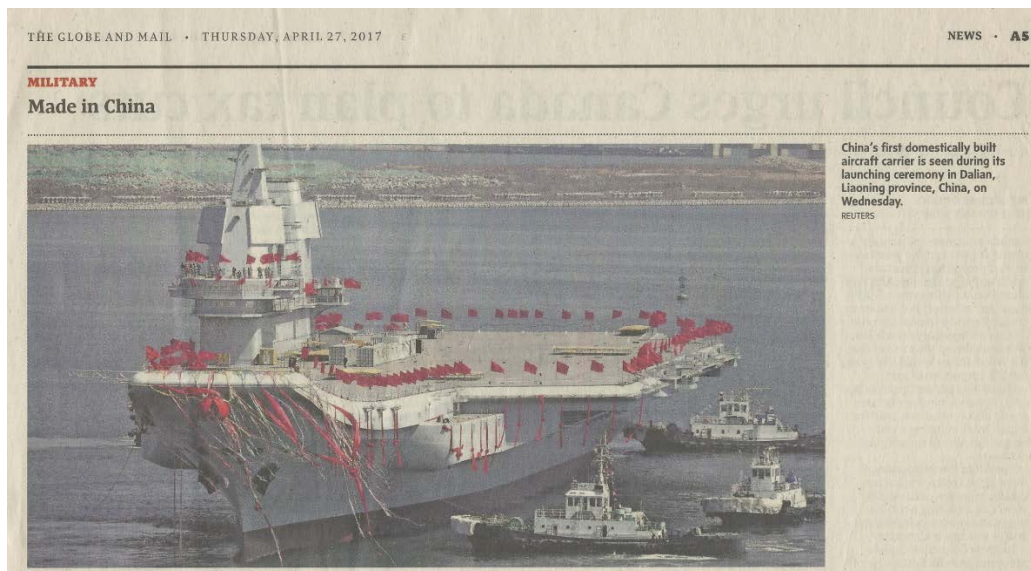


Opinion

The Global Expansion of China's Military – 2019

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After World War II, Winston Churchill said of Josef Stalin that he did not believe he wanted war, just the spoils of war.

Background

China's military spending rose by 83 percent in real terms between 2009 and 2018. China's leader, Xi Jinping has stated that his "Chinese Dream" includes a "dream of a strong armed forces" that involves "modernizing" the People's Liberation Army (PLA) by 2035 and making it "world-class," in other words moving ahead of the US military might.¹ As noted in the recent "Economist" article, Mr. Xi has done more in the past three years to reform the PLA than any other Chinese leader since Deng Xiaoping. In February 2016 Mr. Xi replaced the seven military regions with five "theatres," each with a single commander. Each of these "theatres" would consist in co-ordinating the military objectives of the army, navy and the air force.² Two other commands were created. Strategic Support Force was meant to counter US communications, satellites, computer networks and cyber activities and was established in 2015. Mr. Xi also established the PLA Rocket Force (PLARF) to attack US bases and USN naval aircraft carriers in the same year having a strength of around 175,000 personnel.

Although the PLA remains with a strength of about 2 million, recently the Chinese Navy (PLAN) is expanding into a blue water navy and is increasing its' co-ordination in joint exercises with the army and airforce.

China's unilateral expansion throughout the international waters of south-east Asia in the past several years has altered the strategic balance of power in the region.³ Besides establishing artificial islands in the South China Sea, encompassing seaports, air base and missile systems; it also includes increasing naval operations in the western Pacific, South Pacific and Indian Ocean; the Mediterranean and Baltic Seas; the Arctic and Antarctic; and the Atlantic Ocean.⁴

China has dramatically increased the blue-water operations of the PLAN and the China Coast Guard (CCG) within the waters of the South China Sea and substantially increasing its' deployments around the globe.⁵ As noted by author Fanell, the projection of China's maritime power relies on several assumptions. "First, Chinese leaders will continue investment in the Navy, Coast Guard, and maritime industries to more actively and effectively assert its security and economic interests in the coming decades. Second, China will continue to enjoy a military

¹ "Army dreamers," *The Economist*, 29 June 2019, p. 36

² Ibid.

³ J.E. Fanell, "China's Global Naval Strategy and Expanding Force Structure," *Naval War College Review* 72, 1 (Winter 2019): p. 11.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., p. 14. For a comprehensive article on the CCG, see A. Erickson, I. Hickey and H. Holst, "Forging Second Sea Force," *Naval War College Review* 72, 2 (Spring 2019): p. 11.

ship-building cost advantage over rivals. And third, China will master the technical advances required to overcome issues arising from the production and incorporation of advanced naval systems – from phased array radars to nuclear reactors.”⁶

There is no question that to realize the “Chinese Dream” is to build up a powerful military force to counter a US military build-up in the region. The goal eventually is likely to confront and deny access to US naval forces but possibly to defeat such forces in battle in the longer term. In the South China Sea and other near waters, some pundits are already stating that China’s assertive nationalism is already raising the chances of an accidental clash with American planes or ships to a level too high for comfort.⁷

In a recent editorial in Canada’s *Globe and Mail* newspaper, it stated:

the real People’s Republic of China is not just an economic opportunity. It is a threat. And that threat is growing. This is no passing storm. China’s rapid rise, even as it remains an unapologetically totalitarian state, is geopolitical climate change on an unprecedented scale. We must think hard about how to mitigate its impact.⁸

In July 2019, China warned it was ready to move to war if there was any move towards Taiwan’s independence, accusing the US of undermining global stability and denouncing its’ arms sales to the self-ruled island.⁹

Chinese Military Hardware

People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN)

China now has the region’s largest navy, with over 300 surface and underwater vessels. It will have as many as 78 submarines by 2020; up from 56 in 2018.¹⁰

Surface combatant strike groups could be composed of the following ships:

- Type 052D Luyang III – class guided missile destroyers
- Type 054C Luyang II – class guided missile destroyers

⁶ “China’s Global Naval Strategy,” pp. 14-15.

⁷ A contest for the ages,” *The Economist*, 18 May 2019, p. 16.

⁸ Editorial, “China, from opportunity to threat,” *The Globe and Mail*, 17 May 2019, p. A-10.

⁹ “China Ready to Go to War Over Taiwan,” *National Post*, 25 July 2019, p. NP-4.

¹⁰ “Why China wants a mighty navy,” *The Economist*, 27 April 2019, p. 40.

- Type 054A Jiangkai III – class guided – missile frigates; and
- Type 055 destroyers, the newest warship in the fleet.

These ships have great range, speed and survivability and carry antiship cruise missiles (ASCM's).¹¹ As of 2018, the PLAN has a single combat – ready aircraft carrier, the “Liaoning” (CV-16), with a second and third under construction. It is projected that China may possess five or six nuclear aircraft carrier battle groups by 2035.

The PLAN's submarine fleet consists of Type 091, Qing-class; Type 035, Type 093 and Type 094 A Jin class ballistic missile submarines. Type 094 A's are nuclear-powered SSBN's which are armed with up to 12 ballistic missiles that can carry a nuclear warhead with an estimated range of 7,200 kilometers (4,500 miles). There are currently four of these submarines in service with others under construction. A major submarine base is being build on China's south coast on Hainan Island. Chinese submarines are also armed with supersonic sea-skimming 290 nautical mile range YJ-18 anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCM's).¹²

China has also expanded the People's Liberation Army Marine Corps (PLAMC) to 100,000 personnel.¹³ To assist this corps, China is producing an increasing number of large, high-end amphibious warships. As of 2015, the PLAMC has 56 amphibious warships, ranging from a few WWII landing ships to four modern Yuzhao – class Type 071 transport dock ships which are large and formidable.

China has recently announced they are building new Type 075 landing helicopter docks. This new ship can carry up to 30 transport and attack helicopters and can launch 6 helicopters simultaneously.¹⁴

It is estimated that to achieve its' national maritime goals by 2030, it will likely need a 550 ship/submarine fleet.¹⁵

¹¹ “China's Global Naval Strategy,” p. 18.

¹² Ibid., p. 19.

¹³ Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 21.

People's Liberation Army Air Force and Naval Air Force (PLAAF/ PLANAF)

The People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) of China and its sister branch, the PLA Naval Air Force (PLANAF) has a fleet of approximately 1700 combat aircraft. In his article Sebastien Robbin outlines the types of aircraft in the PLAAF/PLANAF inventory.¹⁶ Approximately 33 percent of their combat aircraft are second-generation fighters, 28 percent include strategic bombers of third generation design and 38 percent are fourth-generation fighters with 1 percent accounting for stealth fighter aircraft.

Robbin breaks down the aircraft inventory as follows:

- J-7 fighter at Mach 2 can keep up to a US F-16 aircraft;
- Shenyang J-8 became operational in 1979. It is a large twin-turbojet interceptor which can attain Mach 2.2;
- The Xi'an JH-7 Flying Leopards entered into service in 1992. They are a naval-attack fighter-bomber which have a top speed of Mach 1.75;
- The Chengdu J-10 Vigorous Dragon is a lightweight multirole fighter. The J-10 B model has a infrared search and track system and an Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar;
- China purchased SU-27 fighters from Russia, which is a highly maneuverable twin-engine jet comparable to the US F-15 Eagle. The Chinese built their own version of this aircraft named the Shenyang J-11 B and D models;
- Russia sold China 76 modernized ground and naval attack variants of the Flanker; the SU-30 MKI and the SU-30 MK2. China then developed its' own version of the SU-30; the Shenyang J-16 Red Eagle having an AESA radar system and the carrier-based Shenyang J-15 Flying Shark which is currently serving on the carrier "Liaoning". The J-16 D is a electronic-warfare fighter used to jam communications and radar equipment;
- In 2016 China purchased 24 Russian SU-35 aircraft which are very sophisticated and maneuverable;
- China has developed two stealth fighter designs. 20 Chengdu J-20's entered the service of the PLAAF in 2017. The J-20 is a large twin-engine machine optimized for speed,

¹⁶ S. Robbin, "Huge: That's the only word to describe China's Air Force," *The National Interest*, 22 May 2019.

range and heavy weapons load. The Shenyang J-31 Gyrfalcon is basically a twin-engine remodeling of the US F-35 Lightning aircraft; and

- The Chinese bomber is the Xi'an H-6, which is based on the Russian TU-16 Badger. This aircraft still remains relevant because it can carry long-range cruise missiles and has a range of over four thousand miles. It has been reported that Xi'an is developing a new H-20 bomber.

China maintains that it now has the intel resources, aircraft and missiles to hunt down US aircraft carriers, although as reported by Robbin, a 2016 Rand Report alleges Chinese aviation units are scrambling to reverse a lack of training under realistic conditions and still must develop experience in joint operations with ground and naval forces.

People's Liberation Army Rocket Force (PLARF)

The Chinese have relied heavily on their military doctrine of a joint-fire strike campaign using an extensive ballistic and cruise missile arsenal from the People's Liberation Army Forces (PLARF). Such capability of China's missile forces would likely be used first to strike US bases.¹⁷

In April 2018, the PLARF announced the establishment of a DF-26 brigade. The DF-26 has a range of nearly 2,200 nautical miles (nm) and is the second Chinese anti-carrier ballistic missile. The first, the DF-21D, with a range of 1000 nm, was designed specifically to destroy US aircraft carriers in the western Pacific.¹⁸

The PLARF have also recently deployed YJ-12B surface-to-surface and HQ-9 surface-to-air missiles to their artificial islands in the South China Sea.

With the development of the DF-21D and DF-26 ballistic missiles, it dramatically affects the USN's carrier operations offshore. In other words, to avoid such potential strikes, the US carrier fleet must now remain further out to sea to avoid such strikes. This would now affect the range of USN aircraft wishing to destroy Chinese military targets onshore.

Russia and China are also developing a hypersonic missile system which purportedly is capable of speeds of more than 15 times the speed of sound and striking any target in the

¹⁷ "China's Global Naval Strategy," p. 23.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

world.¹⁹ The missile will be powerful enough to penetrate any building with the force of three to four tonnes of TNT. In Beijing, on 1 October 2019, China held a large military parade recognizing 70 years of Communist rule. Fifteen thousand troops, accompanied by 580 pieces of weaponry and 160 aircraft were shown to the public, but the missiles stole the show.²⁰

The DF-17 is designed to fly at the atmosphere's outer edge at over five times the speed of sound. The DF-17 can carry nuclear warheads or destroy targets by smashing into them.

For the first time in public, the DF-41 was seen. It has an estimated range of 12,000-15,000 km, which could penetrate any part of North America. It is rumoured that this missile can carry up to ten warheads – each able to manoeuvre independently after re-entering the atmosphere.²¹

The parade also demonstrated China's ability to strike targets from the sea. The JL-2 intercontinental missile can be launched from China's new Jin-class nuclear submarines. Each submarine can carry a dozen of these missiles.

Also on parade were two new drones; the supersonic WZ-8 and the Sharp Sword. Both of these drones could be used to spot targets for DF-17 hypersonic glider.

A leading US expert on the Chinese military called the parade "the largest most impressive military parade in the history of the world." Professor Andrew Erickson of the US Naval War College commented that China's unveiling of new missiles has put the country "at the cutting-edge of frontier military technologies."²²

Michael Sriffen, the US Undersecretary of Defence for Research and Engineering, told a US Senate committee last year, that should China "choose to employ" supersonic missiles, "we would be, today, at a disadvantage."²³

¹⁹ "Hypersonic missiles highlight the urgent need for nuclear disarmament," *Globe and Mail*, 8 July 2019, p. A-10.

²⁰ "Opening the Arsenal," *The Economist*, 5 October 2019, p. 38.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

²² T. Daigle, "China works 70 years of Communist rule with a display of military muscle," *CBC*, 2 October 2019.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

Strategic Support Force (SSF)

The SSF's mission is reportedly focused on "strategic-level information support" for "space, cyber, electronic and psychological warfare."²⁴ One of its main missions will be strategic denial of the electromagnetic spectrum. The SSF has also assumed responsibility for strategic information warfare, which includes quantum computing and artificial intelligence (AI). China wants to lead the world in AI by 2030.²⁵ China is also investing significantly into warfare, which includes space and cyberspace.²⁶ This would include destroying US satellite and communications systems globally to force a "no satellite, no fight" environment on the US. The SSF is also building up its electronic warfare capability to jam US ship and aircraft radars on both land and at sea. As noted in the *Economist*, perhaps the simplest way to attack a satellite is to hit it with a missile from Earth, as China did in 2007; taking out one of its own weather satellites.²⁷ In addition spy satellites can be blinded by lasers or signals which can be jammed. For example, in November 2018 NATO forces on exercises lost their GPS signals in northern Norway and Finland. It was determined this incident was caused by Russian electronic warfare.

China Partnering with Russia

For strategic planners in the Pentagon, a significant concern is China's increasingly congenial relationship with Russia. The breakdown of Russia's diplomacy with the West as a result of the conflict in Ukraine has driven that country closer to China. For example, trade between the two countries rose by 24.5 percent in 2018.²⁸ In April 2019, the Russian gas producer "Novatek" sold a pair of Chinese firms a 20 percent stake in "Arctic LNG 2" for \$25.5 billion.²⁹

The PLAN has also been conducting joint naval-warfare exercises with the Russian Navy since 2012. In "Joint Sea 2017," three Chinese and ten Russian warships conducted

²⁴ E. Kania and J. Costello, "China's Quest for Information Drives PLA Reforms," *The Diplomat*, 4 March 2017.

²⁵ "Battle algorithm," *The Economist*, 7 September 2019, p. 71.

²⁶ "A new kind of cold war," *The Economist*, 18 May 2019, p. 9.

²⁷ "Using the force," *The Economist*, 20 July 2019, p. 19.

²⁸ "Unlikely partners," *The Economist*, 29 July 2017, p. 35.

²⁹ "Putin backs Xi's vision for international trade," *Globe and Mail*, 27 April 2019, p. A-6.

training in the Baltic for several weeks.³⁰ By all accounts from outside observers, the joint operations was flawless.

In September 2018, 3,200 Chinese troops participated in the largest Russian military exercises since the cold war.³¹ China's Defence Minister Wei Fenghe came to Moscow "to show Americans the close ties between the armed forces of China and Russia". In July 2019 Russian and Chinese warplanes conducted what appeared to be a joint air patrol for the first time, causing alarm for the South Koreans.³²

On April 26, 2019 Mr. Xi, along with Mr. Putin and other 36 national leaders, held a "Belt and Road" summit in Beijing. Russia at this meeting supported this Chinese initiative and followed through later at the UN.

Alexander Lukin, the author of "China and Russia: The New Rapprochement", stated: "Russia and China share their vision of how the world should work – that it should be multipolar; countries should be equal and the world should not be dominated by one power."³³ Lukin then went on to remark "If the US wants to dominate the world, they should fear, because they are not going to dominate the world". Both leaders of China and Russia called for the revival of historic greatness with the perceived opportunities for the two powers to expand their influence at the expense of the United States and allied countries seen in decline.

Robert Sutter, a professor at George Washington University told a hearing in March 2019 before the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission:

Such ties, backed by the respective military and economic power of each state, clearly represent the most serious challenge faced by the United States since the end of the Cold War.³⁴

Many pundits regard the China/ Russian relationship from a different perspective. For example, Professor Aurel Braun of the University of Toronto recently stated:

Russia has been working to increase its power through an alliance with China. But this is a Faustian bargain. Not only will Beijing easily shrug off efforts to be

³⁰ "China's Global Naval Strategy," p. 29.

³¹ "Battle algorithm," p. 10.

³² "Brothers in arms," *The Economist*, 27 July 2019, p. 8.

³³ "Battle algorithm," p. 10.

³⁴ Ibid.

manipulated by Moscow, but the great and growing asymmetry of power between them makes Russia a very junior and increasingly dependent partner.³⁵

The Rise of China's Influence in Africa and the Middle East

Under the guise of China's Belt and Road (BRI) initiative, it is expanding its' economic reach into Africa and the Middle East. China's message to the Western world has been called an argument into three parts: In order: China's rise is inevitable; there are rich rewards for those who co-operate with it; and resistance is futile.³⁶

As noted earlier, in April 2019 leaders from 37 countries attended a BRI summit in Beijing.³⁷ Chinese financial institutions as of this time period as part of the BRI program have lent out US 440 billion dollars in Africa and the Middle East. According to McKinsey, a management consultancy, there are now 10,000 Chinese businesses in Africa.³⁸ In September 2018, President Xi announced another US 60 billion dollars for Africa, "with no political strings attached". At China's main African organization: the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) more than 50 African leaders attended the FOCAC summit in China in September 2018.³⁹ The Chinese business interests in Africa and the Middle East is significant. China's overseas lending of outstanding loans to a myriad of countries around the world exceeds more than \$700 billion today. It is the world's largest official creditor – more than twice as big as the World Bank and IMF combined.⁴⁰ About 60 percent of Chinese loans are extended at higher interest rates and shorter maturities.

In South Africa, a major newspaper chain has Chinese investors holding an equity stake in the paper. The African National Congress has recently lauded the Chinese Communist Party as a "guiding lodestar" for the ANC.⁴¹

Zambia is also increasingly dependent on billions of dollars in Chinese loans. The government has agreed to a joint venture between Zambia's state broadcaster, ZNCA and a

³⁵ A. Braun, "The G7 must be united in standing up to Russia," *Globe and Mail*, 24 August 2019, p. 0-7.

³⁶ "Joining the resistance," *The Economist*, 20 April 2019, p. 43.

³⁷ G. York, "African leaders pursue loans from China, defying US warning of 'predatory' debt," *Globe and Mail*, 26 April 2019, p. A-4.

³⁸ "Choices on the continent," *The Economist*, 9 March 2019, p. 19.

³⁹ G. York, "In Africa, China flexes growing influence," *Globe and Mail*, 11 October 2018, p. A-6.

⁴⁰ "Hey, big lender," *The Economist*, 13 July 2019, p. 69.

⁴¹ "Joining the resistance," p. A-6.

private Chinese company called Startimes, which had become one of Africa's biggest digital TV operator with nearly 20 million users.⁴²

China has also begun to provide thousands of African villages with a Chinese-owned satellite television systems; featuring a range of Chinese news and entertainment services. China has spent hundreds of millions of dollars to set up African branches of China's state-owned television channels and newspapers.⁴³ For years, many African countries have embraced China's offers of investment, often to assist with significant infrastructure projects such as highways, railways and powerplants in return for resources which are then transported back to China. For example Kenya and Ethiopia sought Chinese monies to assist in the development of railways, electrical transmission lines, industrial parks and oil and gas developments.

Many critics of BRI, including the US, have argued that the Chinese in Africa use such loans to eventually gain control of major infrastructures in a country, if they are unable to repay such loans. Worries that China will gain economic and political control have prompted queries from African countries partnering with the Chinese.⁴⁴

General Thomas Waldhouser, head of the US military command in Africa, (AFRICOM), in testimony before a US Senate committee described Africa as a potential "failed continent" and warned that Russia and China are aggressively expanding their influence across Africa in a new era of "great-power competition."⁴⁵

Chinese money is also behind some of the Arab world's biggest projects. In Oman, a consortium of Chinese firms wants to invest \$10 billion to build a 1000 hectare industrial zone near the capital Muscat. This would include such industrial items as petrochemicals, glass, solar panels and car batteries.⁴⁶

Chinese money has also been invested in factories in Algeria, in addition to skyscrapers in Egypt's new capital. In 2018, China pledged \$23 billion in loans and aid to Arab states and signed another \$28 billion in investment and construction deals, such as the expansion of Dubai's airport.⁴⁷ China has built schools, paved roads, bored tunnels and lent Tajikistan \$1.3

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ N. Vanderklippe, "Belt and Road Summit suggests more converts than skeptics," *Globe and Mail*, 26 April 2019, p. A-4.

⁴⁵ G. York, "Several norms of Chinese, Russian influence in Africa," *Globe and Mail*, 9 February 2019, p. A-6.

⁴⁶ "Middle Kingdom meets Middle East," *The Economist*, 20 April 2019, p. 44.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

billion which amounts to half its' foreign debt.⁴⁸ By 2016 the Chinese army units arrived in Tajikistan to watch over the Wakhan corridor – a strip of Afghanistan that separates Tajikistan from Pakistan. China later staged a war game with the Tajik army which had been trained in Shanghai.

China's Acquisition of Global Seaports

Aside from China's construction of several artificial islands in the South China Sea, which include berthing for warships and submarines, runways and ASCM's, China has undertaken significant steps to acquire seaports around the world which has major concerns for allied navies and NATO.

China is striving to become a maritime power. Its navy is now the largest in Asia and expanding globally, beyond the South China Sea. Overseas, Chinese companies had by 2018 helped build or expand 42 ports in 34 countries, often as part of the Belt and Road (BRI) initiative scheme whereby Chinese operators own majority stakes in foreign ports.⁴⁹

The first acquisition of a foreign port by China was the Port of Piraeus in Greece; a showpiece of BRI. Under Chinese ownership, this port has emerged as the second-biggest container port in the Mediterranean and Europe's biggest passenger port.⁵⁰ As noted in the *Globe and Mail* article, "it has allowed China to establish a firm foothold in a prominent European Union and NATO country; one that could be used to extend Chinese influence throughout the Mediterranean countries and the Balkans".

In March 2018, the EU labelled China a "systemic rival" making a hardened tone on Beijing's ocean-hopping industrial and security ambitions. Chinese naval vessels have been welcomed in the port, which stretches almost 30 kilometers.⁵¹

In the same article it also mentioned that in 2016, China State Grid bought 24 percent of Greece's power grid operator and is one of the main financial backers of the redevelopment of Athens's abandoned Hellinikon international airport. It also noted that COSCO, the Chinese state-owned logistics giant that controls the Port of Piraeus is said to be considering purchasing

⁴⁸ "Briefing Russia and China," *The Economist*, 27 July 2019, p. 15.

⁴⁹ "A chained dragon," *The Economist*, 6 July 2019, p. 35.

⁵⁰ E. Reguly, "Chinese overhaul of Greek port opens gateway to Europe," *Globe and Mail*, 8 July 2019, p. A-8.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

other Greek ports and several ports in Italy which has joined the BRI. In 2016 COSCO acquired the port for \$436 million (US).⁵²

In 2017, China established its first overseas military naval base in Djibouti, which leased the land to China for \$20 million a year. Prior to this lease arrangement, China provided the country with a \$600 million port terminal, a \$4 billion terminal for LNG, \$600 million for two new airports and a \$4 billion railroad.⁵³

The Chinese base is 36 hectares and has a maze of subterranean structures which can house up to 10,000 soldiers.⁵⁴ In addition to China, the French, US, Japanese, German and Spanish are either billeted or have military bases in Djibouti. China, like the United States, has an unofficial purpose for its military base: to expand its geopolitical influence in a global hot spot, at the intersection of Africa and the Middle East.⁵⁵ The strategic port of Walvis Bay, on the Atlantic coast of Namibia is often reported to be the next Chinese naval base in Africa.⁵⁶

In Tanzania, China used World Bank funding to deepen and strengthen the port of Dares Salaam in 2017. A Chinese company won a \$154 million contract for the rebuild.⁵⁷

In 2017, China and Mauritius announced “a new strategic partnership” that included port access for the PLAN.⁵⁸

China has dramatically expanded its’ military presence in Africa by the PLA conducting training drills in Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana and Gabon and contributed 2,400 Chinese troops to UN missions in Africa.

China has acquired ports around the world to provide critical berthing and logistical support for its’ merchant fleet and the PLAN. In December 2017 Sri Lanka was unable to pay its debt to China and as a result formally handed over its Hambantota port to that country. In

⁵² B. Chelbaney, “China’s lending: A velvet glove cloaks an iron fist,” *Globe and Mail*, 27 December 2017.

⁵³ “China’s Global Naval Strategy,” p. 37.

⁵⁴ G. York, “How Djibouti became the front line in tensions between Beijing and Washington,” *Globe and Mail*, 7 June 2019, p. A-10.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ “China’s Global Naval Strategy,” p. 39.

⁵⁷ Tanzania signs \$154 million Contract with Chinese Firm to Expand Main Port,” *Reuters*, 10 June 2017.

⁵⁸ “Mauritius: China-Mauritius to Explore New Strategic Partnership,” *Forum on China-Africa Cooperation*, 23 April 2017.

accordance with its lease agreement with Sri Lanka it promised to reduce the debt owed which was \$1.1 billion.⁵⁹

In 2015, Australia sold a 99 year lease of its port in Darwin to a Chinese company for \$506 million (AUD), even though US troops are stationed nearby as part of a build-up of its forces in the Asian theatre.⁶⁰

Australian defence officials are concerned that China also aims to establish a permanent naval base on the Pacific island of Vanuatu. China has already built a new wharf on the island of Espiritu Santo and is upgrading the airport and building roads, a convention center and a sports stadium. It is also a logical location for China to build a satellite-tracking station in this same location.⁶¹

In addition to Sri Lanka, China is also acquiring another naval base in South Asia – at Gwadar in Pakistan; signing off on a 40 year lease. China also has a substantial stake in the deepwater Kyaukpyu port in Myanmar. In 2015 China's state media described Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Yemen and ports in the Maldives as potential ports to support PLA and PLAN military operations.⁶²

In the Middle East, China is building a mega-port in the village of Duqm in Oman.⁶³ In addition, a Chinese firm won the tender to operate a new port in Haifa Israel; the country's third largest city. In 2017, China Ocean Shipping Company became a 49 percent owner of the "dry port" of Khorgos - a vast road-and-rail terminal on the Khazal - Chinese border seen as central to the BRI.⁶⁴

In Brazil, China Merchant Port Holdings purchased a 90 percent stake in Brazil's most profitable port, TCP Participacoes SA for \$924 million in 2017. In 2018 a Chinese company held a 51 percent stake in the Port of Sao Luis in the state of Maranhao for \$244 million.⁶⁵

As noted by the author Fanell, China's naval and maritime expansion throughout the globe is a concern both to the USN and NATO. These ports are not really commercial ports as we know them to be. Their real purpose is to logistically provide bases to the PLAN. Similarly

⁵⁹ "China's Global Naval Strategy," pp. 35-36.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 33.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 34.

⁶² Ibid., p. 36.

⁶³ "Briefing Russia and China," *The Economist*, 27 July 2019, p. 18.

⁶⁴ "Middle Kingdom meets Middle East," *The Economist*, 20 April 2019, p. 44.

⁶⁵ "China's Global Naval Strategy," p. 42.

he remarks that China's merchant marine, such as COSCO, is not only a merchant marine but also an arm of the state.⁶⁶ As the PLAN expands its' blue-water missions beyond the South China Sea, it will need these foreign bases to support its growing fleet and nuclear submarines. The Western world should take notice of this military build-up under the banner of the BRI.

China's Presence in Canada's Arctic Ocean

On 6 September 2017, the Chinese Xinhua News Agency lauded the completion of the first ever Chinese shipping voyage through Canada's NorthWest Passage. The "Xue Long" or "Snow Dragon" commenced its transit through Lancaster Sound to the Beaufort Sea on the grounds of obtaining "scientific information" by way of this icebreaker.⁶⁷ The Chinese reported that the ship accumulated a wealth of experience for Chinese ships operating in northern waters, such as the NorthWest Passage.

As noted in the publication "China's Arctic Ambitions", the authors reflect on the remark made by Rear Admiral Yin Zhuo "The Arctic belongs to all the people around the world, as no nation has sovereignty over it... China must play an indispensable role in Arctic exploration as we have one-fifth of the world's population."⁶⁸

It is clear that China is interested in Canada's NorthWest Passage to possibly reduce ships transit time to Europe as well as the potential for future resource development in the Canadian Arctic.

The publication also states:

The idea that the Canadian Arctic may turn into a transit route was given new life in April 2016 with the publication of a manual on navigation through the NorthWest Passage by China's Maritime Safety Administration." Ministry spokesman Liu Pengfei was widely quoted in the Canadian media saying that "Chinese ships will sail through the NorthWest Passage in the future, and once this route is commonly used, it will directly change global maritime transport and

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 40.

⁶⁷ R. Fife, S. Chase, "China tests shipping in the NorthWest Passage," *Globe and Mail*, 11 September 2017, p. A-3.

⁶⁸ P. W. Lackenbauer, A. Lajeunesse, J. Manicom, F. Lasserre, *China's Arctic Ambitions and what They Mean for Canada* (Calgary, University of Calgary Press, 2018) p. 170.

have a profound influence on international trade, the world economy, capital flow and resource exploitation.⁶⁹

In 2013, China was approved, with other non-Arctic states as “observers” on the Arctic Council consisting of eight arctic member states, including the United States and Canada. Questions raised by Canadian government authorities is whether in future China will abide by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982 (UNCLOS) while their ships transit the NorthWest Passage and will they confirm that any Chinese shipping through the NorthWest Passage will receive Canadian authorization and consent by complying with Canadian regulations and controls prior to entering these waters.

Asia-Pacific expert Professor Paul Evans was quoted in “China’s Arctic Ambitions”, in referring to his study on Canada’s engagement strategies with China since the 1970’s: “Its political power is that it is becoming a rule maker, and occasional rule breaker, with a major hand in defining the rules, norms, and institutions of global order in ways that only decades ago seemed unimaginable. The rise – on a global spread – of Chinese power and influence has catapulted the country from a secondary or tertiary place in Canadian diplomacy to a “top-tier policy priority for Ottawa”, with questions abounding about whether China’s participation in international institutions will conform with “a Western-led Liberal order or whether it will instead “try to create an alternative set of institutions, norms and rules.”⁷⁰

Besides China’s interest in Canada’s Arctic Ocean, it has also been interested in opportunities in Greenland. Chinese companies are involved in several mining projects in this country, including Citronen Fjord zinc exploration in the north and the Kvanefjeld rare earth and uranium project in the south.⁷¹

In Norway, Wang Donjin, president of China National Offshore Oil Corporation stated that China wanted to expand its’ cooperation with Norwegian energy companies.

Chinese infrastructure builders also seem to have an interest in Norway. The Sichuan Road and Bridge Group participated in the construction of the Halogaland Bridge project near the port city of Narvik, the longest suspension bridge within the Arctic Circle.⁷²

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 78.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 21; Paul Evans, “Engaging China: Myth, Aspiration, and Strategy in Canadian Policy from Trudeau to Harper” (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), pp. xi-xii.

⁷¹ M. A. Kuo “The Diplomat,” *Greenland in US-Denmark-China Relations*, 2 October 2019.

⁷² Xin Huanet, “Companies from China, Norway voice hope on more economic, trade cooperation,” 17 May 2019.

Conclusion

Professor Andrew Preston of the University of Cambridge stated several years ago:

As the United States withdraws from its' global commitments, China is stepping into the breach with its' "One Belt, One Road: infrastructure program to bind Eurasia and Africa more tightly together and its' new Asian Infrastructure Bank to fund international development projects." He then remarked: "Over the past ten years US power has dipped compared to others. The US military might still be the world's largest and most technologically sophisticated, but other countries, not least China, have narrowed the gap."⁷³

There is no doubt in the past several years China has become a regional hegemon compared to its' neighbours. The country is sending a message of hard power in that "anything you can do or undertake, China can do bigger and better."⁷⁴ Under the "One Belt, One Road" initiative, China wants to be viewed with wonder and respect."⁷⁵ Externally, Beijing is pursuing a policy of global domination, in direct competition with the US and its' military forces around the world.⁷⁶

In pursuing the "Chinese Dream", there appears no question that building up its military power under BRI, it is expanding globally in its desire to replace the US as a superpower in the very near future. From the PLAN patrolling the South China Sea, it is now looking forward to an active blue-water navy with the capability to deploy carrier battle groups around the world. Of concern to western nations is the fact that China is continuing to acquire commercial seaports on every continent in order to supply the PLAN ongoing logistical support, when needed, in addition to China's ongoing military and commercial connections with its partner in Russia.

The USN is certainly aware of the build-up of the PLAN nuclear submarine program and the acquisition of their new onshore missile capability, which affects the littoral warfare strategy of the USN fleets operating in the Asian theatre.

From the Canadian perspective, there is no question that China is very interested in our Arctic Ocean and specifically possible future traffic of Chinese shipping in our NorthWest Passage. Instead of Canada recognizing that our icebreakers are indeed reaching their shelf-lives and need to be replaced sooner than later, China is already taking steps to build ice-

⁷³ A. Preston, "The rise and fall of great powers," *Globe and Mail*, 7 December 2017, p. O-3.

⁷⁴ "The travails of a regional hegemon," *The Economist*, 22 April 2017, p. 8.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ S. Ringen, "Pushing back against China," *The Los Angeles Times*, 15 March 2019, p. A-7.

breakers to operate in the Arctic in order to assist their commercial ships in these ice-covered waters. As noted earlier, Canada must ensure that it has the ability year-round to monitor and enforce our legislation and regulations if Chinese ship traffic is on the increase in these northern waters.

Although Canada wishes to remain a strong trading partner with the Peoples Republic of China, Mr. Xi has aggressively asserted China's goal is to overtake the US as the global military and political hegemon by 2050, using the Belt and Road Initiative to reorient the world's economy toward Beijing.⁷⁷ In addition, the West must recognize that China remains a one-party dictatorship, with no rule of law, no free speech and a government whose authority derives not from the consent of the governed, but from the maintenance among them of a certain amount of fear.⁷⁸

The US and its western allies much be wary of the global military expansion of the Chinese dragon under the guise of the BRI. The Chinese leadership has made an open declaration that they see themselves as the future superpower replacing the US in this role in both Asia and other important strategic locations throughout the world.

It is interesting to note that in a recent Defence White Paper, Japan now lists China as a bigger military threat than North Korea, as it routinely sends its air and sea patrols near Japan's western Okinawa islands and into the Western Pacific.⁷⁹

Based on the recent pronouncements from the Chinese leadership, NATO and our allies must consider China as a potential military threat.

⁷⁷ C. Burton, *Globe and Mail*, 15 August 2019, p. A-10.

⁷⁸ Editorial, "Why Beijing fears protests in Hong Kong," *Globe and Mail*, 20 August 2019.

⁷⁹ T. Kelly, "Japan lists China as a bigger threat than N. Korea in new report," *Globe and Mail*, 28 September 2019, p. A-20.