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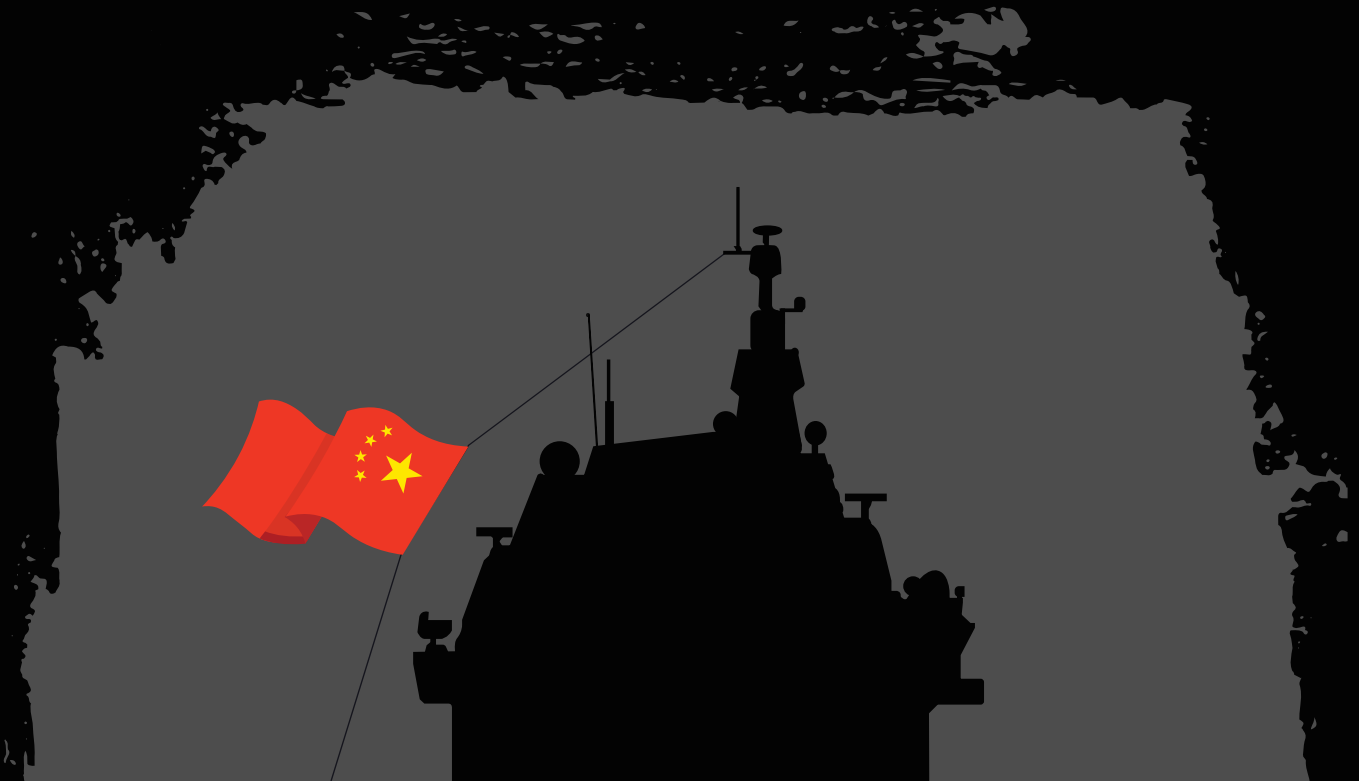
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NOTES: 25



Precluding the Powerful Enemy:

A New PLA Concept for a Taiwan Conflict



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Precluding the Powerful Enemy: A New PLA Concept for a Taiwan Conflict

Ryan D. Martinson¹

Key Takeaways:

- In recent years, the PLA has employed a new concept—“preclusion” (*shezu*)—that captures the two related missions of deterring and denying U.S. military intervention in a Taiwan conflict.
- While the precise origin of the term is unknown, as early as 2019 it appeared in an internal PLA article written by a PLA Navy admiral with direct responsibility for commanding forces in a Taiwan campaign. This early use of the concept suggested that “deterrence” (懾) and “denial” (阻) were two steps in a three-step graduated PLA response to U.S. military intervention.
- Since the intensification of PLA operations around Taiwan that began in 2022, the term has frequently appeared in both PLA reporting and academic writing.
- In Chinese military strategy, “preclusion” would seek to combine defensive operations on “interior lines” and offensive operations on “exterior lines.” The former would rely on shore-based cruise and ballistic missiles “to use the land to control the sea,” while the latter would favor long-range air and naval operations to envelop the approaching enemy.
- The “preclusion” concept is essential to PLA thinking on “cognitive warfare,” which seeks, among other aims, to deprive the adversary of the will to intervene on Taiwan’s behalf.
- Precluding U.S. military intervention in a Taiwan conflict is an apparent driver of the PLA Navy’s development and employment of carrier strike groups. It is the core focus of PLA Air Force training and operations beyond the First Island Chain.

¹ Ryan D. Martinson is a researcher at the China Maritime Studies Institute. The views and opinions expressed here are the author’s alone and do not reflect the assessments of the U.S. Navy, U.S. Department of Defense, or any other U.S. government entity. The author thanks Dan Caldwell, Ian Easton, and Chris Sharman for comments/edits on earlier drafts of this article. Any errors/omissions are his alone.

Introduction

As the People's Liberation Army (PLA) accelerates its preparations for a military campaign against Taiwan, how does the prospect of direct U.S. involvement inform its planning process? What does the PLA think it must do to dissuade Washington from intervening on Taiwan's behalf? Should dissuasion fail, how will it prevent the U.S. military from meaningfully contributing to Taiwan's defense? Where and how does it intend to operate, and which platforms and weapons will it rely on to achieve its strategic and operational objectives against the United States? Any attempt to answer these vital questions requires a certain degree of fluency in PLA jargon, especially the subset associated with the "counter-intervention" problem. While foreign experts have done fine work deciphering the PLA's various modes of expression, in recent years a new concept has appeared that has yet to receive the attention it deserves: *shezu* (慑阻), translated as "preclude" or "preclusion." Combining the characters for "intimidate" and "thwart," the term encompasses the PLA's evolving approach to countering U.S. military intervention in a Taiwan conflict.

Tailor-Made Coercion

If the PLA were ordered to attack Taiwan, it would have to account for the possibility of U.S. military intervention. While Washington has offered no ironclad security guarantees to Taipei, it has clearly expressed a strategic interest in a peaceful resolution to Taiwan's status and has deployed forces to the region to signal its commitment to that goal. Thus, the prospect of U.S. involvement in a Taiwan conflict has been a key driver—perhaps the key driver—of China's military modernization since the 1990s, affecting everything from strategy to procurement to training. By building enough military power and demonstrating its willingness to use that power, the PLA believes that it can deter Washington from getting involved. However, if deterrence fails, it would try to stop the U.S. from aiding Taiwan's defense, likely resulting in a direct confrontation with the vaunted U.S. military.²

In recent years, the PLA has adopted a phrase that captures both aims: deterrence and denial. The term is *shezu*. It combines two words: 慑 (intimidate) and 阻 (thwart). In this article, I will translate it as "preclude" or "preclusion."

Until recently, the term "preclude" (*shezu*) rarely appeared in PLA writings.³ When it did, it was usually in a tactical naval context.⁴ PLA Navy forces, for instance, train to "preclude" (deter and

² Ryan D. Martinson, "Counter-Intervention in Chinese Naval Strategy," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 44, no. 2 (2021), pp. 265-287.

³ It is not listed in the 2011 PLA *Dictionary of Military Terms*, a volume containing a large catalogue of strategic terms and concepts. It is absent from both the 2013 (Academy of Military Science) edition of the *Science of Military Strategy* and the 2020 edition of the volume by the same name, published by China's National Defense University. See 中国人民解放军军语 [*Dictionary of Military Terms*] (Beijing: Academy of Military Science Press, September 2011). 寿晓松 [Shou Xiaosong], ed., 战略学 [*Science of Military Strategy*] (Beijing: Military Science, 2013); 肖天亮 [Xiao Tianliang], ed., 战略学 [*Science of Military Strategy*] (Beijing: National Defense Univ. Press, 2020).

⁴ One contemporary synopsis of the 2015 U.S. Office of Naval Intelligence report entitled *The PLA Navy: New Capabilities and Missions for the 21st Century* translated the English term "deterrence" as *shezu* (慑阻). See 钱中 [Qian Zhong] and 吕强 [Lv Qiang], 解读《中国海军 21 世纪新能力和新使命》["A Close Reading of *The PLA Navy: New Capabilities and Missions for the 21st Century*"], 现代舰船 [*Modern Ships*], no. 7A (2015), p. 46.

deny) pirates from attacking civilian vessels in the Gulf of Aden. If the PLA Navy cannot scare the pirates away, it will stop them with force.⁵

In the last four years, the term has occurred more frequently in PLA sources, almost always in a strategic/operational context and almost always about Taiwan. This trend has roughly coincided with the dramatic uptick in China's coercive activities near the island, which began in 2022. From 4–7 August of that year, for example, the PLA conducted military exercises around Taiwan as a show of force following Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's visit. A Chinese state-run news channel hosted National Defense University (NDU) Professor Meng Xiangqing (孟祥青) to discuss the significance of the exercises. In his remarks, Professor Meng highlighted that this was “the first time the PLA had ever established a missile range east of Taiwan.” He argued that the threat of PLA missiles flying over the island had compelled the aircraft carrier USS RONALD REAGAN, then operating near Taiwan, to “retreat about several hundred kilometers.” In his words, this demonstrated the PLA's “distant-area preclusion capability.”⁶



Figure 1. NDU Professor Meng Xiangqing⁷

⁵ 第二十四批护航编队航渡途中组织反海盗演练 [“The 24th Escort Task Force Conducts Anti-Piracy Drills During Its Transit”], 人民海军 [People's Navy], 19 August 2016, p. 2. See also 潘志强: 誓把此生献大洋 [“Pan Zhiqiang: I Vow to Dedicate My Life to the Sea”], 人民海军 [People's Navy], 7 March 2016, p. 3. See also 尚俊亮 [Shang Junliang], 赵阳 [Zhao Yang], and 杜江帆 [Du Jiangfan], 海天组网守卫深蓝航道 [“Forming a Network at Sea to Safeguard the Deep Blue Waterways”], 当代海军 [Navy Today], no. 12 (December 2021), pp. 25-26. See also 赵阳 [Zhao Yang] and 杜江帆 [Du Jiangfan], 新年“首”护, 战舰伴您远航——海军第 39 批护航编队为中国远洋渔船延伸护航纪实 [“The ‘First’ Escort of the New Year: A Report on the 39th Naval Escort Task Force's Extended Escort Mission for Chinese Distant-Ocean Fishing Vessels”], 解放军报 [PLA Daily], 6 January 2022, p. 4.

⁶ Professor Meng's original words were 远域慑止能力, which used the character 止 (stop) instead of 阻 (thwart). Reporting on his interview included a section heading with the correct characters, i.e., “precluding external forces” (慑阻外部势力). See 导弹穿岛! 航母出动! 专家: 我们可以想怎么打就怎么打 [“Missiles Pass Over the Island! Aircraft Carrier Deployed! Expert: We Can Fight However We Want”], 央视军事 [CCTV Military], 5 August 2022, http://m.cyol.com/gb/articles/2022-08/05/content_PO8Vmix0B.html

⁷ Ibid.

As Meng’s comments suggest, the term “preclusion” (*shezu*) is PLA jargon referring to a special category of coercive operations directed against the United States in a Taiwan scenario. Indeed, the term is often used in combination with oblique references to the United States. In September 2025, for instance, as droves of PLA Air Force aircraft flew over Beijing to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the victory against Japan, the *PLA Daily* described the newer aircraft models as “a powerful foundation upon which the PLA precludes the powerful enemy and secures victory in the air and space.”⁸ In December 2025, PLA Navy Senior Captain Zhang Junshe (张军社) offered commentary on the PLA’s “Justice Mission-2025” exercises, held that month in the waters and airspace around Taiwan. In his remarks, Zhang claimed that PLA operations like these would someday “preclude external interference forces from providing support to Taiwanese separatist forces.”⁹



Figure 2. PLA Air Force Bombers Flying Over Beijing (3 September 2025)¹⁰

⁸ 赵第宇 [Zhao Diyu], 李建文 [Li Jianwen], and 张雷 [Zhang Lei], 座舱里的“祖国颂” [“‘Ode to the Motherland’ in the Cockpit”], 解放军报 [*PLA Daily*], 30 September 2025, p. 5. See also 刘岩 [Liu Yan], 慑阻强敌 制胜空天——走近以作战体系编成的空中梯队 [“Precluding the Powerful Enemy, Winning in the Air—A Closer Look at the Air Echelon Formed as an Integrated Combat System”], 光明日报 [*Guangming Daily*], 4 September 2025, https://epaper.gmw.cn/gmrb/html/2025-09/04/nw.D110000gmrb_20250904_1-13.htm. See also 刘济美 [Liu Jimei], 张瑞杰 [Zhang Ruijie], and 米思源 [Mi Siyuan], 4个关键词看懂空中受阅梯队 [“Understanding the Aerial Parade Formations Through Four Key Terms”], 新华网 [Xinhua], 7 September 2025, www.news.cn/politics/20250907/e2eb9d0f02354afe84fc7642ea342c8a/c.html.

⁹ 军事专家: “内控外驱”严密封控“台独”, 慑阻外部势力干涉 [“Military Expert: ‘Internal Control and External Deterrence’ Strictly Curb ‘Taiwan Independence,’ Preclude External Forces from Interfering”], 北京日报 [*Beijing Daily*], 29 December 2025, <https://news.bjd.com.cn/2025/12/29/11492193.shtml>.

¹⁰ “Understanding the Aerial Parade Formations Through Four Key Terms.”

A Recent Idea, Newly Elevated

Although “preclusion” widely entered the public lexicon in the wake of Speaker Pelosi’s visit, that does not mean it was invented in 2022. In fact, the PLA had already been using it in a counter-intervention context, just not openly. In a 2019 issue of the internal PLA journal *Military Art*, the then-Commander of the PLA Navy’s Fuzhou Base (Unit 92403), Rear Admiral Wu Hongzhi (吴宏志)—someone with direct responsibility for a cross-Strait assault—published an article about how the PLA could offset its capability shortfalls for a Taiwan campaign by emphasizing rapid, well-coordinated operations. In his piece, Rear Admiral Wu carefully weighed the prospect of “deep military intervention by external forces.” He cited the need for “precise and forceful preclusion operations to firmly secure comprehensive control over the battlefield.”¹¹

In his article, Rear Admiral Wu offered valuable details about the two constituent parts of “preclusion”—deterrence (慑) and denial (阻). As he described them, they constitute the first two steps of a three-step graduated PLA response to U.S. military intervention. Against low-intensity intervention, the PLA should “focus on deterrence” (以“慑”为主). This meant “rapidly establishing a maritime defensive posture, deterring close-in [U.S.] intimidation operations, and increasing the expected cost of intervention.” Against medium-intensity intervention, the PLA should “focus on denial” (以“阻”为主). To that end, it should “rapidly blockade the waters surrounding the island, push forward the near-seas defensive front, and minimize the impact [of U.S. intervention] on our core combat operations.” Ultimately, if the U.S. engaged in high-intensity intervention, the focus would be on “counter-action” (以“反”为主). In his view, the PLA should “resolutely intercept and strike advancing [U.S.] forces, swiftly counter [U.S.] operations that cross [PLA-defined] lines, and deter and stop [the U.S.] from further risky moves, thereby providing strong support for effective strategic control over the situation.”¹²

A “Key” Concept

The term “preclusion” often appears in PLA writings without any additional context, making it difficult for unfamiliar readers to grasp its connotations. If one accepts the explanation offered above, the term becomes a “key” to unlock meaning within the texts in which it appears. For example, in April 2023, PLA reports highlighted the term in their coverage of the inaugural “Joint Sword” exercise around Taiwan. In a paragraph about the naval component of the exercise, the *PLA Daily* described how PLAN destroyers and frigates had conducted drills including “close-range assault, *distant-area preclusion* (远域慑阻), and air and missile defense.”¹³ For those familiar with the jargon, that passage implies that the PLA Navy was training to deter and deny the U.S. Navy at long distances from the mainland. During the December 2025 “Justice Mission-2025” exercises, the PLA reported that the Eastern Theater

¹¹ 吴宏志 [Wu Hongzhi], 东南方向近岸近海作战“快速聚优”探纲 [“Outline for the ‘Rapid Concentration of Superior Forces’ in Near Shore and Near Seas Operations in the Southeast”], 军事学术 [*Military Art*], no. 8 (2019), p. 16.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ 樊斌 [Fan Bin] and 陈利 [Chen Li], 东部战区组织环台岛战备警巡和“联合利剑”演习 这是对“台独”分裂势力与外部势力勾连挑衅的严重警告, 是捍卫国家主权和领土完整的必要行动 [“Eastern Theater Command Organizes Combat Readiness Patrols Around Taiwan and ‘Joint Sword’ Exercise. A Serious Warning Against the Collusion and Provocations by ‘Taiwan Independence’ Separatist Forces and External Forces. A Necessary Action to Safeguard National Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity”], 解放军报 [*PLA Daily*], 9 April 2023, p. 1.

Command had practiced, among other subjects, “*multi-dimensional preclusion on exterior lines*” (外线立体慑阻).¹⁴ This likely referred to offensive air and maritime operations intended to envelop U.S. forces in the far seas, in support of defensive PLA operations conducted on “interior lines” (i.e., cruise and ballistic missile strikes from the mainland).¹⁵

The term unlocks other potentially useful insights from PLA texts:

1. *A Concern of Chinese Military Strategy*

The term “preclusion” has appeared in recent PLA writings on military strategy. For instance, in 2024, PLA Navy Captain Chen Zhongwei (陈忠伟) published an article in *China Military Science* on the topic of innovation in “military strategic guidance” (军事战略指导), which the PLA defines as “the principled directives and guidance on the preparation and conduct of war.”¹⁶ In a section on new models and approaches to great power war, Captain Chen highlighted the threats posed by the “hegemonic state,” i.e., the United States. In his view, the U.S. is fixated on preparing for high-end military conflict against China. Captain Chen therefore recommends that China respond to U.S. hostility by adroitly integrating core elements in its military strategy. For example, the PLA must both “command the sea from the land” (倚陆制海)—a reference to anti-ship cruise and ballistic missile attacks from the mainland—and “pin down [the U.S.] on exterior lines” (外线牵制), likely referring to offensive air and naval operations intended to envelop the enemy. Captain Chen also highlights the need to combine both “strategic preclusion” (战略慑阻) and “campaign and tactical destruction” as a means, in his words, “to control the scale of conflict.”¹⁷ The concept also appeared in a 2025 *China Military Science* article about applying the lessons from China’s conflict with Imperial Japan to the current situation with the United States. The authors recognize that, as in the past, China is facing a more powerful enemy, and “this strategic situation will persist for a period of time.” Thus, any effort to innovate China’s military strategy should “focus on effectively counterbalancing and precluding the powerful enemy” (应着眼有效制衡和慑阻强敌). Echoing Captain Chen, the authors highlight the need to leverage China’s ability to “command the sea from the land” and the advantages afforded by its close proximity to the fight (以近制远优势).¹⁸

¹⁴ 东部战区位台岛周边开展“正义使命-2025”演习 这是对“台独”分裂势力和外部干涉势力的严重警告，是捍卫国家主权、维护国家统一的正当必要行动 [“Eastern Theater Command Conducts the ‘Justice Mission-2025’ Exercise Around Taiwan Island. A Serious Warning to ‘Taiwan Independence’ Separatist Forces and External Interference Forces. A Legitimate and Necessary Action to Defend National Sovereignty and Safeguard National Unity”], 解放军报 [*PLA Daily*], 30 December 2025, p. 1.

¹⁵ For PLA definitions of “exterior lines” (战略外线) and “interior lines” (战略内线), see *Dictionary of Military Terms*, p. 56.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹⁷ 陈忠伟 [Chen Zhongwei], 新征程上创新军事战略指导问题研究 [“Issues on Innovating Military Strategic Guidance on the New Journey”], 中国军事科学 [*China Military Science*], no. 2 (2024), p. 86.

¹⁸ 闫文虎 [Yan Wenhui], 王盛 [Wang Sheng], 殷学斌 [Yin Xuebin], and 田宇 [Tian Yu], 传承抗日战争的抗强制强胜强智慧创新发展新时代军事战略指导 [“Carrying Forward the Wisdom from the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression on Resisting the Powerful Enemy, Countering the Powerful Enemy, and Prevailing Against the Powerful Enemy to Innovatively Develop Military Strategic Guidance for the New Era”], 中国军事科学 [*China Military Science*], no. 4 (2025), p. 16.

2. A Goal of Cognitive Warfare

The PLA has fully embraced the concept of “cognitive warfare,” defined as actions in the physical and information domains intended “to undermine the enemy’s cognitive foundation,” thereby achieving the strategic aim of “conquering the heart and breaking the will.”¹⁹ Given the psychological aspect of military deterrence, it is natural that the concept of “preclusion” appears in PLA writings on cognitive warfare. In an early 2022 article, PLA Army Senior Colonel Zhang Guangsheng (张广胜), assigned to the Central Military Commission’s Political and Legal Commission, summarized the different “operational patterns” (作战样式) of cognitive domain warfare, one of which he called “detering war and denying [the enemy]” (慑战拒止). In a section describing this pattern, he cited the goal of “precluding the enemy’s strategic adventurist intentions.”²⁰ In a 2023 issue of *China Military Science*, three NDU professors examined cognitive warfare in the context of joint military operations. The authors offered recommendations for how best to use cognitive warfare to achieve desired strategic and operational outcomes. In the case of military deterrence, they highlighted the aim of “precluding” the enemy’s “will to use force.” To that end, they recommended that the PLA conduct a range of “military deterrence operations” designed to shackle the enemy with a “cognitive restraint,” namely, that “any intervention would be met with a military response and that [a campaign of] denial is hopeless, thereby deterring the operational opponent and precluding external intervention.”²¹

3. A Mission for Carrier Strike Groups

Aircraft carriers are prized for their ability to support operations across a broad continuum from peace to war. Some in the United States have argued that because of improvements in long-range precision strike, their utility in high-end naval operations has greatly diminished.²² Regardless of the merits of this argument, the PLA clearly does not believe that is the case. In a late 2025 issue of *Military Art*, three experts from the PLA Naval Aviation University published an article about how PLA Navy carrier strike groups could best cope with the U.S. Navy’s concept of distributed maritime operations (DMO, 海上分布式作战), defined as the coordinated employment of small numbers of large, manned, multi-function platforms and large numbers of small and cheap unmanned systems “to boost operational flexibility and strike capabilities and reduce the opponent’s strike effectiveness.” The authors argue that DMO constituted a “new challenge” for PLA Navy carrier strike groups conducting “far seas preclusion operations.” This created “an

¹⁹ 高凯 [Gao Kai], 探究认知战运行机理 [“Exploring the Operational Mechanisms of Cognitive Warfare”], 解放军报 [*PLA Daily*], 12 April 2022, p. 7.

²⁰ 张广胜 [Zhang Guangsheng], 认知域作战若干问题 [“Several Issues on Cognitive Domain Warfare”], 中国军事科学 [*China Military Science*], no. 1 (2022), p. 117.

²¹ 闫振生 [Yan Zhensheng], 刘孝良 [Liu Xiaoliang], and 黄立彬 [Huang Libin], 新时代联合作战认知战浅析 [“A Brief Analysis of Cognitive Warfare in Joint Operations in the New Era”], 中国军事科学 [*China Military Science*], no. 1 (2023), p. 77.

²² “Debate on the Future of Aircraft Carriers,” U.S. Naval Institute, 9 January 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8sdNU0K1Hg>; Sam Roggeveen, “China’s New Aircraft Carrier is Already Obsolete,” *Foreign Policy*, 25 April 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/04/25/chinas-new-carrier-is-already-obsolete/>.

urgent need for new ideas and new solutions,” which the authors then provide.²³ In September 2022, the PLA Navy held a major, service-wide meeting on improving personnel training and education. An unnamed representative from the Naval Aviation University gave a speech on new approaches to training naval aviators, which is one of the school’s core missions. According to excerpts from the speech, the university pledged to “focus on cultivating elite naval aviators who can...stand shoulder-to-shoulder against the powerful enemy.” The university also intended “to strive to forge...the main force for precluding the powerful enemy” (慑阻强敌的主力).²⁴ These data points lend credence to the 2025 claim by an unnamed Chinese military analyst that “the possibility could not be ruled out” that Chinese aircraft carrier strike groups would someday do battle with enemy carrier strike groups in distant locations.²⁵

4. The Core Focus of PLA Air Force “Far Seas” Operations

Like the PLA Navy, the PLA Air Force is buying equipment and training personnel for “distant-area preclusion” (远域慑阻) operations.²⁶ However, given that the service currently has few overseas responsibilities, when the PLA Air Force operates in the “far seas” it is almost entirely fixated on high-end operations against the “powerful enemy.” Currently the H-6K bomber is the platform of choice for that purpose. One PLA article published in September 2025, for instance, highlighted the evolution of its mission from “near seas confrontation to distant-area preclusion” (从近海对抗到远域慑阻的战略跨越).²⁷ In late 2023, the internal PLA journal *Air Force Military Academics* published an article entitled “Creating an Air Kill Chain for Operations in the Far Seas and Distant Areas.” In his introduction, the author, a Senior Colonel at the Air Force Research Institute, declared that the PLA Air Force’s combat effectiveness was determined by its ability to achieve air superiority in locations far from the Chinese mainland. Moreover, to defend China’s national interests, the PLA Air Force should “conduct missions such as denial, preclusion, and raiding at great distances from China” (完成远离本土的拒止、慑阻、破击等任务). To this end, the service “must establish an air kill chain for operations in the far seas and distant areas against the powerful enemy, develop a system-level operational capability to

²³ 潘长鹏 [Pan Chengpeng], 陈榕 [Chen Rong], and 韩玉龙 [Han Yulong], 航母编队有人无人协同反制敌海上分布式作战探研 [“Research and Development on Carrier Strike Group Manned-Unmanned Collaborative Countermeasures Against Enemy Distributed Maritime Operations”], 军事学术 [Military Art], no. 6 (2025), p. 26.

²⁴ 探索舰载机飞行人才培养新路 [“Exploring Approaches to Training Aircraft Carrier Pilots”], 人民海军 [People’s Navy], 23 September 2022, p. 3.

²⁵ Original Chinese: 我们也不排除未来和敌方的航母战斗群在大洋深处展开角逐的可能性. The article in which this claim was made was first published in *Global Times* and later republished by Xinhua. 双航母编队首提“互为对手实战对抗”展现了何种能力? [“What Capabilities Does the First-Ever ‘Adversary Live-Fire Drill’ Between Two Aircraft Carrier Strike Groups Demonstrate?”], 环球时报 [Global Times], 1 July 2025, <http://www.news.cn/milpro/20250701/9904e2b3121a482885b16cf0e100ccb3/c.html>.

²⁶ 张伟 [Zhang Wei], 徐梦玥 [Xu Mengyue], and 李建文 [Li Jianwen], 同一蓝天下共上一堂课——从国防教育视角看第十一届空军航空开放活动和长春航空展 [“A Shared Lesson Under the Same Blue Sky—A Look at the 11th Air Force Aviation Open Event and the Changchun Air Show from the Perspective of National Defense Education”], 解放军报 [PLA Daily], 3 October 2025, p. 3.

²⁷ 张瑞杰 [Zhang Ruijie] and 米思源 [Mi Siyuan], 首次! 轰-6 双机在空军航空开放活动进行飞行展示 [“A First! A Pair of H-6 Bombers Perform Flight Demonstration at Air Force Open Day Event”], 新华社 [Xinhua], 19 September 2025, <https://military.cctv.com/2025/09/19/ARTIww8tpgvxDnvcQKk8WSFh250919.shtml>.

counter the powerful enemy, and provide strong support for effectively asserting air supremacy in the far seas and distant areas.”²⁸

Conclusion

In recent years, the PLA has employed a new concept—“preclusion” (*shezu*)—that succinctly captures the two related missions of deterring and denying U.S. military intervention in a Taiwan conflict. While the precise origin of the term is unknown, in 2019 it appeared in an internal PLA article written by a PLA Navy admiral with direct responsibility for commanding forces in a Taiwan campaign. This early use of the concept suggested that “deterrence” and “denial” were two steps in a three-step graduated PLA response to U.S. military intervention. Since the intensification of PLA operations around Taiwan that began in 2022, the term has frequently appeared in both PLA reporting and academic writing. A close reading of these sources shows that the concept of “preclusion” is a focus of PLA military strategy, especially naval and air operations on “exterior lines” in support of missile attacks on “interior lines.” The deterrence element of preclusion is a key concern of PLA thinking on cognitive warfare, which seeks, among other aims, to deprive the adversary of the will to defend Taiwan. The preclusion mission is an apparent driver of the PLA Navy’s development and employment of carrier strike groups, and the threats posed by dispersed enemy forces armed with modern munitions—as embodied by the U.S. Navy’s DMO concept—are regarded as a technical challenge that can and should be overcome, not harbingers of a fundamental shift in the nature of naval warfare. Whereas counter-intervention is one of many missions the PLA Navy performs beyond the First Island Chain, undermining the strategic will and military ability of the “powerful enemy” (i.e., the United States) appears to be the primary driver of the PLA Air Force’s fixation on far seas operations.

²⁸ 杨红霞 [Yang Hongxia], 远海远域作战中的空中杀伤链构建 [“Creating an Air Kill Chain in the Far Seas and Distant Areas”], 空军军事学术 [*Air Force Military Academics*], no. 5 (2023), p. 10.