed here, mainly because it is more or less related to naval and air operations conducted to resolve the issues of Taiwan and the Spratlys. See Liu Huaqing, “The Question on Operations concerning Sea Transportation Lines” (speech delivered at the Navy Conference on Campaign to “Protect and Sabotage Transportation,” June 20, 1987), in *Selected Military Works*, p. 581.

18. To operate heavy strike aircraft in large numbers, a carrier needs to be big, fast, and able to generate copious quantities of steam for aircraft catapults. These attributes heavily favour a large, nuclear-powered ship.

based aviation divisions. He was particularly concerned about lack of air cover for naval operations over the Spratlys. However, naval operations over Taiwan can be covered by land-based combat aircraft, even though, as Liu mentioned, without carriers, air operations over Taiwan could be more costly because more airfields and land-based combat aircraft are needed due to the reduced loitering time in the air.¹⁹ The 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis and the 1997 retirement of Liu Huaqing, which helped to consolidate further Jiang Zemin's position as the CMC chair, clearly contributed to the shelving of the PLAN's carrier project.²⁰

While articulating the near seas active defence strategy in the 1980s, Liu Huaqing stated that the PLAN would operate within and around the first island chain, or in China's near seas, for a long time to come. But he also suggested that the growth of the economy and strengthening of science and technology would translate into expansion of Chinese naval power in the long run. This, in turn, would allow the PLAN to extend its operational range from the near seas to the "middle and far seas" or the space between the first and second island chains, the latter stretching from northern Japan to the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam and farther southward, and beyond. This would also allow the PLAN to "strike the enemy's rear" through exterior-line operations if China's coast, or interior line, were attacked by an opponent. Liu, however, placed emphasis on the primacy of "near seas operations" and regarded "middle and far seas operations as [only] supportive and auxiliary."²¹

By 2004, however, such an emphasis seems to have shifted somewhat. China's naval analysts, for instance, now argue that China's naval strategy

19. Liu, n. 13, p. 480.

20. See Storey and You, n. 1.

21. See Liu, n. 13, p. 437; Senior Captain Wu Dianqing, "Xiao Jinguang and Liu Huaqing: Conception of China's Aircraft Carriers by Navy Commanders of Two Generations," *Zhishi bolanbao* [Extensive Knowledge News], November 19, 2008. For the role of carriers in sea-control operations within the first island chain, see also Liu Huaqing, "The Situation Requires Us to Handle Well the Research on Naval Development Strategy" (speech delivered at the Navy Research Seminar on Naval Development Strategy, January 1987), p. 528, and "Naval Armament Plan Needs Long-Term Consideration," March 31, 1987, both in Selected Military Works.

China's naval analysts, for instance, now argue that China's naval strategy should shift from near seas to far seas operations. They hold that such operations are necessary because of China's increasing vulnerability relating to distant sea-lanes and choke points.

should shift from near seas to far seas operations.²² They hold that such operations are necessary because of China's increasing vulnerability relating to distant sea-lanes and choke points. China's ever-expanding ocean-going fleet of merchant ships, especially tankers, also needs to be protected, as do China's growing overseas investments, and the increasing number of Chinese citizens living and working overseas. Moreover, China's prosperous coastline and resource-rich exclusive economic zones and territories need to be secured. These areas, however, are difficult to secure, because they are so long and

wide and their flanks are so exposed. This problem extends into such close forward positions as China's near seas, which are partially blocked by the first island chain, and the few exits through straits and channels are mostly narrow and controlled by others, making it difficult to gain initiative by manoeuvring out through them. Many of the navies operating in these near seas are quite formidable, including the US, Japanese, Russian, Taiwanese, ASEAN-state, and Indian Navies. They render the PLAN more vulnerable, and they limit, and even reduce, the effectiveness of, the near seas active-defence strategy for both deterrence and war-fighting.²³

According to China's naval analysts, to alleviate vulnerability and enhance effectiveness, the PLAN needs to break out of interior-line constraints associated with the narrow and near seas within and around the first island chain. Acquiring capabilities to operate in the far seas, the vast space beyond the first island chain, would allow the PLAN to regain initiative and momentum. While "interior-line operations require near seas

22. Ye Xinrong and Zuo Liping, "Strategic Reflections regarding the March of the Navy from Near Seas to Far Seas," *Junshi xueshu* [Military Art Journal], no. 10 (2004).

23. Ibid., p. 31; Zhang Wei and Zheng Hong, "On Strategic Necessities and Opportunities for Developing Our Navy," *Military Art Journal*, no. 10, 2004, p. 34; Liang Fang, "Status and Role of the Oceans in National Security and Policy Response," *Military Art Journal*, no. 1, 2005, p. 66.

capabilities, exterior-line operations are based on far seas capabilities. . . . Far seas capabilities make it possible to carry out offensive operations and ambush and sabotage operations in the far and vast naval battlespace beyond the first island chain, and would have the effect of shock and awe on the enemy.” Forward operations and offense are central to naval combat, because oceans have few invulnerable physical objects on which to base the defence, whereas naval platforms, once crippled, are hard to restore. An emphasis on offence also helps to optimise naval force structure. It is also more cost-effective, because as strikes become more long-range, precise, and powerful, and, therefore, more lethal, defence becomes more expensive to maintain. History also shows that a strategy of close and static defence led to the decisive defeat of the Qing Navy in the first Sino-Japanese War, in 1894.²⁴

In the worst case, the PLAN may come into direct contact with the US and Indian Navies in competition for vital sea-lanes in the South China Sea and Eastern Indian Ocean and for such choke points as the Malacca Strait.

The far seas strategy suggests that the PLAN needs to develop power-projection capabilities that can operate effectively in the more distant Western Pacific Ocean and the Eastern Indian Ocean. It also implies that the PLAN may come in direct confrontation with the US Navy in the Western Pacific—in, for instance, a competition for sea access and denial in a crisis over Taiwan. Moreover, in the worst case, the PLAN may come into direct contact with the US and Indian Navies in competition for vital sea-lanes in the South China Sea and Eastern Indian Ocean and for such choke points as the Malacca Strait. These scenarios may require the PLAN to acquire large, nuclear-powered aircraft carriers, very different from the medium, conventionally powered carriers for limited missions envisioned by Liu Huaqing. A key variable that may determine whether China would acquire medium, conventionally powered carriers or the large, nuclear-powered ones is whether the requisite technologies are available.

24. For quotation, see Ye and Zuo, n. 22, p. 31. For others, see Cheng Xiaochun and Hu Limin, “Revelations of the Sino-Japanese War on Rejuvenating the Navy in the New Period,” *Military Art Journal*, no. 10 2004, p. 29; and Liang, *Ibid.* p. 67.

AVAILABILITY OF REQUISITE TECHNOLOGIES

Before discussing the specific carrier development route that the PLAN might follow, it is useful to spend a moment talking about aircraft carriers in general.

Thinking About Aircraft Carriers

There are four main types of aircraft carriers operating worldwide today, as defined by their method of launching and recovering aircraft. The first—the most capable but also the most expensive—is the “Catapult-Assisted Take-Off But Arrested Recovery” (CATOBAR) design. Originally created by the United Kingdom but perfected by the United States, this design philosophy is currently employed by the United States and France. Because catapults (currently using steam, though electromagnetic catapults have been proposed) are necessary for heavy aircraft capable of long range or heavy payloads (which, in turn, can perform a wider variety of missions at greater range), the CATOBAR carrier is generally considered a prerequisite for a significant carrier-borne power-projection capability.

The second carrier design is the “Short Take-Off But Arrested Recovery” (STOBAR) type. This design uses a rolling take-off—often assisted by a ski-jump ramp—but aircraft return on board via arrested recovery. Most current non-US aircraft carriers are of this type, including the Russian Kuznetsov class, a unit of which, the *Varyag*, has been acquired by China. A STOBAR carrier is generally much simpler to build and maintain than a CATOBAR design but less capable, though it may still be a large, fast ship. A STOBAR is less appropriate for the strike role, so a decision to forgo catapults may indicate intent to not perform the strike mission.

The third design, “Short Take-Off Vertical Landing” (STOVL), combines a rolling take-off—often assisted by a ski-jump ramp—with vertical recovery. This is the system Spain and the United Kingdom have used on their most recent units. Britain is currently evaluating a variant called “Shipborne Rolling Vertical Landing,” or SRVL, for its new Queen Elizabeth

class.²⁵ As a general rule, aircraft capable of vertical landing can also take off vertically, but the performance penalty is high; a rolling, ski jump-assisted take-off maximises load or range. A STOVL design is likely to be smaller than other types, but it still requires high speed to generate wind over the deck. The STOVL design severely limits strike and long-range missions, but it is easier to build and maintain than types better suited to those tasks. STOVL generally represents the minimum capability needed for fighter-based air defence.

The fourth and final type is the “Vertical Take-Off and Landing” (VTOL) carrier. Compared to STOVL, a VTOL design forgoes even more aircraft operational capability and allows for a slower (and, thus, less expensive) ship. Selecting VTOL over STOVL generally means either that the ship is intended to operate only helicopters, is designed for a function (e.g., amphibious assault) that constrains performance, or is really envisioned only for non-combat or general support missions. For fixed-wing aircraft, the difference between STOVL and VTOL is generally the presence in the former of a ski-jump ramp at the front of the flight deck and the ability to make enough speed to generate wind over the deck.

Several general rules of thumb are useful when thinking about aircraft carrier size and capabilities:

- The more missions a carrier is to perform, the more aircraft it needs and the bigger the ship must be.
- The longer the range or heavier the payload of the aircraft, the more likely the carrier will need catapults and arrested recovery.
- The bigger the flight deck, the bigger the aircraft that can be operated. Also, the faster the carrier, the bigger the aircraft that can be operated. (Faster carriers require bigger propulsion spaces, so these factors are complementary.) Some missions are best performed by bigger aircraft.
- Strike is a long-range, heavy-load mission, as is aerial refuelling.
- One pays a penalty for VTOL capability. Even if the design of the aircraft

25. This is specifically to increase “bring back,” the amount of weight (e.g., ordnance) with which the aircraft can land. SRVL involves landing the VTOL-capable aircraft (e.g., the F-35), while moving forward at 35 knots relative to the ship, to increase the amount of lift produced by the wings. This could be expected to affect adversely the ability to park aircraft on the deck.

does not involve performance compromises, which is a big assumption, it still takes extra fuel to take-off vertically, because “there’s no such thing as a free launch,” and there will be much more restrictive weight limits on what one can “bring back” on landing—unused ordnance may have to be jettisoned. VTOL is at best inefficient, and at worst, affects overall combat capability.

- A large carrier is more efficient—that is, it carries more aircraft per ton of displacement and can handle planes on board better than a small carrier.

Taken together, these considerations are powerful tools in analysing what a PLAN carrier might look like, based on discussions of design features, on the one hand—that is, “What can they do with what they intend to buy?”—and missions, on the other—that is, “What do they need to buy to do what they say they want to do?” For example, the Russian-built *Varyag* is a ski jump-equipped STOBAR design, displacing 60,000 to 65,000 tons and with a long, thousand-foot flight deck. This makes it a relatively large carrier, smaller than an American *Nimitz* but larger than the French *Charles de Gaulle*, roughly comparable to both the American Kitty Hawk class and the British Queen Elizabeth. Note that one must be careful comparing displacements: with large, capacious ships like carriers, the difference between empty, full, and standard loads can be tens of thousands of tons.

Due to the lack of catapults, fixed-wing aircraft on the *Varyag* are essentially constrained to air superiority—fleet air defence or offensive air—or relatively short-range strike.²⁶ The *Varyag* was intended to operate with a steam propulsion plant capable of thirty-two knots, but when sold

26. The *Varyag* does have an oddly positioned jet-blast deflector—an essential determinant of where an aircraft can be positioned to start its take-off run—a considerable distance from the bow, possibly indicating a capability to operate heavy aircraft requiring a longer takeoff run. See en.wikipedia.org/, s.v. “Russian Aircraft Carrier Admiral Kuznetsov,” for an illustration.

to China it reportedly had no engines.²⁷

Russia officially categorises this type as a “heavy aircraft-carrying cruiser”; the limited abilities of its embarked aircraft and its Russian-style heavy missile load are consistent with this description.²⁸ Its usual suggested role is to support and defend strategic missile-carrying submarines, surface ships, and maritime missile-carrying aircraft. In other words, while it may have some anti-ship capability, both in its aircraft and its missiles, it is not really designed to support long-range strike missions.

It appears that in the short run, China is likely to acquire a medium-sized carrier for limited, air defence-dominant missions.

Medium-Carrier Options

Maj Gen Qian Lihua stated, in his November 2008 comment already cited, that if China acquires an aircraft carrier, it will serve mainly the purpose of near-seas active defence. Thus, it appears that in the short run, China is likely to acquire a medium-sized carrier for limited, air defence-dominant missions. For a medium, conventionally powered carrier intended for these purposes, the requisite technologies are generally available. China has been analysing the *Varyag* since 2002.²⁹ The Chinese design and construction of super container-ships, tankers, and liquefied natural gas carriers should also be useful experience for building the hulls of aircraft carriers, although carriers are much more complex ships. China also has the simulation and

27. Frankly, this claim is problematic. The propulsion machinery for a ship this size is large and heavy; it is installed early in construction, with the rest of the ship built around it; and without its weight, the ship would have serious stability issues. It is more likely the ship has at least some propulsion gear but that the plant is inoperable due to incomplete manufacture, later salvage, or some manner of vandalism. Alternatively, it is possible the engineering spaces are filled with concrete or other ballast, but this begs the question of why the ship was completed in the first place.

28. The Montreux Convention, which prohibits the transit of aircraft carriers through the Dardanelles, is often cited as the reason for this designation. While that is no doubt a factor, Russian naval doctrine emphasises that aircraft carriers support other surface units, not the other way around. In other words, the category accurately describes the function of the vessel.

29. Note that while the *Varyag* is a large ship—larger than the French carrier *Charles de Gaulle*—the air wing complement of the Kuznetsov class is relatively small, at about fifty aircraft, of which half are helicopters.

testing facilities necessary for research and development, such as large-scale ship-model basins and wind tunnels, and it has been gaining engineering and technical assistance from Russia and Ukraine, countries that have experience in designing and building medium-sized aircraft carriers. Furthermore, specialised construction materials, such as high-grade steel, can either be indigenously developed or acquired through import. Moreover, China has made substantial progress in information, automation, new materials, and maritime and space technologies, many of which can be integrated into carrier construction. Finally, while major technical bottlenecks exist and need to be resolved, China has experience in producing heavy steam and gas turbines, of which several units can be grouped together to provide sufficient speed and range.

For take-off and landing, China is likely to choose a STOBAR design. China's naval analysts have identified several benefits of a STOBAR design over a CATOBAR design. A STOBAR design, for instance, minimises the space needed for water and fuel storage, maximises the energy available for the ship's propulsion, offers simpler production and maintenance, and reduces vulnerability to mechanical breakdowns, because of the absence of the steam catapult.³⁰

Because the missions for medium carriers are more those of air cover for naval operations than those of more distant sea and land attack, air superiority fighters with some sea/land-attack capabilities would be sufficient. In this case, purchasing the Russian STOBAR-capable Su-33 combat aircraft, which can carry eight air-to-air missiles and one or two Anti-Ship Cruise Missiles (ASCMs), seems to be a realistic option, and, indeed, China has been negotiating with Russia for such a purchase.³¹

In the meantime, China's aircraft carrier ambitions may be larger than the current literature has predicted. China may also attempt to upgrade

30. See Li Jie, "Aircraft Carrier-Based Aircraft: Catapult or Ski-Jump Takeoff?" *Xiandai junshi* [Contemporary Military], no. 6 (2006); Liu Jiangping, Jiang Yongjun, and Yang Zhen, "Medium-Sized Aircraft Carrier Has Prominent Advantages," *Dangdai haijun* [Modern Navy] (November 2006). Senior Captain Li is an analyst at the PLAN's Naval Military Art Studies Institute in Beijing; Modern Navy is a publication of the PLAN's Political Department.

31. Reuben Johnson, "China Considers Next-Generation Su-33s for Aircraft Carrier Programme," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, October 28, 2008.

a land-based combat aircraft of its own, such as the indigenous J-10 or the J-11B (a Chinese variant of the Russian Su-27), into a carrier-based aircraft. At a minimum, such an attempt would probably involve reinforcing the landing gears, wings, and fuselage of the aircraft for arrested recovery, which puts heavier stress on these components than standard runway landings.³² Similarly, China may purchase carrier-based Ka-31 Airborne Early Warning (AEW) helicopters from Russia. The Ka-31 can patrol for two to three hours on end, with a detection range of 150 km for sea targets and 100-150 km for low-altitude aircraft and ASCMs, and it can direct engagement against 15 targets at one time. Assisted by shipborne phased-array radars, these ranges and capacity are sufficient for limited missions in the near seas. It is also likely that China may upgrade its shipborne Z-8 (a variant of the French Super Frelon) to a carrier-based AEW platform and develop carrier-based Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) with electro-optical, infrared, and radar sensors for intelligence collection, surveillance, and reconnaissance at sea. UAVs can patrol for a long time at high altitude and are difficult to detect.³³ The Chinese approach to carrier development is likely to be incremental. Therefore, China may attempt to gain engineering and operational experience by moving from smaller and simpler platforms to larger and more complex ones. This means that the option of building small V/STOL carriers should not be completely excluded.³⁴ On the other hand, many Chinese naval analysts argue that the missions that small

The Chinese approach to carrier development is likely to be incremental. Therefore, China may attempt to gain engineering and operational experience by moving from smaller and simpler platforms to larger and more complex ones.

32. See Wei Xiaohui and Nie Hong (Nanjing Aeronautics and Astronautics University), "Research on New Technologies to Attenuate the Landing Impact on Carrier-Based Aircraft Landing Gears," *Hangkong Xuebao* [Aeronautics Journal], no. 2 (2007); Bi Yuquan and Sun Wensheng (Aeronautical Mechanics Department, Qingdao Campus of the Naval Aeronautical Engineering Academy), "Preliminary Analysis of the Ski-Jump Takeoff Performance of a Type of Aircraft," *Feixing lixue* [Flight Mechanics], no. 4, 2006.

33. Huo Ke, "China Should Study and Produce Ship-Borne AEW Aircraft on Its Own," *Jianzai wuqi* [Shipborne Weapons], December 12, 2007.

34. See Erickson and Wilson, n.2

For far seas operations, AEW platforms are particularly indispensable. carriers can accomplish are too limited, because the number and types of aircraft they carry and their operational radii are too limited. To secure China's 18,000-km coastline, the "three million square km of maritime territories," and the nation's expanding maritime interests, as well as to further learning and adaptation, these analysts believe, building medium-sized carriers is more appropriate as the first step in realising China's aircraft carrier ambitions.³⁵

Large-Carrier Options

For far seas operations, a medium-sized carrier may not be adequate. A STOBAR design, for instance, limits aircraft take-off weight and shifts the full burden of take-off propulsion onto the aircraft, thus increasing the amount of fuel consumed at that stage. This restricts the fuel and weapons payload that an aircraft can carry, thereby reducing its range, loitering time, and strike capabilities. STOBAR is also more affected by wind, tide, rolling, and pitching. Furthermore, it needs more flight-deck space for take-off and landing, thus, limiting the parking space and having an adverse effect on take-off frequency-based crisis reaction. In comparison, the CATOBAR design, which is mostly associated with large carriers, minimises aircraft fuel consumption on take-off, thus, enabling better payload, range, loitering time, and strike capability. Its runway requirement, while greater than in a V/STOL design, is also minimal, thus, allowing more flight-deck parking and faster launches, even simultaneous launch and recovery, resulting in quicker crisis response.

CATOBAR designs can also launch heavier fixed-wing AEW and ASW aircraft.³⁶ For far seas operations, AEW platforms are particularly indispensable. China's military analysts, for instance, are impressed by the

35. Anonymous naval specialists cited in "Is China's Aircraft Carrier Journey Still Very Long?" *Zhongguo guofang bao* [China National Defense News], April 7, 2009; CCTV *Jinri guanzhu* [Today's Concerns], interview with Zhang Zhaozhong and Li Jie, April 20, 2009. China National Defense News is a franchise of Liberation Army Daily; Zhang, a Rear Admiral, is a Professor at China's National Defence University.

36. See Deng Taihong and Wang Yingchao, "Exploring the Origins of the Differences between US and Russian Aircraft Carriers in Active Service," *Shipborne Weapons*, June 6, 2008; Liu, Jiang, and Yang, n. 30.

American E-2C, which can patrol up to six hours, monitor a sea area of 12.50 million sq km, and track 2,000 targets, directing engagements against 40 of them simultaneously. They believe that with its detection range of 741 km for surface targets, 556 km for aircraft, and 270 km for missiles and its ability to patrol 180-200 km away from the carrier battle group, the E-2C, together with the combat patrol aircraft, establishes a 300 km outer air defence perimeter, deeper than the range of most ASCMs.³⁷ Without a similar air defence perimeter, Chinese analysts believe, a Chinese carrier battle group would be a “sitting duck,” particularly if it engages highly stealthy US combat aircraft.

Similarly, far seas operations require far more capable carrier-based combat aircraft than does near seas active defence. Such an aircraft should be capable of high speed, large combat radius, long-range sea/land attack, and stealth.³⁸ Finally, the tremendous thermal energy that a large carrier consumes, particularly for propulsion and catapult-steam generation, suggests that a nuclear power plant is preferable to a conventional one.

Because China has had no experience in building and operating an aircraft carrier, acquiring a working, medium-sized carrier may be a necessary stage to gain such experience in the near future. Nonetheless, China’s naval analysts are particularly impressed by the large US carriers, including their most advanced iteration, the Gerald R. Ford class, and its related technologies.³⁹ Further, there are indicators that research has been done on tackling some major technical issues for constructing large carriers.⁴⁰ The process of acquiring such carriers, however, is likely to be costly and protracted.

37. Deng and Wang, “Exploring the Origins”; Hou, “China Should Study and Produce Ship-Borne AEW Aircraft on Its Own.”

38. Liu, Jiang, and Yang, n. 30.

39. See Li Jie, “Future Aircraft Carriers Are More Powerful,” *Jiefangjun bao* [Liberation Army Daily], March 16, 2009, p. 8.

40. See Li Meiwu, Cui Ying, and Xue Fei, “Electromagnetic Catapult System: The Optimal Takeoff Method for Aircraft Carrier-Based Aircraft,” *Jianchuan kexue jisu* [Ship Science and Technology], no. 2 (2008); and Ding Guoliang, Hu Yefa, and Liu Xiaojing, “Maglev Electromagnetic Catapult System Structure Design and Magnetic Field Analysis,” *Jijie gongchenshi* [Mechanical Engineer], no. 7 (2008). It is also believed that the heavier and stealthier J-14 fourth-generation combat aircraft, which is under development, has a carrier-based variant.

In spite of unresolved issues, China is getting closer to realising its aircraft carrier ambitions in terms of leadership endorsement, financial affordability, naval strategy, and requisite technologies.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS?

In spite of unresolved issues, China is getting closer to realising its aircraft carrier ambitions in terms of leadership endorsement, financial affordability, naval strategy, and requisite technologies. China is likely to develop medium-sized aircraft carriers in the medium term for near seas missions and to gain operational experience so that it can develop larger carriers for far seas operations in the long term. In this section, we offer some thoughts on the potential missions of such ships, the factors that go into defining those missions, and the regional implications.

An aircraft carrier is not a solo-deploying ship. To be survivable in an intense combat environment, it needs escorts to protect it. While China has acquired new surface combatants with sophisticated anti-surface and anti-air capabilities, it continues to lag behind in the area of ASW. Unless one is willing to assume that the PLAN does not believe in the anti-surface utility of submarines—a conclusion at odds with its own submarine acquisition efforts—the lack of anti-submarine escort capability implies at least one (and perhaps all) of the following:

- China intends to address its lack of ASW capability in the future and is willing to accept increased risk in the short term, or
- China thinks that it has a solution to the ASW problem, or
- China does not envision its aircraft carriers as becoming the targets of submarines.

All three are likely true to some degree, and, indeed, they may be interrelated. Aircraft carriers are long-lead time projects, and it may be that China's decision-makers have decided to start that programme first, accepting that they may end up fielding a carrier before its ASW support is ready. Or they may have decided that they have a solution to the ASW problem in the form of mines—implying in turn that they believe they can

control the location of the battle—or through speed and manoeuvre, which itself may be an argument for a big, fast nuclear carrier.

Or perhaps China does not expect to use its aircraft carriers against a first class opponent with submarine capability. For that matter, perhaps China does not expect to use its carriers in combat at all. Many missions (such as those detailed below) would either involve smaller regional powers, unable to mount a significant submarine threat, or be strictly for peace-time. The United States has traditionally viewed aircraft carriers as instruments of high-intensity combat, but their utility in other areas is significant. Imagine, for instance, a carrier providing surface-search capability via a small number of airborne assets. While high-intensity carrier operations require frequent replenishments of jet fuel, low-intensity operations could continue for weeks with minimal support, while maintaining a surge capacity if needed.⁴¹ Since China lacks overseas bases, it may be willing to make do with a relatively small increase in capability in a given situation and, hence, be willing to operate carriers in ways the US Navy is unlikely to consider. For this reason, it will be very interesting to see how many and what types of aircraft the PLAN decides is appropriate for its carriers.

It is important to note that while China understands the potential vulnerability of aircraft carriers to concerted attack, the problems facing China and those facing the United States are not similar.⁴² US Navy aircraft carriers operating in the Western Pacific face a sophisticated reconnaissance-strike complex of over the-horizon radars, supersonic cruise missiles, and anti-ship homing ballistic missiles. A PLAN aircraft carrier operating in the same geographic area has none of these concerns; rather, a PLAN carrier has these systems backing it up.

With the above points as a backdrop, one can readily envision five PLAN carrier missions:

- SLOC protection. In recent years, China has become concerned regarding

41. There are issues with maintaining pilot proficiency in such a mode, which may limit surge capacity.

42. See Andrew S. Erickson and David D. Yang, "Using the Land to Control the Sea? Chinese Analysts Consider the Anti-ship Ballistic Missile," *Naval War College Review*, 62, no. 4, Autumn 2009, pp. 53-86.

The only nations in the region likely to be able to stand up against even a modest Chinese air wing are Japan, South Korea, and, going a little farther afield, India.

its sea lines of communication through the Strait of Malacca and other areas outside the range of its land-based air power. Even more recently, Chinese warships have undertaken anti-piracy missions in the Gulf of Aden. Whether the mission is constabulary or combative in nature, an aircraft carrier provides useful capabilities, including facilitation of extended surface-search capabilities via fixed-wing and helicopter assets, and “visit, board, search, and seizure” via

helicopter. Moreover, such a mission would likely be welcomed by the international community—including, the United States.

- Deployment to overseas crisis locations. Because Chinese overseas interests have grown extensively, such deployment serves to deter threats to Chinese overseas interests and reassure security of these interests.
- Exclusive economic zone/territorial enforcement. China has extensive territorial claims in the South China Sea, including the Spratly Islands. Small amounts of air power in these areas—even just to maintain a surface picture—could confer a tremendous advantage.
- Humanitarian aid and disaster relief. The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami demonstrated the utility of aircraft carriers in disaster relief operations, both as helicopter-staging platforms and for the use of the power-generation, water purification, and medical capabilities aboard. Using a Chinese carrier in such a contingency would potentially produce a great deal of prestige and goodwill for China, perhaps even more than would a ship specifically designed for disaster relief, reassuring regional neighbours as to Chinese intentions. Again, such a humanitarian deployment by the PLAN would likely be welcomed by the international community.
- Taiwan contingency. The prospect of the use of an aircraft carrier in support of an invasion or coercion campaign is often cited. Given the PLAN's lack of proficiency in ASW, a PLAN carrier participating in

such a scenario would make a tempting target for opposing forces. Nonetheless, it would have the potential to complicate the problem by increasing the axes of attack, especially if US entry into the conflict could be forestalled. Even if a feint (after all, China's close mainland air bases could generate far more sorties than could one or two carriers), a carrier's presence would likely prompt the United States or Taiwan to "honour the threat" and allocate forces accordingly, which could be significant in a short conflict.

Lacking such support mechanisms, a Chinese carrier is likely to stay closer to home, but it may still require a Chinese support presence overseas.

For the first four missions listed above, a carrier seems like overkill, or at best a sub-optimal use of resources. In strict terms, that is true, but China attaches great symbolic value to a Chinese aircraft carrier as physical evidence of the nation's coming of age as a great naval power. China may feel it gains more through incidental use of an aircraft carrier in humanitarian aid/disaster relief or other non-combat missions than it would with purpose-built (but less prestigious) platforms.

FINAL THOUGHTS

For regional conflicts short of full-scale warfare, a Chinese aircraft carrier has the potential to complicate seriously the calculations of competitors in the region. The only nations in the region likely to be able to stand up against even a modest Chinese air wing are Japan, South Korea, and, going a little farther afield, India. A PLAN carrier would have the effect of extending Chinese air capabilities without requiring overseas air bases. Nonetheless, while a nuclear carrier may be home ported in China, supplying it with jet fuel, food, ammunition, and other consumables becomes harder with distance. The US Navy solves this problem with an extensive series of overseas logistics bases and large, fast replenishment ships that support the operations of carriers, themselves operating largely from the continental United States. Lacking such support mechanisms, a Chinese carrier is likely to stay closer to home,

but it may still require a Chinese support presence overseas.

For the United States, a PLAN aircraft carrier is probably of little day-to-day concern, at least until the PLA develops an ASW capability. In peace-time, the US Navy is unlikely to consider a Chinese carrier a threat, and it may perhaps even welcome Chinese assumption of great-power naval responsibilities in such maritime constabulary operations as counter-piracy. In war-time, for the foreseeable future, a Chinese air wing is unlikely to threaten US naval forces seriously, and China's limited ASW capability provides persuasive options to an American commander. This is not to say that a Chinese carrier would not complicate American planning, however, even threats that can be neutralised require allocation of resources to do so.

In the short to medium terms, therefore, China's acquisition of aircraft carriers offers more opportunities than challenges. Medium-sized carriers would be for limited, air defence dominant missions in local conflicts within the first island chain. They could be easily contained, being exposed and made vulnerable by their large profiles in so limited an operational space. Developing such carriers would also divert funding from building advanced submarines or advanced missiles that arguably pose greater threats. Also, carriers could perform non-traditional security missions that are compatible with the goals of other navies in the Asia-Pacific region, thus, contributing to maritime security cooperation.

In the long-term, however, if China can overcome the technological obstacles and gain the operational experience needed to build large, nuclear-powered carriers in substantial numbers and correct the deficiencies in its anti-submarine capabilities, the PLAN may pose more challenges than opportunities. Several such carrier-based strike groups could project Chinese power beyond the "far seas" to the still more distant and vast "near oceans" and "far oceans". The much improved sensors, sustainability, stealth, networking, range, and strike capabilities and self-protection of such highly integrated battle groups could drive the cost of containing and fighting them much higher.

SECURITY STRUCTURES IN THE GULF: PAST AND PRESENT

M. R. KHAN

The Persian Gulf region has been important since time immemorial. Long before the discovery of oil, great civilisations flourished here. It acted as a land bridge among three continents. Its location in the tropical zone and warm climate was conducive to human habitation and development. The region was central to the ancient Silk Route as well as the maritime trade of China during the early Middle Ages. The Persian Gulf itself, along with the Red Sea, has always been an important East-West communication link since the dawn of history. It was often the preferred link due to its developed ports, favourable winds and access to Central Asia, though the distance to the head of the Gulf from Europe was much longer than the distance to the head of the Red Sea. Therefore, control and security of the channel was of paramount importance to the competing great powers of the day. During the early part of history, the two dominating empires were the Byzantine and Persian. The Byzantine Empire controlled the western approaches of the Gulf while the Sasanids held the eastern approaches and the Gulf itself.¹The two empires continued to engage in frequent warfare for nearly four hundred years for the control of the region. The rise of Islam towards the middle of the 7th century saw the decline of these empires. The Islamic Armies from Arabia swept through Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Yemen

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1. See Lawrence G. Potter, ed., *Persian Gulf in History* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 60.

and northern Africa, crossing over to the Iberian Peninsula. This virtually liquidated the Eastern Roman Empire. In another eastward thrust, they conquered Ctesiphone and ended the reign of the Sasanids over Persia.

Thus, the Arabs ended the centuries long balance of power between the two ancient empires in the region and established their own control. After the early Caliphs, who were Companions of the Prophet, the first Arab dynasty to rule over the region were the Umayyads. The Umayyads were replaced by another dynasty called the Abbasids. The Abbasids shifted the capital of the Arab Empire from Damascus to the new city of Baghdad established by Caliph Al-Mansoor. The main port of the empire became Basra at the mouth of the Euphrates, and the locus of the empire, the northern Gulf. Since the Abbasid Empire was large and powerful, the waters of the Gulf became secure and the region remained tranquil for close to 300 years. The Gulf grew in importance and much of the East-West traffic of the Red Sea also shifted to the Gulf. These were the days when the "China trade" flourished. Ships would sail mainly from ports of the northern Gulf laden with the goods of the West and Arabia, unload and reload at the Indian ports, touch the west coast of Malaya, shape course towards Indo-China and from there onwards to Canton. They would return with the goods of the East, touching ports along the same route and back to the Gulf. A round trip took 16 to 18 months, depending upon the monsoon winds. The Abbasids maintained conditions conducive to trade throughout their long imperium in the Gulf region. Similarly, in China, the Tang Dynasty maintained their rule from 618 to 907 CE with a strong stable government, ensuring security for merchants at each end of the route.

The China trade began to decline by the 10th century. Many factors contributed to the decline.² The Zanj revolt followed by the Qamaratian uprising weakened the Abbasid Empire considerably, resulting in its main ports, Basra and Siraf, losing their importance. The sacking of Baghdad by Halagu shifted the centre of the Islamic world to Cairo, ruled by the Fatimid Dynasty. Consequently, Jeddah in the Red Sea became the principal entrepot for trade with Egypt and the Mediterranean and also for trade with the

2. Alvin J. Cortell, ed., *The Persian Gulf States* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1980), p. 18.

Indian Ocean ports and Iran. The Tang Dynasty also never recovered from the revolt of Huang Chao, who, in 878, sacked Canton and is said to have massacred 1, 20,000 Muslims, Christian, Jews and Magians. Nevertheless, the China trade continued till the 15th century, but there were only a few direct sailings after the 11th century.

COLONIAL POWERS IN THE GULF

The first colonial power to appear in the Indian Ocean were the Portuguese. After struggling for nearly 600 years under Muslim rule, Portugal saw the Islamic world as its main enemy. Their early forays down the African west coast were inspired by a combination of religious zeal, commercial interest and colonial quest. They wanted to discover a direct route to India and onwards to China to loosen the Mamluk and Ottoman grip on Oriental trade and, at the same time, considered Christian expansion into Asian waters a maritime extension of the Crusades.³ Beginning early in the 15th century, they continued to extend their sea voyages along the African coast till Bartolomeu Dias rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1488. A decade thereafter, Vasco da Gama reached India in 1498. The Portuguese prepared for a long haul and their ships captured ports in the Indian Ocean littorals and built forts and factories. Their General, Alfonso De Albuquerque correctly appreciated that the entry to the Indian Ocean was through certain choke points, and whoever controlled these could control the trade passing through the Indian Ocean.

Albuquerque established the first Portuguese fort at Cochin in 1504, and then shifted his attention to the Gulf and the chokepoint at its mouth, Hormuz. He succeeded in capturing Qalhat, Quriyat, Muscat, Sohar, and Khawr Fakkan but failed to capture Hormuz in his first expedition to the Gulf in 1507. In 1510, he conquered Goa and in 1511, Malacca. His attempt to conquer the third choke point at Aden also failed in the face of stiff resistance, though he briefly held Socotra. Finally, in 1515, he managed to conquer Hormuz and subsequently built a fort at Jarun.

3. Lawrence G. Potter and Gary J. Sick, eds., *Security in the Persian Gulf* (New York: Palgrave), p. 10.

Portuguese hegemony in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean continued throughout the 16th century before fading in the face of serious challenges by the European rivals and resurgent local rulers. They built forts and factories on the Indian coast, with Goa as its epicentre as well as at Malacca, Ceylon, East Africa, and in the Gulf at Muscat, Hormuz and Jarun. The Portuguese had severe limitations, belonging to a small country in terms of manpower and imperial resources, and were always constrained due to the geographic dispersion of their strongholds. Their fanatical anti-Muslim zeal, high-handed behaviour with the local rulers, and low morale and bad discipline onboard their ships are cited as other reasons of the gradual decline of their imperium.⁴

The end of Portuguese predominance in the Gulf came when a joint expedition of Shah Abbas and the English East India Company captured their stronghold, Hormuz, in 1622, and Muscat, to where the Portuguese garrison had fled, fell to the Omanis in 1650. This also marked the emergence of the Omani sea power between 1650 and 1730, during which the Arabs expelled the Portuguese from the East African coast and harassed their remaining possessions on the western coast of India.

The beginning of the 17th century saw the rise of the Dutch as a significant sea power. The Dutch East India Company was formed in 1602, only two years after the establishment of the English company of the same name. They established their headquarters at Java in 1607. With the decline of the Portuguese, the situation in the Gulf and the Indian Ocean became a three-cornered contest among the English, Dutch and French for control of the lucrative trade, and dominance. The Dutch gradually usurped Portuguese forts, factories and settlements around the Indian Ocean, including the capture of Malacca in 1641, Ceylon in 1658 and Cochin in 1663. The main aim of the Dutch was to monopolise trade to China and the East Indies by restricting British interest in India. They concentrated on directing the China trade through their base at Java and protecting the onward route by establishing a station at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652.⁵ In the Gulf, the

4. Ibid., p. 11.

5. Ibid., p. 11.

Dutch forced the English to vacate Bandar Abbas and rapidly proceeded to establish a monopoly on the spice trade between the East Indies and Iran. Throughout the 17th century, they often got the better of the British in trade wars as well as naval engagements. But Dutch superiority in the Gulf was short-lived. In the first half of the 18th century, their power in the western Indian Ocean began to decline mainly as a result of reverses in the European wars, including the war of the Spanish Succession(1713-14).⁶

THE BRITISH IMPERIUM IN THE GULF

The 18th century was one of the most chaotic in the Gulf. The disintegration of the Safavid Empire and consequent anarchy in Iran, contest among local petty states for dominance and the struggle among colonial powers such as Britain, France and Netherlands for supremacy resulted in the breakdown of security in the Gulf. Piracy was rampant and trade had declined greatly. The most powerful local ruler in the region was the Imam of Muscat. An agreement between him and the British East India Company in 1798 marked the turning point in the British involvement in the Gulf. This agreement, dated October 12, 1798, was apparently intended in part as a defensive measure against Napoleon's designs in the East, which included India. But, in reality, it constituted the first, in a series of acts, which gradually placed most of the principalities along the eastern and southern littoral of the Arabian Peninsula in varying degrees of dependence on Great Britain. A supplementary agreement dated January 18, 1800, stipulated that, "An English gentleman of respectability on the part of the honourable company, shall always reside at the port of Muscat and be an agent through whom all the intercourse between the states shall be conducted."⁷ After the failure of Napoleon's great design for the invasion of India via Iran, the British captured the French headquarters at Mauritius in 1810. The loss of Mauritius, and reverses in the Anglo-French conflict in Europe, greatly weakened the French position in the Indian Ocean and dealt a severe blow to their colonial ambitions.

6. Ibid., p. 12.

7. Ibid., p. 80.

The 18th century was also the period when the British East India Company came to be firmly established in India as a mercantile as well as a political power. The company considered the Gulf a vital communication link for its expanding trade, and its dominance essential to security of its trade with the littorals of the Gulf as well as India.

In the 19th century, the Gulf shore was sparsely populated. There were no great cities and the prosperity of its people depended on fishing, trade and pearl diving. Tribal rivalries, competition for scarce resources and interference by foreign powers resulted in persistent maritime warfare which the British termed 'piracy'. Some tribal Sheikhs only fought with each other, while some others spared no one, including the European merchant shipping, and even a large squadron of British warships stationed in the Gulf could not prevent it. The problem was mitigated when a British Resident thought of the ingenious device of "trucial system". According to this system, the Gulf state had to sign a truce for the limited period of the pearling season and abstain from any hostilities during that period. Gradually, the truce periods were extended and finally the truce was made permanent. Hence, these states are sometimes also referred to as "trucial states". With the trucial system in place and the Gulf now safer for maritime trade, the British began to consolidate their position and started playing a regulating role not only between the Arab states but also among the warring clans of these states.

The Ottomans also staged a comeback under Mahmud II and re-established their control over Iraq in 1831. One of their Governors in Iraq, Midhat Pasha (1869-71) extended Ottoman authority along the Arabian shore of the Gulf. In 1871, an Ottoman seaborne expedition from Basra landed on Hasa coast, took Qatif and pushed inland towards Najd. The Al-Saud family put up strong resistance and prevented the Ottoman takeover of the Najd, but the expedition warded off the danger posed by Al-Saud to the Turkish control of all important Hijaz.

Despite the Ottoman presence on the Hasa coast, and in Iraq and Kuwait, the British reigned supreme in the Gulf from the middle of the 19th century. Their supremacy was based on their mastery of the seas. In fact, the whole

structure of the British Empire was built on, and kept ascendant by, sea power. The imperial policy included not only the mastery of the sea but also the control of vital choke points and ports of entry⁸. The British possessions came to include Gibraltar, Suez, Aden, South Africa, India, Ceylon, Singapore and Hongkong. The crucial system, mentioned earlier, was superintended and the security in the Gulf ensured by the vessels of the Gulf squadron of the Royal Indian Navy, which was also responsible for the surveys of the Gulf and for other assistance to navigation in the area.

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In the latter half of the 19th century, the British had become the sole regulating authority in the Gulf. They also assessed that constant engagements with the Arab chiefs of the littoral provided them protection of commerce, and helped maintain peace in the region. This was also the time of opening of the Suez Canal and closer connection of Europe and the East. As a gesture of advancing their role in the Gulf, the direct control of the British Residency in the Gulf was transferred from the subordinate Presidency of the Government of Bombay to the Supreme Government in Calcutta in 1873. Within the next twenty years, Britain assumed further formal control over Bahrain and the crucial states. The major reason for this forward movement was Ottoman occupation of Al-Hasa and their assertion of suzerainty over Kuwait and Qatar.

The largest country and the most coveted possession in the British Empire was undoubtedly India. Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India from 1898 to 1905, believed that the security of the British Empire in India was unquestionably bound with the British supremacy in the Gulf. He said, "If we lose control of the Gulf, we shall not rule long in India." Therefore, the Government of India, and Curzon as its chief protagonist, argued that Britain must seize control of additional buffer territory to safeguard India. Whitehall, on the other hand, countered that it was already a case of imperial overreach and the empire could not support an unending expansion and that influence and indirect

8. J. E. Peierson, "Historical Pattern of Gulf Security," in *Ibid.*, p. 13.

control was preferable to conquest and direct administration. By this time, the Gulf, besides being considered the outer perimeter of India, had also become a vital communication route with the invention of the telegraph.

By the end of the 19th century, the British predominance in the Gulf was complete and they were truly in a hegemonic position. The British administration in the Gulf was a part of the Government of India's far flung Residency system. The Political Resident in the Persian Gulf (PRPG) was headquartered at Busher (on the Iranian coast) until 1947 and thereafter at Manamah, Bahrain. The Resident subordinates included Political Agents, Political Officers and native agents, stationed at Muscat, Bandar Abbas, Sharjah, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha Manamah, Kuwait and Basra (after 1914)⁹. A new series of formal treaties was signed with all the chieftains and the Sheikhs of the littoral states. The terms of the treaties generally stipulated cessation of responsibility for defence and foreign relations to the British, and in return, the local Sheikhs were recognised as the legitimate rulers. Thus, a system of governance, for centuries based on tribal customs and of first among equals, was converted into territorial states complemented with hereditary rule through designated, presumed loyal, individuals and their families.

During the closing years of the 19th century and the early 20th century, the British perceived only two major threats to their supremacy in the Gulf and consequently to their Indian Empire: Russia and Germany. Russia's expansion in Central Asia and its machinations to gain influence over the Qajar court were viewed by the British with suspicion as part of the intrigue dubbed by Rudyard Kipling as the "Great Game". The perennial British fear was that Russia, in competition with Germany, would seek a warm water port in the Gulf to connect with a railway. Successive defeats at the hands of Russia during the 19th century had forced Persia to cede its Caucasus territories to it. The Russian influence in Iran reached its peak in the early years of the 20th century and the country was divided into two formal zones of the British and Russian influence. The Russian officered Cossack Brigade played a significant role during the constitutional revolution and it was an officer

9. Ibid., p. 14.

from this brigade, Reza Khan, who usurped the throne in 1921 and later assumed the title of Shah in 1925. After the Russian revolution, the Russian role diminished for some time but the Soviet Union joined Britain in invading Iran during World War II. The forced occupation of Iran by these two colonial powers left a deep adverse impression on the Iranian psyche which is a source of problems even in the 21st century.

The defeat of Germany in World War I and dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire in the aftermath saw extension of British control or influence over Mesopotamia, Palestine and Hijaz and French paramountcy in Syria and Lebanon. The imperial lines of communication now had enhanced security, in the Red Sea as well as the Gulf. At the end of World War I, the British dominance of the Gulf was at its peak. There were no international rivals; the regional powers—Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia—were all linked to Britain. It was already in control of the minor states of the Gulf. During this period, Britain was party to a number of agreements on delimitation of boundaries between the littoral states of the Gulf, some of which were based on imperial interests and are the cause of much friction even in the contemporary Gulf.

Between the wars, there were two developments which enhanced the strategic importance of the Gulf, particularly to the Western powers. The first comprised the great leaps in aviation technology which made the military as well as commercial use of air transportation a viable option and, consequently, the Gulf became an important part of the East-West aerial lines of communication. The second was the discovery of oil. Oil was first discovered in commercial amounts at Masjide Sulaiman in Iran in 1908 and, the following year, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company was formed to exploit it. The British government acquired a majority share-holding in the company in 1914. Commercial quantities of oil were discovered in Iraq in 1927 and subsequently in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait. Though oil was considered important, its full strategic potential was

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hardly appreciated prior to World War II. In 1940, the Gulf oil represented less than 5 percent of the world oil production but it was large enough to provide German war-time needs and some thought was given to preventing German incursion into the region. But the Germans had their hands full elsewhere and showed no interest in the Gulf.

The German invasion of Russia in June 1941 resulted in Iran assuming fresh importance in the Allied calculations. Firstly, the British feared that the Russian collapse would allow the Germans to penetrate deep into Central Asia and access the Gulf oil. However, these apprehensions proved unfounded, as mentioned earlier. Secondly, it was considered desirable to use the Iranian route for supplies to Russia as it was safe from the scourge of German bombers. It was feared that the Axis influence in Iran may obstruct this route. The two powers invaded Iran on August 25, 1941, forcing the abdication of Reza Shah and formation of a new puppet government. The route proved helpful but inadequate due to the amount of supplies required and insufficient facilities in the Iranian ports and at Basra. Bahrain played an important role in the Allied war efforts with its well developed oil fields, refinery and the naval base at Jufayr.

The post-war years saw the gradual waning of the British Empire. The subcontinent was divided in two independent countries, India and Pakistan. Withdrawal from the subcontinent did not mean the end of British interest in the region. Britain still had substantial commitments in Southeast Asia and the Far East and its forces in those areas needed support. By 1949-50, more than 80 per cent of Britain's crude imports came from the Gulf area. Any interruption of supplies would have had severe effects on Britain's economic recovery. Additionally, there was fear of the southward thrust of the USSR and the threat to the interests of the entire Western Alliance. The United States entered the Gulf scene gradually. The process had started with American minority interest in British oil concessions and it then became pronounced with the establishment of the Arabian-American Oil Company (ARAMCO) concessions in Saudi Arabia. The American armed forces utilised the Gulf air facilities of Britain during World War II. Subsequently, the US built an airfield at Dhahran, established a small naval presence in the Gulf

(headquartered at Bahrain) and initiated a long and close relationship with Iran under the rule of Mohammed Reza Shah. Thus, by the mid-Fifties, the British influence in two of the most important countries of the Gulf had receded and been replaced by the American influence.¹⁰ The final withdrawal of British troops from the Suez Canal base in 1954 and the disastrous Suez War of 1956 further eroded British influence in the region. However, the British did not formally withdraw from the region till 1971.

The United States did not formally join the pact for technical reasons although it was closely associated with it and a member of all its committees and functional groups—in fact, a full member in all but name.

THE BAGHDAD PACT-CENTO

Initially, the Baghdad Pact was a pact signed between Turkey and Iraq on February 24, 1955, as a bilateral pact on security and cooperation. The two invited other countries of the region, recognised by them (this clause was to exclude Israel) and concerned with peace and security in the area, to join in. Later in the year, it was joined by Great Britain, Pakistan and Iran and a permanent organisation was set up at Baghdad. Though US exhortations and promises of economic aid were the main incentives for the signing of the pact, the United States did not formally join the pact for technical reasons although it was closely associated with it and a member of all its committees and functional groups—in fact, a full member in all but name.¹¹ A *coup d'état* in Iraq in July 1958 overthrew the Hashimite King and Gen Qasim became the President, who denounced the pact. Iraq finally withdrew from the treaty in March 1959.

The headquarters of the pact were moved to Ankara in August 1959 and the name changed to the “Central Treaty Organisation”(CENTO). The pact and its later *avatar*, had only limited success. The main objectives of the

10. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

11. The reason that the US could not join the treaty formally was that the obligations of the treaty were general cooperation for defence and security, whereas the relevant two Acts of the Congress were limited to the defence of these countries against Communist armed aggression. Ralph H. Magnus, “International Organisations in the Persian Gulf,” in *Ibid.*, pp. 179-180.

The rise of Arab nationalism under the charismatic leadership of Gamal Abd al-Nasser, who denounced the pact as an imperialist conspiracy, prevented any other country of the region from joining the pact.

regional member countries of the treaty were two-fold. Firstly, they believed that it would provide a cooperative defence bulwark against aggression from any country of the region; and secondly, it would ensure security through the promised intervention of the US and the UK against any expansionist intent from the USSR, as in the past, a purely regional Sa'dabad Pact had failed to do so. The other Arab countries were also expected to join the pact and exercise the attractive option of the two great powers of the day providing the security umbrella. However,

the rise of Arab nationalism under the charismatic leadership of Gamal Abd al-Nasser, who denounced the pact as an imperialist conspiracy, prevented any other country of the region from joining the pact.

After the formal withdrawal of the British from the Gulf in 1971, the Shah of Iran tried to use the CENTO structure to implement his hegemony in the Gulf. But Washington's apathy due to its heavy involvement in Vietnam, did not allow him much headway. Iran withdrew from the CENTO following its Islamic revolution in February 1979, and soon thereafter, the Foreign Ministers of Iran, Turkey and Pakistan met and announced their intention to dissolve the CENTO. The CENTO hardly had anything to show on the positive side and its effectiveness was greatly diminished because of political developments in the region and an anti-imperial wave sweeping West Asia as a whole.

NIXON DOCTRINE OR THE TWIN PILLARS POLICY

The British withdrawal from the Gulf was a gradual process which started in the mid-1950s and was completed in 1971. When the Nixon Administration took over in 1969, there was a growing public demand, in the backdrop of the Vietnam War, to limit costly US commitments abroad. Thus, a comprehensive review of the Persian Gulf situation was undertaken as a part of a global effort to redefine US security interests. The outcome

of this review was the Nixon Doctrine, which placed primary reliance on security cooperation with regional states as a means of protecting US interests around the world.¹² Another constraint on US options was that knowledge of Persian Gulf affairs in the strategic community and the foreign service of the United States was scanty, because so far it had almost entirely relied on British presence in the region. Since Iraq, after the Baathist revolution, was already in the Soviet camp, and considered a grave threat to American ally, Israel, it was decided to rely on Iran and the somewhat weaker, but considered reliable, Saudi Arabia. The overall situation in the Gulf, was assessed as stable and no immediate threat to American interest was foreseen.

In May 1972, the United States agreed to increase the number of military advisers in Iran and assured the Shah access to some of the most sophisticated non-nuclear weapon systems in the US military arsenal.

During the post-War years, Washington had developed a close working relationship with the Shah of Iran. He was obligated to the US as he was brought back to power through a Central Investigation Agency (CIA) engineered coup, after a republican movement led by Mohammed Musaddiq had forced him to flee Iran in the 1950s, and whereas Riyadh was squeamish about its relations with the US due to Arab sentiments on Palestine, he had no qualms about flaunting his close relations with Washington. Iran was also considered a suitable partner, based on the strategic assessment that it alone could bring order to the region, as it was the largest country in the Gulf, with substantial military power and economic resources. Moreover, it was also suitably located between the southwestern part of the Soviet Union, which was considered the main threat to US interests, and the Gulf. President Nixon, along with his National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger, visited Iran in May 1972 for three days and a deal was concluded between the two countries. According to the terms of the deal, the United States agreed to increase the number of military advisers in Iran and assured the

12. Lawrence G. Potter, ed., *The United States and the Persian Gulf in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 296.

Shah access to some of the most sophisticated non-nuclear weapon systems in the US military arsenal. The Shah in return agreed to accept a key role in protecting Western interests in the Persian Gulf region.¹³

The Shah began taking his role as the Gulf hegemon seriously. In 1973, he sent troops to assist the Sultan of Oman in putting down a Marxist led rebellion. He hit upon a common chord with the southern Gulf states and Saudi Arabia, and made common cause with them in taking measures to contain the new aggressive Baath regime in Iraq. As a result, his occupation of the two Tunb Islands and coercion with Sharjah to share sovereignty on Abu Musa were condoned by the Western powers as well as the Gulf regimes. As a consolation gesture, and under pressure from Britain and Saudi Arabia, the Shah agreed to relinquish Iran's claim to Bahrain. He was also part of a tripartite covert action plan, along with the US and Israel, to destabilise Iraq by supporting a Kurdish rebellion¹⁴. He ditched the plan when he signed a border agreement with Iraq, which included the long disputed Shatt al Arab waterway between the two countries. The Twin Pillars policy collapsed with the overthrow of the Shah and the Islamic revolution in Iran.

THE CARTER DOCTRINE, CREATION OF CENTRAL COMMAND

A number of developments in the region toward the end of the 1970s changed the strategic picture considerably, foremost among them the Iranian Revolution led by the leading cleric of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini, in February 1979, and creation of an Islamic regime in Iran, hostile to the United States in the extreme. The regime's early enthusiasm to export its Islamic revolution to the neighbouring states of Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia became a cause of deep anxiety in these countries and presented a spectre of widespread instability to Washington. The other major events which contributed to the altered strategic picture in the region were the invasion of North Yemen by its Marxist neighbour to the south, the Marxist led Saur Revolution in Afghanistan in April 1978, the Ethiopian-

13. *Ibid.*, p. 297.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 298.

Soviet Treaty in November 1978, the assassination of US Ambassador Adolph Dubs in Kabul in February 1979, and the dissolution of CENTO, as mentioned above.

The US response to these events was piecemeal. It dispatched a carrier task force to the Arabian Sea, rushed emergency military aid to Yemen, transferred sophisticated Airborne Warning and Control Systems (AWACS) to Saudi Arabia and decided to support the Afghan Mujahideen fighting the regime. But the feeling in Washington was that it was not in a position to counter effectively these game changing events which had brought its main adversary into a position where it could threaten vital Western interests, and a more comprehensive strategy must be evolved, sooner than later, to arrest erosion of American power in the region. Some initial steps were taken to create a Rapid Deployment Force and negotiations initiated with the Southern Gulf countries, Kenya and Somalia, about the possible creation of facilities. A further blow to American prestige was delivered by the hostile Iranian regime when 52 hostages were taken in the embassy in Tehran, and the US able to do precious little except sending a second aircraft carrier to the region.

The murder of Afghan Prime Minister Hafizullah Amin and the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union with more than 1,00,000 troops in December 1979 was the proverbial last straw in this chain of events. Under pressure to act decisively, the Carter regime abandoned efforts to adopt a more accommodating policy with the Soviets, including the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) II. The policy shift was articulated by President Carter in his State of the Union address of January 23, 1980. He stated, "An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force." The declaration which was later referred to as the Carter Doctrine, indicated Washington's resolve to gain and keep control of the region by whatever means, though at that juncture, it had limited capabilities to do so. It was a case of history repeating itself as the doctrine was similar to the enunciation of the British policy in 1903

In September 1980, Washington was in the early stages of building its military capabilities for intervention in the Gulf. It decided to rely on maintaining a balance of power policy in the region

by Lord Lansdowne, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, when he stated in the Parliament, "We should regard the establishment of a naval base, or the fortified port, in the Persian Gulf by any other power as a very grave menace to British interests, and we should certainly resist it with all means at our disposal."¹⁵

The Reagan Administration adopted the Carter Doctrine and set about translating intentions into capabilities. The Rapid Deployment Force was created at Tampa, Florida, in 1980. By 1983, it had evolved into the US Central Command with earmarked forces totalling 230,000 military personnel drawn from the four Services, then one of six US unified multi-Service Commands, with a theatre of operations centred in Southwest Asia and Northeast Africa. Its basic mission reflected the two themes that have dominated the US regional policy from the very beginning "to assure continued access to Persian Gulf oil and to prevent the Soviets from acquiring political-military control directly or through proxies."¹⁶

By the time the Iran-Iraq War broke out in September 1980, Washington was in the early stages of building its military capabilities for intervention in the Gulf. It decided to rely on maintaining a balance of power policy in the region and preventing either of the two warring countries from emerging as a hegemonic power at the end of the war. Accordingly, the United States did several flip-flops during the course of the war. Initially, it assumed a neutral posture but later tilted in favour of Iraq as Iran drove back the Iraqi forces and counter-attacked across the border and appeared to be winning. In 1985-86, when it suspected that the USSR might take advantage of the prevailing chaos and anarchy in Iran, substantial arms and spares for weapon systems sold during the Shah's regime, were covertly transferred to Iran through Israel. The funds from the arms sale were used

15. Potter, n. 1, Potter and Sick, n. 3, p. 24.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 299.

to support the Nicaraguan counter-revolutionaries. Towards the end of the war in 1987-88, when Iran, in retaliation against Iraqi air attacks on its shipping in the Gulf, started using mines and small, unmarked armed boats against Iraqi as well as neutral shipping headed towards Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, US policy decidedly shifted in favour of Iraq and it decided to reflag eleven Kuwaiti tankers with the US flag. It also moved a substantial number of naval ships into or near the Gulf and began escorting tanker convoys to and from Kuwait. The US and Iranian naval forces clashed several times during the so-called tanker war. In one such action on April 18, 1988, the United States Navy, in retaliation to a US ship hitting an Iranian mine, sank two Iranian oil platforms, two frigates and damaged four gun boats. These events signalled that Washington was now ready to intervene with military force in the region to protect its perceived interests.

The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 and the break-up of the USSR did not bring any immediate changes in US policy in the Gulf. In spite of ample proof of Saddam Husain's use of chemical weapons against his own populations and the Kurdish genocide at Anfal, the US thought it expedient to continue a policy of limited support to Saddam Husain. Washington also ignored several indications that Baghdad was in the quest for nuclear and other Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). This policy under Bush I came under much criticism within and outside the US, after the annexation of Kuwait by Saddam and the Gulf War.

SOME GEO- POLITICAL ASPECTS OF SECURITY IN THE GULF

The Persian Gulf is a landlocked body of water with an area of 239,000 sq km, it is 990 km long and 338 km at its widest stretch. The Strait of Hormuz, its narrowest point, is 56 km across. The deepest water (up to 80 m) is off the Iranian coast.¹⁷ There are eight countries on its littoral. Three of them, Iran, Iraq, and the Saudi Arabia, are considered medium powers, based on traditional elements of national power such as population, area, size of the armed forces, and economy. The other five, Oman, the UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar, are small countries with limited resources. Their internal

17. "Appendix A. The Persian Gulf" in Cortell, n. 2, pp. 541-543.

The five smaller states of the region feel particularly vulnerable as no matter how much they spend on security, they still cannot defend themselves against their bigger neighbours on their own.

political structure is fragile and indigenous populations small. Their boundaries were drawn during the British imperium in the Gulf and were a perennial source of conflict till only a few years ago. Many of these boundary disputes have been resolved through the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the other international fora like the UN and the International Court of Justice. But a few, with potential for conflict, remain.

The relationship between the medium powers has been adversarial rather than cooperative. Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia not only had different political structures but also different state ideologies. Iran is quasi-theocratic, Shia and partly republican. Iraq, before the fall of Saddam, was Baathist, dictatorial, and secular. It is a democracy now under the American guidance, but the real contours of its political system will emerge only after the US withdrawal. Saudi Arabia is a conservative, theocratic monarchy, with a state ideology based on the tenets of the Sunni, Salafi version of Islam, resurrected by a Najadi cleric, Mohammed Bin Abdul Wahab, in the 19th century. These differences and rivalry for the leadership of the region, as well as of the Islamic world at large, have been the cause of much friction in the region, leading to two of the most devastating wars in the recent history of the Gulf. In the past, each of these countries has tried to dominate the security system in the region, and Iran continues to do so.

Six of these states are extremely rich in hydrocarbon reserves, Oman and Bahrain being the exceptions. Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq have some of the largest deposits of hydrocarbons. Overall, the Gulf holds 62 percent of the world oil reserves and 40 percent of the natural gas reserves.¹⁸The mineral wealth of the region has made it an area of vital interest to the great powers, especially the United States, which consumes 25 percent of the total oil production of the world. Japan and Europe are also heavily dependent on

18. World proved reserves of oil and natural gas, US Energy Information Administration 2008.

import of the Gulf oil for their economic well-being. In recent years, China too, as it rapidly industrialises, has developed a humongous appetite for oil from the Gulf and has been meddling in its geo-political equations.

The five smaller states of the region feel particularly vulnerable as no matter how much they spend on security, they still cannot defend themselves against their bigger neighbours on their own. The Islamic Revolution in Iran, with its early zeal to spread it beyond its borders, and the invasion of Kuwait by the Iraqi forces in 1990 further enhanced this feeling of vulnerability.

The formation of the GCC has done little to assuage this perennial feeling of insecurity among the southern states of the Gulf because of longstanding mutual suspicions. The United States, if anything, tries its best to exaggerate these fears to legitimise its large military presence in the region. The control of such a vital area, besides protecting the oil interests of Washington and its allies, gives it a critical leverage in world affairs. The rulers of these states feel reassured with Washington's military presence and formal guarantee of security through alliances. This dependency gives Washington great leverage with the rulers of these states and a virtual monopoly of arms sales to the region, which it sometimes shares with its Western Alliance as a favour. However, anti-American feelings among the indigenous inhabitants of these states are high due to the blatant and unconditional US support to some of the most oppressive Israeli policies in Palestine in recent times, as well as due to the long history of conflict between the world of Islam and Christianity. This paradox, which is sometimes referred to as the dilemma of Gulf security, requires fine balancing of external vulnerability versus internal security on the part of the ruling elite of these states, and militates against their democratisation. This phenomenon also constrains US ability to pressurise them to do so, in spite of its oft-repeated rhetoric to bring in democracy in the region.

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The Emirs and Sheikhs of the Gulf have tried to counter the paradox by providing exceptional welfare measures to their populations like free education up to the highest level, free health facilities, highly subsidised housing, soft loans, lucrative franchises and almost guaranteed employment. This has been much easier for the high oil income states per capita like the UAE, Kuwait and Qatar but much tougher for Saudi Arabia, Oman and Bahrain and, consequently, they have been vulnerable to internal disturbances, particularly Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, which are also plagued by religious conflict. The overall internal security situation in all the southern Gulf states is uncertain and fluid and, to a large extent, dependent on world oil prices. Any unusual dip in the prices could lead to reduction in entitlements and increase in the internal security problems in these states.

POST GULF WAR US SECURITY POLICY AND DUAL CONTAINMENT

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the Gulf War has been analysed in some detail in my previous papers. So also, the often asked questions like why did Saddam reject various face saving formulas? And why did the US leave his regime intact? Perhaps the most significant error of the Bush I regime was to allow Saddam the use of helicopters in suppressing a Shia rebellion in the south. It allowed him to once again consolidate his power and ensure the survival of his regime. The logic of leaving some of his military intact was that it would help him keep the country together and also provide a potential balance against a hostile Iran.¹⁹ However, there were some contradictions in this policy, as extremely humiliating ceasefire resolutions were slapped on him and crippling sanctions imposed in the name of preventing him from going ahead with his perceived WMD programme, with the hope that their implementation would lead to the personal humiliation of Saddam, resulting in a change of regime, not by the pro-Iran Shias but his own Generals. Both these measures resulted in weakening Iraq but did not accomplish the desired aim of change of regime.

19. Phebe Marrin, "US Strategy Towards the Persian Gulf," in Cartell, n. 2, p. 16.

A review of the Gulf policy was undertaken in May 1993 by the incoming Clinton Administration and a policy of “dual containment” unveiled by Martin Indyk of the National Security Council staff. It was explicitly founded on four basic premises:²⁰

- Both Iraq and Iran are hostile to American interests in the Middle East and, implicitly, are likely to remain so for the indefinite future.
- Iran now presented the more serious threat.
- Seeking regional security by balancing Iraq and Iran against each other would be ineffective, dangerous and unnecessary.
- The Gulf War coalition could be sustained to defend the region against the threats posed by both countries.

Though preference for a change of regime was maintained covertly, it was not made an overt part of the policy. As mentioned above, it was different from the policies followed earlier since the 1970s in the sense that the policy of balancing Iran and Iraq was scuttled. Indyk declared that since Iraq was effectively boxed in by the UN sanctions, and Iran crippled economically and militarily, “we don’t need to rely on one to balance the other” and the United States was the predominant power in the Gulf with the “means to counter both the Iraqi and Iranian regimes.”²¹ The containment of these two major powers of the Gulf was to be achieved mainly through sanctions but there was also a military component, especially in the case of Iraq. The two no-fly zones in the north and the south were slapped on Iraq in order to protect the pro-American Kurds and Kuwait, and clip Saddam’s wings further. Enforcement of these no-fly zones required direct injection of US and British forces in ever larger numbers and high-tech equipment for early warning in the southern Gulf states, especially in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The increasing US military footprint and repeated attacks on Iraqi sites, displayed prominently on Arab television networks, deepened resentment against the Americans in the streets of the Gulf and led to an increase in

20. Joseph Macmillan, “US Interests and Objectives” in Richard D. Sokolsky, ed., *The United States and the Persian Gulf* (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2004), p. 21.

21. “The Clinton Administration’s Approach to Middle East,” article by Martin Indyk, in *Proceedings of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, May 18-19, 1993.

The dual containment had only limited success against Iran, as even close allies of the US like Turkey, France and Germany continued to do business with Iran.

terrorist activity, resulting in the bombing of US facilities in Riyadh and Al-Khobar. The worst, however, was still to come.

The dual containment had only limited success against Iran, as even close allies of the US like Turkey, France and Germany continued to do business with Iran. Due to the compulsions of internal politics, the Clinton Administration also failed to take advantage of favourable developments in Iran like the coming of the reformist Khatami as President and the opening

of the society in terms of social mores and freedom of the press under him. Some overtures, also by Khatami, like his famous reconciliatory speech on Canadian TV and the initiative of the Dialogue of Civilisations were also ignored. And despite much rhetoric of regime change in Iran, little was done to help the reformers. In Iraq, two covert attempts were made in 1995 and 1996 to stage a CIA supported internal coup but both attempts ended in failure.²² Similarly, the Clinton Administration's attempts to win the heart and minds of the Arab street by brokering a peace process in Palestine and creating a favourable security situation in the region, also came to nought, despite the persistent efforts, because of the intransigence of both the parties and some of the intractable issues involved. One significant development in the Gulf security structure, after the Gulf War and during the dual containment, was the entrance of the US as a resident political and military power in the Gulf and its intention to stay there over the long haul.²³

PRESENT SECURITY STRUCTURE IN THE GULF

The Bush II Administration took over in January 2000, but there was no significant change in the Gulf policy during the first ten months of the new Administration. Secretary of State Colin Powell, under pressure from

22. *Washington Post*, January 20, 1993, and ABC news transcript no.97062601 dated 26, 1997.

23. Potter, n. 1, p. 303.

allies and the international community to loosen sanctions against Iraq and Iran, proposed “smart sanctions”, meaning loosening up on essential imports to Iraq but tightening up on border controls to prevent smuggling of military and dual use items. The Administration also had divided council on Iran, between those who favoured opening up and a softer attitude towards Iran to help the reformists, and those who favoured tightening up. Nevertheless, the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA) was renewed in 2001, signalling continuation of the policy followed during the Clinton era.

The neutralisation of Iraq as a Gulf power entirely changed the geo-strategic landscape of the Gulf.

However, the events of 9/11 and the ascendancy of a group broadly known as “neoconservatives”, led by the Vice President, who advocated the use of unparalleled US power to shape global environments in its favour, altered the picture completely. The early focus of the Bush II foreign policy team was on shaping a strategy to prevent the emergence of a future rival such as China. But post 9/11, the focus, inevitably, shifted to the Gulf and Afghanistan, and a strategy of preemptive military intervention was adopted.

The neutralisation of Iraq as a Gulf power entirely changed the geo-strategic landscape of the Gulf. It gave encouragement to the long suppressed political aspirations of the Shias, who form the majority in Iran, Iraq and Bahrain and are a significant minority in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon. Their newly awakened political assertion gave rise to Sunni fears, especially in Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Jordan, and talk of a dominant Shiite crescent stretching from Iran through Iraq and Syria into Lebanon. The rise of non-state groups like the Mahdi’s Army and the various Sunni insurgent groups in Iraq, including the Al Qaeda, and Hezbollah in Lebanon, equipped with new generations of conventional weapons such as the RPG-29, advanced sniper rifles, remotely piloted vehicles loaded with explosives and new surface-to-surface rockets gave an alarming dimension to the Gulf security and aroused deep concern for stability in the smaller countries of the Gulf.

The problem of non-state groups was compounded by the fact that some of the Gulf states have deliberately followed a policy of keeping the military weak to prevent the possibility of internal coups. These factors forced the southern Gulf states into an increasing degree of dependence on the United States for the security of their regimes. Gone was the squeamishness they displayed prior to the Gulf War in allowing US bases on their soil due to public sentiments. Virtually all these states renewed a series of bilateral defence cooperation agreements with Washington, first signed in the 1990s, which included, among other things, large scale pre-positioned war equipment, including rumoured tactical nuclear weapons, interoperability clauses, basing facilities, military construction, and the legal status of the US forces in these countries. The only exception was Saudi Arabia from where most of the American personnel were withdrawn due to domestic conditions and the premier US air base, Prince Sultan Air Base, was handed over to the Saudi forces. All the facilities which existed at the air base, were replicated at the Al Udeid Combined Air Operation Centre in Qatar. This base was extensively used by the US military during the invasion of Iraq, and continues to be its premier base in the Gulf.

The role of the United States in the current Gulf security structure is somewhat based on the East Asian and European models and relies heavily on its alliances in the region and force projection capabilities in the so-called arc of instability, through Main Operating Bases (MOB), Forward Operating Sites (FOS) and an array of more modest Cooperative Security Locations (CSL) spread throughout the Gulf and Central Asia. These facilities are linked and mutually supportive. The whole security structure is based on the premise that these forward deployed forces will be able to address regional contingencies expeditiously, with Special Operations Forces and weapon platforms capable of stand-off, precision strikes. For the local rulers, the facilities are intended to protect them from external as well as internal threats.²⁴ They are costing the US exchequer billions of dollars, some of which come from the oil rich Gulf regimes, but not all.

24. James A. Russel, "Charting US Security Strategy in the Persian Gulf" in Potter and Sick, n. 3, p. 49.

This heavy financial burden, along with the expenditure being incurred on war-fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, has had serious detrimental effects on the US economy and is now being seriously questioned in Washington, not only because of the unbearable financial burden but also because of the military-political disconnect, as is evident from the ambivalence of the Gulf rulers towards Iran, which in Washington's calculus is the main threat to the region because of its nuclear ambition and hostile posture towards American interests.²⁵ The debate on whether the United States should revert to a policy of over the horizon protection and mainly rely on its formidable navy and its futuristic "sea basing" concept, or maintain the status quo, is so far inchoate and inconclusive.

TOWARDS A MORE VIABLE REGIONAL SECURITY STRUCTURE FOR THE GULF

Since the British departure, except for a brief period in the 1970s, security structures in the Gulf have been based either on the realist school's "balance of power" theory or a hegemonic external power, the United States in this case, as the only credible guarantor of peace. Both these models have been unsuccessful. The constant state of confrontation between Iran and the US over the nuclear issue, and the situation in Iraq does not augur well for peace and harmony in the Gulf. India too is a big stakeholder in the Gulf, as brought out in the earlier papers, and any instability in the region directly affects our national security. Therefore, it is only appropriate to contemplate on a more viable security structure in the region.

The political systems and national institutions of public opinion are still evolving in the Gulf. The boundaries of many states in the region are still under dispute and a constant source of friction. Political awakening has given rise to many ethnic, religious and class conflicts within states and even among states. Mutual suspicions of rulers, most of them lacking legitimacy, have also been a source of instability. So far, there is no regional forum where all the states of the region are represented. The biggest drawback

25. For example, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem Al Thani's statement to reporters in March 2007 and widely reported in the Gulf press, "We will not participate by any means to harm Iran from Qatar" and similar statements, time to time, by the other Gulf rulers.

Another stumbling block to regional security is the large US presence in the region and its confrontational attitude towards Iran.

of the GCC was that it excluded Iran and Iraq, the two biggest countries of the region. Therefore, the first step towards a cooperative security structure should be the creation of a forum on the lines of the Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN) or ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), or even Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). The forum, then, can be used for confidence building measures on the pattern adopted during the Cold War at Stockholm in 1986, and modified in Vienna in 1990. The initiative has to come from Iran and Saudi Arabia, as Iraq's political structure is yet to stabilise. The two must sit down together despite differences, as has happened on numerous occasions in international politics. Perhaps the only condition required is that both countries refrain from covert attempts to destabilise each other's regimes. Turkey could play the role of a mediator in view of its growing influence in the Arab world and its good relations with Iran.

Another stumbling block to regional security is the large US presence in the region and its confrontational attitude towards Iran. During the 1990s, when some kind of rapprochement was on the cards between Iran and Saudi Arabia, Washington feared for the legitimacy of its large presence if rapprochement were to materialise, and used its influence to abort it. The fact is that Iran is the most populous and technologically advanced country in the region, with the largest armed forces. Its oil and gas reserves when converted to Barrels of Oil Equivalent (BOE), are a match for Saudi Arabia. It has other strategic advantages such as the majority of the Gulf population is Shia; Iran has considerable influence in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Persian speaking states in Central Asia, and has good relations with the large Muslim states in the neighbourhood, Pakistan, Turkey and Syria, and influence with Hezbollah and Hamas, hence its hankering for regional primacy is easy to comprehend. This denial of primacy is at the root of its confrontation with the US. Therefore, a broader engagement with Iran, not entirely focussed on its nuclear programme, is essential to security in the

Gulf. A rapprochement between the US and Iran will make an inclusive regional forum a reality. On its part, Iran must give up its unnecessarily virulent rhetoric against Israel and aggressive behaviour towards some of the Gulf states.

A just and peaceful solution of the Palestinian problem on the lines of the two-state solution being proposed, will also go a long way in improving security in the region. Successive US regimes have tried to broker peace between Israel and the Palestinians, without any real headway. The intransigence of the present Israeli government on the crucial issue of stopping construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and President Obama's inability to force the issue, has once again exposed how the compulsions of domestic politics in the US can mess up the security situation in the Gulf. A quick resolution of the Palestinian issue will greatly assuage the feelings of the Arab street, prevent Iran from rabble rousing, weaken Hezbollah, Hamas and Al Qaeda, and thereby, greatly improve the security situation in the entire West Asia. Washington must rise above partisan politics to force the issue in Palestine and mitigate the volatile situation in the region.

Lastly, the United States, after withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan, must reduce its military footprint in the region and revert to over the horizon security policy based on the mobility of its formidable navy. It should also factor in a broader policy geared towards creating a stable, prosperous and predictable regional environment in which WMD and terrorism are just some of the troublesome issues. Environmental concerns, domestic socio-economic developments, transnational threats, and lingering distrust between small and large states in the Gulf should all get an equal share of attention. All these together form a broader vision of security.



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