

New U.S. Maritime Strategy: Initial Chinese Responses¹

Andrew S. Erickson

No Turning Back

The United States unquestionably remains the country with the largest stake in the security of the oceans. It must safeguard its 8.8 million square kilometers of exclusive economic zone (EEZ) – more than any other nation in the world² – and nearly 21,000 kilometers of coastline.³ Most importantly, the United States still operates the world's most advanced maritime forces and largest economy – one deeply dependent on overseas commerce in a world where a staggering nine-tenths of all trade and two-thirds of all petroleum is transported by sea.⁴

Enter China. This increasingly capable and influential nation is acquiring a growing interest in maritime security and commerce, which are essential to its national program of “peaceful development.” China arguably already possesses the world's second largest navy and largest civil maritime sector.⁵ In 2006, maritime industries generated an estimated 10 percent of its GDP (US\$270 billion), a

Andrew Erickson is an assistant professor and founding member of the China Maritimes Studies Institute in the Strategic Research Department of the Naval War College.

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significant increase from 2005,⁶ and may reach \$1 trillion by 2020.⁷ China also has 18,000 km of coastline, claims over 4 million square km of sea area, and operates over 1,400 harbors. Already the world's third largest ship builder (after South Korea and Japan), China aims to become the largest by 2015. By some metrics, China has more seafarers, deep sea fleets and ocean fishing vessels than any other nation.⁸ Seven maritime universities and colleges and 18 vocational maritime institutes are training China's seafarers today. This maritime economic revolution increasingly hinges on homeland maritime security. China has five of the world's top 10 ports by cargo volume;⁹ and ships entered Chinese ports more than 1.5 million times in 2005 alone.¹⁰

A new era of shared stakes in the global maritime commons is upon the two nations. How China and the United States interact on the high seas will be of enormous import to their respective futures and that of the international system. The United States is forging a new path with the recent promulgation of a new maritime strategy and China's reaction to it will significantly impact its direction and even perhaps its realization and success.

Strategies at Sea

The new direction for a U.S. maritime strategy began with a landmark speech delivered at the 17th International Seapower Symposium, held at the U.S. Naval War College in September 2005, by the then-U.S. chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Mullen. He called for a series of Global Maritime Partnerships spearheaded by a "Thousand-Ship Navy" that would bring the maritime forces of friendly nations together based on their abilities, needs and interests to provide collective security against a variety of threats in the maritime commons.¹¹

Under the leadership of Mullen,¹² and Adm. Gary Roughead, the current chief of Naval Operations, the U.S. government has for the first time brought all three of its maritime forces (the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard) together to produce a unified strategic document, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*. This new strategy was guided by the objectives set out in the *U.S. National Security Strategy*,¹³ the *National Defense Strategy*,¹⁴ the *National Military Strategy*¹⁵ and

the *National Strategy for Maritime Security*.¹⁶ It incorporates the ideas of U.S. military officers, government civilians and academics.

As U.S. Secretary of the Navy Donald C. Winter has cautioned, the United States is “not walking away from, diminishing, or retreating in any way from those elements of hard power that win wars – or deter them from ever breaking out in the first place.”¹⁷ But this first major U.S. maritime strategy in twenty-five years is based on the premise that “...preventing wars is as important as winning wars”¹⁸ and does place renewed emphasis on cooperating to protect the global commons on which the security and prosperity of nations around the world depend. In this new vision, U.S. maritime forces will focus more on participating in collective security efforts that recognize the importance of broad coalitions “in an

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open, multi-polar world.”¹⁹ Long-term engagement with other nations, in the form of maritime law enforcement (e.g., against terrorism, proliferation and drug trafficking), regional maritime governance frameworks, capacity building, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief will be emphasized. This is because “trust and cooperation,” while vital to collective defense against security threats, cannot simply “be surged” to respond to a crisis; they must be painstakingly built and maintained on a permanent basis.²⁰

The new U.S. Maritime Strategy represents a significant departure from the last major strategy, as defined by Navy Secretary John F. Lehman, Jr. in his 1986 “Maritime Strategy.”²¹ War fighting played a much more prominent role in that document and whereas the Soviet Union was the explicit focus of the 1986 strategy, today there is no identified adversary. While the new 11-page strategy document is not detailed, it does contain a powerful vision. In today’s increasingly globalized and uncertain world, U.S. maritime forces are committed to work with others to maintain the security of the global maritime commons. Every nation has an opportunity to participate in this process; no nation is explicitly excluded. Rather, it is only those nations and sub-state actors that actively decide to challenge or disrupt this process that could become a threat to the existing order and hence trigger countermeasures on the part of the United States and its

global maritime partners.

While it is premature to predict the degree to which the new U.S. Maritime Strategy will succeed in shaping and safeguarding the global maritime commons, a variety of indicators should be monitored over the next several years.²² Within the U.S. Navy, continued CNO support and the appearance of the maritime strategy's principles in key navy planning documents²³ as well as national strategy pillar documents,²⁴ will provide important barometers of success. As in the past, reactions from other military services, the Congress and the media will signal policy and monetary support for relevant programs. Regardless of who the next U.S. president is, implementation is likely to be subject to budgetary limitations, particularly given the ongoing challenges associated with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Cooperation and coordination between the U.S. Navy, Marines and Coast Guard will be particularly important to the strategy's successful functioning. A broad acceptance of and participation in the Global Maritime Partnership Initiative by the international community will likewise be essential if the strategy is to fulfill its intended goals.

The new U.S. Maritime Strategy contains a variety of crucial elements that could facilitate enhanced cooperation with China. First, the emphasis on conflict prevention echoes many elements of Chinese strategic culture and doctrine. Second, the avowed objective of securing the global maritime commons is highly compatible with China's strategic interests. China relies increasingly on the oceans to both import tremendous amounts of energy and raw materials, and to ship its finished goods to market. At the same time, while its navy is increasingly formidable regarding Taiwan and littoral maritime areas, it has not yet developed the extensive blue water capabilities needed to independently safeguard interests further afield. The key for the United States will be to attempt to convince China that the goals and intentions of the new strategy are real and not, as many in China fear, merely "window-dressing" or a disguise for a "containment" of China. Third, the new emphasis on humanitarian operations, especially, offers opportunities for bilateral cooperation to build mutual trust without participat-

ing in activities that Beijing may deem objectionable.

A Cautious Reaction

In the nearly two months since the new U.S. Maritime Strategy's promulgation, there has been muted public reaction in China. This could indicate a number of possibilities. The new strategy may not be perceived as a bona fide shift in new U.S. policy – and therefore a strategic opportunity – for China. Other events, such as Taiwan politics, may be demanding greater attention at this time. It may also represent a deliberate hedging strategy to avoid definitive judgments until the new document is better understood.²⁵

Nevertheless, several articles already offer some insight into possible Chinese assessments of the U.S. Maritime Strategy. One of the first Chinese reports appeared in *International Herald Leader*,²⁶ a weekly general affairs newspaper.²⁷ The article describes a new emphasis on soft power and highlights the document's balance of preventing war with winning war. While seemingly open to this new approach, the article quotes a U.S. official as stating that the new strategy fails to address such critical issues as “[c]ommercial fleets, industrial bases, polar resources and missile defense.” In a theme common to nearly all Chinese articles on the subject, the author states, “so-called ‘international cooperation’ still serves the global deployment of U.S. sea power.”²⁸

More blatant suspicions of U.S. intent are also often on prominent display. Many Chinese observers contend that U.S. military activities are specifically designed to “encircle’ China.” In one case, emphasis is expressed with regard to U.S. military activities with the Philippines, which, being located in Southeast Asia and so close to Taiwan, is seen by two Chinese reporters as being vital for such “encirclement.”²⁹ This last point, while seeming to ignore the overwhelming rationale for counterterrorism cooperation between Washington and Manila, does underscore the centrality of Taiwan to the U.S.-China relationship.

Such a tendency to ascribe malign motives to nearly all U.S. actions, even those specifically targeting terrorism, is at odds with Beijing's frequent insistence that

it has no intention to exclude the United States from East Asia, or even to challenge its position there. Moreover, on this basis, what is the United States to make of increasing Chinese influence in Latin America, particularly given Beijing's close ties with Cuba and Venezuela? The U.S. media has certainly exaggerated some of the latter issues. Elements of China's media are increasingly subject to market forces, which promote a similar demand for sensationalist reporting. Still, the theme of Chinese "encirclement" is likely to continue to influence bilateral strategic interactions. The larger question is, given that China avowedly accepts the current robust U.S. presence in East Asia, how would the United States demonstrate that its actions were not specifically designed to "contain" China?

Characteristic of many foreign policy writings on China's *Liberation Army Daily* website in its tone of suspicion, one representative article infers ulterior motives for the new U.S. Maritime Strategy.³⁰ It seems there is a foregone conclusion about the intentions of the United

States and that therefore its strategy's content matters little. This suggests that some elements in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) at this early stage

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of the new strategy's application may already believe that U.S. sea power and ambitions remain fundamentally unchanged, and continue to challenge China's interests. By this logic, the manner in which Washington describes its maritime policies will have little effect on PLA perceptions. This apparent willingness in at least some PLA quarters to prejudge the U.S. Navy without specific evidence raises important questions about strategic communications and transparency. Does the United States have the responsibility, or even the ability, to convince China that its intentions are sincere? Nevertheless, it is worth emphasizing that this particular assessment does not reflect official Chinese policy, which in any case is largely determined by the nation's civilian leadership.

Other unofficial sources do articulate the balance of challenges and opportunities for China in the area of maritime strategy. The *People's Daily Online* attempted to place the new document within the larger context of America's strategic con-

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ditions.³¹ Having previously suffered from a “strategically confusing” period with the removal of its Soviet competitor, and having labored mightily to respond to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and support the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. Navy has been too busy to conduct a systematic self-examination of its long-term development until very recently. The new U.S. Maritime Strategy is thus correctly seen as an attempt to recreate strategic clarity and direction for U.S. maritime forces. On a more positive tone, the article allows that the new U.S. Maritime Strategy is “quite gentle, and it really embodies the lofty ideal of ‘cooperation’, and regards war prevention as an important mission of U.S. sea power.” Moreover, the author notes, “this is the first time that a U.S. official document has put forward the concept [of a] ‘multi-polar world’,” a foreign policy goal long championed by China.

Yet, the gist of the analysis is consistent with the others in its concern with and suspicion of U.S. motivations. Had Washington not revised its maritime strategy to emphasize fighting nontraditional security challenges such as terrorism in keeping with world events, “the mighty U.S. fleet [would] be like a giant that [had] lost its way, a colossus without any merit.” Renewed U.S. emphasis on cooperation and humanitarian operations is thus not seen as being altruistic – what nation’s policies truly are? Rather, they are a utilitarian repackaging of a time-honored “power-politics approach.” “Americans have recognized the weaknesses of the unilateralism of the last several years,” the article concludes. “What [the strategy] expresses can only be one thing, that is, American hegemony has put on a new cover called ‘cooperation.’”³²

These preliminary unofficial Chinese reactions suggest that revising America’s maritime strategy alone will not persuade China of positive U.S. intentions. In these Chinese views, while the new Maritime Strategy recognizes the limits of unilateralism, a perceived fundamental arrogance of American power is seen as structural and unchanged. Thus, while there is a degree of competing perspectives on the future use of U.S. naval power, the initial reaction remains highly circumspect and more will need to be done to overcome Chinese suspicions. In this regard, America’s actions must ultimately speak louder than its words.

Despite these concerns, however, there is room for optimism in the sense that the views from Chinese think tanks, policy analysts and government officials – like those of their U.S. counterparts – once they become available, are likely to be more balanced and pragmatic in acknowledging the many potential benefits of more actively cooperating with the United States in the maritime dimension. Here it will be important for U.S. officials and scholars to engage deeply with a wide variety of Chinese interlocutors to explain in great detail the strategy’s genesis, intent, evolution, and potential applications as well as to discuss specifically Chinese concerns and reactions. In this sense, the strategy can serve as a catalyst for much-needed Sino-American strategic dialogue and engagement.

Cooperation under the Radar

Amid the suspicious rhetoric of its official media, China is quietly cooperating with the United States on a number of maritime security activities.³³ The premise for these increased activities may be China’s 2006 Defense White Paper, which for the first time acknowledges that “[N]ever before has China been so closely bound up with the rest of the world as it is today.” China, in this statement of national policy, is “[C]ommitted to peace, development and cooperation” as it seeks to construct “together with other countries, a harmonious world of enduring peace and common prosperity.”³⁴

This new wave of cooperation already extends from the corridors of government to the Pacific Ocean. Here the two nations’ navies and other maritime services have the opportunity to do what other services have not: establish a new and cooperative relationship. This special maritime role is not a coincidence. Given the unique nature of sea-based presence, port visits and diplomacy, as well as their critical role in constantly maintaining trade, maritime forces interact in peacetime in a way that other services generally do not. For the U.S. and Chinese maritime forces, this generates many compatible and overlapping strategic priorities. Indeed, when seaborne bilateral trade is considered, the two nations already have a major maritime partnership, albeit one in which the military element lags far behind the commercial. This peacetime contact, particularly between the U.S.

and Chinese navies, is potentially vital; given the nature of the volatile Taiwan issue, U.S. and Chinese naval forces would also be the most likely to directly engage each other in the unfortunate event of kinetic war. Thus, there is a strong impetus for the two nations' maritime forces, particularly their navies, to better relations regarding issues critical to both peacetime and times of conflict.

Underscoring the value of the new Maritime Strategy's comprehensive sea service scope, the U.S. Coast Guard has established a working relationship with its Chinese counterparts.³⁵ In May 2006, buoy tender U.S. Coast Guard Cutter (USCGC) *Sequoia* became the first U.S. cutter to visit China.³⁶ In August 2007, USCGC *Boutwell* continued these exchanges with a visit to Shanghai during the North Pacific Coast Guard Forum, East Asia's only maritime security organization, in which China and the United States both play substantive roles.³⁷

U.S. Coast Guard officers have provided training and lectures in China, and Chinese officers have studied at the U.S. Coast Guard Academies.³⁸ Chinese fisheries enforcement officers have served temporarily on U.S. cutters (i.e., to interdict

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Chinese ships fishing illegally). Their patrol boats work with U.S., Japanese and Russian counterparts annually to prevent illegal drift-net fishing in the North Pacific. The possible creation of a unified Chinese coast guard organization may provide further opportunities to build on this progress by reducing institutional conflict and confusion. The posting of a U.S. Coast Guard liaison officer, with the rank of captain at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, appears to indicate prioritization of developing the relationship on the U.S. side.³⁹

Despite its greater sensitivity, cooperation between the U.S. and Chinese navies is expanding as well. In July 2006, P.R.C. Central Military Commission Vice Chairman Guo Boxiong became the highest-ranking Chinese military officer to visit the United States since 2001. Qian Lihua, deputy director of the Foreign Affairs Office of China's Defense Ministry, described Guo's visit as "the most important Chinese military exchange with another country this year" and bilateral military relations as being "at their best since 2001."⁴⁰ Then-commander of U.S.

forces in the Pacific, Adm. William Fallon, visited China in May⁴¹ and August 2006. During the first visit, he extended to the PLA an unprecedented invitation to observe the June 2006 U.S. Guam-based military exercise Valiant Shield, which was readily accepted. This gesture of transparency demonstrates that the United States has nothing to hide from China, even in major military exercises in the Western Pacific.

That same month, the U.S. Navy's Pacific Fleet flagship *Blue Ridge* called on Shanghai for the fourth time, which China's official media described as "highlighting warming exchanges between the two navies." Assistant Defense Secretary Peter Rodman led a U.S. delegation to Beijing for the eighth round of annual defense consultations between the two countries. Visits to China were also made in September and November 2006 by Ryan Henry, deputy under secretary of the U.S. Department of Defense, and Roughead, then commander in chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet.⁴² In August 2007, Rep. Ike Skelton (R-Mo.), chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, led a seven-person congressional delegation to Beijing, where they visited a navy destroyer and a Second Artillery brigade.⁴³ Interaction between the nations' institutions of professional military education is also growing.⁴⁴

Building on the foundation of this growing series of exchanges, the United States and China have held a series of unprecedented bilateral exercises. Two decades of cooperative rhetoric were matched with concrete if modest action when a search and rescue exercise (SAREX) took place off the coast of San Diego on Sept. 20, 2006.⁴⁵ Though a series of port visits had previously occurred, and are scheduled to continue, this was the first bilateral military exercise ever conducted between the two nations.⁴⁶ The two navies stationed observers on each other's ships as they practiced transmitting and receiving international communications signals. The 2006 SAREX is envisioned to be "the first in a series of bilateral exercises."⁴⁷

A second phase of the exercise was held in the strategically-sensitive South China Sea in November 2006.⁴⁸ Chinese and American ships and aircraft worked together to "locate and salvage a ship in danger."⁴⁹ Noting that the South China

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Sea had been the scene of the unfortunate EP-3 incident only five years before, *Xinhua*'s news service stated, "The same location has witnessed the process of exchanges between the Chinese and U.S. militaries moving from rock bottom to recovery and development."⁵⁰ In *Xinhua*'s assessment, "The holding of the joint search-and-rescue exercises indicate that Sino-U.S. military relations are 'moving toward the pragmatic' and carries major significance for the future development of relations between the two militaries."⁵¹

China has also been invited to cooperate more broadly with the U.S. Navy under the framework of Global Maritime Partnerships, as set forth in the new Maritime Strategy. While visiting China in November 2006, Roughead stated to Chinese officials that "our navies can improve the ability to coordinate naval operations in missions such as maritime security, search and rescue, and humanitarian relief."⁵² During PLA Navy Commander Vice Adm. Wu Shengli's April 2007 visit to the United States, Mullen asked him to consider "China's potential participation in Global Maritime Partnership initiatives."⁵³ China's navy is reportedly in the process of considering this proposal.⁵⁴ In a subsequent news conference, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang declined to elaborate on this point, but said that the naval leaders "reached a consensus in many areas."⁵⁵ On Aug. 17-21, 2007, Mullen visited a variety of naval facilities and educational institutions and discussed possibilities for future maritime cooperation with China's top navy officials.⁵⁶

Many of the aforementioned activities would have been unthinkable only a few short years ago. However, one could argue that only the "low hanging fruit" of in terms of cooperation have been attempted thus far, while the truly substantive areas have not yet been fully explored. Much remains to be done before both sides can forge a robust maritime partnership that generates any sort of policy momentum. As the two sides must acknowledge (at least in private), several fundamental issues still serve to undermine the bilateral political and military-to-military relationship and thereby limit the possible options for deeper maritime cooperation.

Key Obstacles to Enhanced Cooperation

Unfortunately, several core differences between the United States and China – absent significant policy changes – are likely to limit cooperation for the foreseeable future. The inability of Beijing and Washington to reach an understanding concerning Taiwan’s status has long been the principal obstacle to improvements in U.S.-China relations, and hence will likely retard some forms of maritime security cooperation.

Since 1949, Beijing has consistently emphasized the vital importance of reuniting Taiwan as a central tenet of national policy. To safeguard its interests in East Asia, Washington must firmly honor its commitment not to support Taiwan independence, while also honoring its responsibility to protect Taiwanese democracy amid massive geopolitical changes. Rising Chinese military strength and economic integration arguably make the island increasingly indefensible in a military sense and complicate the status quo that previously prevailed. The U.S. policy of strategic ambiguity is becoming increasingly unsustainable. Greater policy and strategic clarity is therefore essential.

Despite suspicious rhetoric, China is quietly cooperating with the United States in maritime security.

In order to avoid provoking Beijing into exploiting this situation – a risky and costly proposition, to be sure – Washington must use its considerable leverage with Taipei to make it clear that movement toward independence would constitute a breach of their current relationship. Concrete actions, previously avoided out of consideration for Taiwan’s fledgling democracy, may be critical to demonstrating the U.S. position concerning this grave issue.⁵⁷ Given the increasingly untenable situation, the best option for the United States is to make clear that “Americans will not fight and die to defend a Taiwan that declares constitutional independence from the Chinese nation. At the same time, America should warn the mainland that a military attack on a Taiwan that is still legally Chinese will meet a U.S. military response.”⁵⁸

Amid these challenges, Beijing must recognize that no U.S. president has the power to change a basic reality: the preservation of Taiwan’s democracy is an is-

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sue of critical importance to the United States and one which enjoys overwhelming congressional support.⁵⁹ For this reason, the question of Taiwan's status must be separated from other issues if robust bilateral cooperation is to be achieved. This is certainly a thorny issue, and raises the difficult but unavoidable question: just how strong is the desire of Washington and Beijing to agree to disagree regarding their enduring strategic differences and cooperate to safeguard larger commercial, resource, homeland security and maritime interests?

From the U.S. perspective, China's ongoing lack of transparency, both in terms of capabilities and intentions, coupled with its rapid increases in defense spending and wide-ranging military modernization, remains a source of great concern. This situation undermines U.S. cooperation initiatives – which are being attempted with increasing willingness – for fear that China is unwilling or unable to truly reciprocate. A related concern is that China may attempt to exploit U.S. goodwill by imposing larger political demands. Under these conditions, the political reality in Washington circumscribes the evolution of better military-to-military relations with Beijing, something the latter seems not to fully understand. Beijing's lack of transparency and reciprocity only strengthens the critics of cooperation. This has led to a wide speculation in the United States and elsewhere concerning China's intentions, much of it inaccurate, unsubstantiated and worst-case in nature. But, the lack of communication from Beijing unnecessarily helps feed this trend in Washington.

A number of incidents epitomize this issue of non-transparency and its impact on crisis management between the two nations. Not only have a number of recent events been murky in explanation, there have been confusing signals about who was making the decision (the PLA, the Foreign Ministry, or even China's central leadership). In the case of the tragic April 2001 EP-3 incident, China's official state media continues with implausible claims that the slow, cumbersome reconnaissance aircraft "turned into" the fast, highly maneuverable F-8 fighter. The alleged intrusion of a Han-class nuclear submarine into Japan's territorial waters in late 2004, which occurred shortly before an important summit meeting, was blamed on a navigational error in a manner that does not appear cred-

ible to naval experts.⁶⁰ In October 2006, a Chinese diesel submarine reportedly surfaced unexpectedly within 8 km of the U.S. Navy's Kitty Hawk aircraft carrier as it was operating near Okinawa.⁶¹ China's January 2007 anti-satellite test has still not been satisfactorily explained despite repeated inquiries by the U.S. government. Most recently, the media reported that two U.S. minesweepers and the Kitty Hawk carrier battle group were denied permission, on separate occasions, to make port calls in Hong Kong. This issue raises the larger question as to what degree military-to-military activities will be subject to ever-shifting political winds and strategic disagreement.

There may well be clear explanations for each of the aforementioned events, but unfortunately China's government has been unwilling to provide any thus far. A degree of public clarification is necessary, and would do much to allay U.S. concerns, even if it defends China's strategic reasoning, which the United States may strongly disagree with. While official explanations for China's military development and assertions of benign intent may fulfill domestic political and even cultural imperatives, they ultimately do not serve Beijing's interests vis-à-vis the United States because they are not persuasive, or in some cases even comprehensible, to an American audience.

The obstacles to strategic transparency are sobering. If China provides a vague description of its strategic intentions that fails to explain key behaviors, while the United States offers detail and is still held in suspicion, how can the two sides achieve a firm basis for robust maritime security cooperation?

Sailing Forward?

While China appears to be maintaining a cautious, hedging approach in its rhetoric, low-level yet concrete maritime cooperation is proceeding without great fanfare. The real question is whether this progress has the ability to launch greater maritime and naval cooperation, or broader strategic relations. Given the issues at stake, it is time to explore how to take those important steps. This will require expanding the Bush Administration's vision of both the United States and China as global "stakeholders" more fully into the maritime dimension.

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With the importance of the high seas as an irreplaceable conduit for international trade and energy, maritime security includes both civil maritime and naval cooperation. Forging a relationship through which the two nations can help to secure this global commons and still avoid conflict is the crux of the issue. Once launched, overcoming the many incidents that could scuttle it will require better communication and a high level of interaction.

A wide variety of non-sensitive cooperation areas will remain the most viable starting point and can likely continue regardless of the state of U.S.-China relations. These include tourism, civilian academic conferences and exchanges, Track II diplomacy (i.e., by the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific), commercial utilization of new maritime resources and technologies, environmental protection, meteorology (e.g., typhoon and tsunami detection) and certain types of scientific research. For these areas, the private sector and non-governmental organizations can continue to play a major role.

For areas of cooperation that impinge more clearly on issues of national security, a more organized and official basis for exchange will be essential. A vital underpinning of both civil maritime and naval cooperation will be the development of robust ties between relevant institutions of professional military educa-

Beijing and Washington will have to live with considerable ambiguity and expect occasional setbacks.

tion. Exchanges of faculty and students, currently limited, can hopefully grow steadily in the future. Exchanges can facilitate fuller explanation of all aspects of the new Maritime Strategy as well as mutual discussion of non-sensitive and technical elements (e.g.,

best practices and simulation procedures). A new community of military officers can be trained to be capable of sophisticated interaction and even some degree of interoperability. Development of bilateral academic links will help to provide continuity to the relationship while facilitating the personal interaction that is essential to a Chinese cultural and bureaucratic context.

Given the fundamental interests of both nations, cooperation on maritime crime, drug and human trafficking, and terrorism should be able to proceed sub-

stantively over the next few years. China's participation in the Container Security Initiative (CSI) is a positive development in this area. China formally joined CSI in 2003 and the ports of Shanghai and Shenzhen now participate. But given that China has seven of the world's top twenty container ports,⁶² and that Chinese ports (including those of the Hong Kong S.A.R.) handled roughly one-quarter of global container traffic in 2004 and nearly 40 percent of global container volume, it is to be hoped that more Chinese ports will soon participate. Cooperating against piracy is more complicated, given its association with international maritime legal issues on which China tends to have different interpretations. Yet, the interests involved are essentially the same here as well. In the minds of many Chinese analysts, energy security is connected to scenarios of naval conflict, but commercially viable confidence building measures can be explored in an effort to remedy this. Technology transfer in clean energy production and coordinated efforts on strategic petroleum reserves could go very far in assuaging suspicions while promoting shared economic interests.

In particular, the new U.S. Maritime Strategy can play a crucial role by facilitating a variety of missions that require substantial coordination but are not viewed as inherently sensitive by either side. Much more can be done in terms of humanitarian operations, particularly as China increases its capabilities in this area. Joint search and rescue exercises can expand from the current ones between civil maritime and select naval forces to more regular naval cooperation. China's apparent launch of its first naval hospital ship in August 2007 seems to demonstrate an intention to project increased "soft power" in the maritime realm.⁶³ Already China's largest deck aviation platform, the multirole aviation training ship *Shichang*, which has a hospital module, has supported domestic flood relief efforts. It has also deployed as far away as New Zealand.⁶⁴ There is no inherent reason why China's already significant domestic maritime disaster relief capabilities could not be mobilized in the future to provide humanitarian assistance overseas – perhaps in coordination with the hospital ship USNS *Mercy*.

As China's naval modernization continues at a rapid pace, and new Chinese aircraft and vessels appear unannounced, American and Chinese military plat-

forms are increasingly encountering each other in or near territorial waters or airspace. These incidents increase the possibility of tactical incidents escalating into major crises. The U.S.-Soviet 1972 Incidents at Sea and 1989 Prevention of Dangerous Military Activities agreements established specific guidelines for conduct in such situations that have been credited with preventing countless crises. The current U.S.-P.R.C. 1998 Military Maritime Safety Agreement provides for annual consultations but offers no specific procedures. The two nations could benefit from a new code of conduct – one that stresses the role of early communication between military platforms in an era of advanced communications and sensing technology.

What the new U.S. Maritime Strategy alone cannot accomplish is to change China's perception of its fundamental national interests. It will not persuade China to participate in activities with implications that it may deem objectionable. Such activities might include intrusive boardings under the aegis of the Pro-

The two nations could greatly benefit from a new code of conduct at sea.

liferation Security Initiative, which China apparently believes to contravene its oft-stated need for U.N.-based legitimacy (a point disputed by many Western maritime legal scholars) and complicates its attempts to stabilize the Korean Peninsula. Even areas

of concern and disagreement must be discussed in fora related to the Maritime Strategy. Cooperative partners must be able to have open and candid dialogue on all issues of mutual interest.

Regardless of its exact parameters, building and sustaining a high level of cooperation will require substantial effort and patience. Washington and Beijing will have to live with considerable ambiguity, and expect occasional setbacks. For the foreseeable future, there will be significant differences in their military capabilities, political systems and national interests. To guard against the threat of conflict as China, the rising power, gains on the United States, the dominant power, both sides will likely find it necessary to “hedge” – not only rhetorically but also economically, politically and even militarily. This transitional power conflict scenario is a natural part of international politics, and will be a highly

destabilizing factor at times, particularly when U.S. and Chinese domestic politics are thrown into the mix.

Despite the long term strategic importance of cooperation, perceptions and misperceptions will continue to wield great influence over its success. Just as a “China threat theory,” continues to maintain a firm grip on many in Washington, many Chinese construe ulterior motives from virtually any U.S. action (an “America threat theory”) as well. American analysts and planners need to look at the big picture, which strongly suggests an overall Chinese desire and need to cooperate with the United States rather than challenge it. And the renewed American focus on humanitarian operations should be seen by Chinese for what it is, an opportunity for better cooperation and improved relations with the United States. Only time, increased interaction and concrete efforts at cooperation will ameliorate these knotty problems of perception and trust.

Maritime security lies at the heart of the survival and prosperity of nations. It is important never to lose sight of the greater perspective: the world’s largest developed nation and its largest developing nation stand to reap tremendous benefits by jointly ensuring the safety of the maritime commons. The possibility of conflict will always threaten the U.S.-China relationship, but the objective rationale of national interests overwhelmingly reinforces the need for durable, if sometimes competitive, coexistence on the world’s oceans. ☪

Notes

¹ The views expressed in this study are solely those of the author as a private individual. This study is based only on publicly available sources and does not represent the official position or analysis of the U.S. Navy or any other organization of the U.S. government [在这篇文章的意见完全是作者个人的学术观点，并不代表美国海军或者美国政府的官方看法或者政策]. The author thanks Peter Dombrowski, Andrew Winner, Nan Li and William Murray for their helpful comments.

² Timiraos, Nick, “Arctic Thaw Defrosts a Sea Treaty,” *Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 3-4, 2007, p. A7.

³ U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, *An Ocean Blueprint for the 21st Century* (Honolulu, HI: University Press of the Pacific, 2004), inset.

⁴ “A Cooperative Strategy for the 21st Century Seapower,” U.S. Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandants of the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Coast Guard, Oct. 17, 2007, <http://>

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⁵ Capt. Bernard T. Moreland, USCG, "U.S.-China Civil Maritime Operational Engagement," draft paper for presentation at "Defining a Maritime Partnership wWith China" conference, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI, Dec. 5, 2007.

⁶ "10% Of GDP Now Comes From Sea, Says Report," *China Daily*, Apr. 10, 2007, see www.chinadaily.com.cn.

⁷ 徐起 [Xu Qi], "21世纪初海上地缘战略与中国海军的发展" [Maritime Geostrategy and the Development of the Chinese Navy in the Early Twenty-first Century], *中国军事科学* [China Military Science] 17, no. 4 (2004), pp. 75-81, trans. Andrew Erickson and Lyle Goldstein, *Naval War College Review*, 59, no. 4 (Autumn 2006).

⁸ China Fisheries Law Enforcement Command, as reported by Capt. APT Bernard T. Moreland, USCG, "U.S.-China Civil Maritime Operational Engagement," draft paper for presentation at "Defining a Maritime Partnership With China" conference, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI, Dec. 5, 2007.

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¹⁰ *中国海洋年鉴2005* [China Ocean Yearbook 2005], (Beijing: Ocean Press, 2006), p. 201.

¹¹ Adm. Michael Mullen, "The Thousand Ship Fleet," *Pentagon Brief*, Oct. 1, 2005; "Global Maritime Partnership' Gaining Steam at Home and with International Navies," *Defense Daily International*, Oct. 27, 2006, Vol. 7, Issue 42.

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¹³ President George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: The White House, Mar. 16, 2006), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/nss2006.pdf>.

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¹⁵ *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America: A Strategy for Today; A Vision for Tomorrow* (Washington, DC: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2004), <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2005/d20050318nms.pdf>.

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¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²¹ Hattendorf, John, *The Evolution of the U.S. Navy's Maritime Strategy, 1977-1986*, Newport Paper 19, (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 2004), <http://www.nwc.navy.mil/press/newportpapers/documents/19.pdf>.

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²³ Such as the Navy Strategic Plan and the Naval Operational Concept.

²⁴ See endnotes 11-14.

²⁵ On this point, it must be recognized that Beijing may require time and further explanation from the U.S. (perhaps in the form of prolonged consultations) before it is ready to issue anything resembling an official response to the strategy.

²⁶ 杨晴川 [Yang Qingchuan], “美国海上力量 ‘三巨头’--海军作战部长拉夫黑德, 海军陆战队司令康韦和海岸警卫队司令艾伦共同出现在罗得岛州纽波特海军战争学院举行的国际海军研讨会上, 向与会的 100 多个国家和地区的海军首脑隆重推出美国新版的海上战略” [The ‘Three Magnates’ of U.S. Sea Power – Adm. Gary Roughead, Chief of Naval Operations; Gen. James T. Conway, Marine Corps Commandant; and Adm. Thad W. Allen, Coast Guard Commandant, Presented the Strategy to Maritime Leaders From More Than 100 Countries Attending the International Seapower Symposium at the Naval War College in Newport, R.I.], 国际先驱导报 [International Herald Leader – Beijing], Oct. 17, 2007, see www.chinesenewsnet.com. Translation by Danling Cacioppo and Nan Li.

²⁷ *International Herald Leader* is published by *Reference News*, a daily that carries materials translated by the foreign press, carried by China’s official news agency, *Xinhua*. Like a brief *Xinhua* English-language summary, and a wide variety of other online articles and internet commentaries, it provides some basic facts about the strategy and the circumstances of its roll-out. See also “U.S. Releases Unified Maritime Strategy,” *Xinhua General News Service*, Oct. 18, 2007, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-10/18/content_6899251.htm.

²⁸ This final point may help to explain the reasoning behind the article’s contention that “Mullen not long ago aroused great concern from the international community by proposing the so-called ‘1000-ship Navy.’” It is important to note that this term appears to have been largely replaced by the phrase “Global Maritime Partnerships” in current U.S. Navy parlance.

²⁹ 刘华, 吴强 [Liu Hua and Wu Qiang], “美国通过新海上战略 指导美军重返菲律宾” [Through the New Maritime Strategy, the U.S. Directs its Military to Return to the Philippines], 国际先驱导报 [International Herald Leader], Oct. 24, 2007, http://www1.chinataiwan.org/xwzx/gj/200710/t20071024_473467.htm. Translation by Andrew Erickson and Nan Li.

³⁰ 杨晴川, 王薇 [Yang Qingchuan and Wang Wei], “美国推出新的海上战略--遏制潜在竞争对手” [The U.S. Releases a New Maritime Strategy – Containing Potential Competitors], 新华网 [Xinhua Net], Oct. 18, 2007, http://www.pladaily.com.cn/site1/xwpdxw/2007-10/18/content_986293.htm. Translation by Andrew Erickson and Nan Li. It must be emphasized that this is not a *Liberation Army Daily* article and did not appear in that publication’s print edition. The brief text gives factual information on the strategy; it is the seemingly arbitrary label “Containing Potential Competitors” that is troubling.

³¹ 邢蓬宇 [Xing Pengyu], “美国新海上战略: 以合作之名谋强权之实” [The United States’ New Maritime Strategy: Solidifying Its Might Under the Banner of Cooperation], 人民网军事频道 [People’s Daily Online: Military Affairs Section], Oct. 24, 2007, <http://military.people.com.cn/GB/8221/51756/81282/81532/6422552.html>. Translation by Lyle Goldstein and Nan Li.

³² Unless otherwise specified, all quotations from this section derived from *Ibid*.

³³ For a positive but realistic exploration of this topic, see Erickson, A. and L. Goldstein, “Hoping for the Best, Preparing for the Worst: China’s Response to U.S. Hegemony,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 6, December 2006, pp. 955-986. This section draws heavily on Erickson, Andrew, “Combating a Collective Threat: Prospects for Sino-American Cooperation Against Avian Influenza,” *Journal Of Global Health Governance*, Volume I, Issue 1, January 2007, http://diplomacy.shu.edu/academics/global_health/journal/.

³⁴ The Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, “China’s

Initial Chinese Responses

National Defense in 2006,” Dec. 29, 2006, see www.chinaview.cn, pp. 1, 3.

³⁵ These include the Ministry of Public Security (with its Border Control Department and Maritime Police Division), Ministry of Communications (with its Maritime Safety Administration and Rescue and Salvage Agency), Ministry of Agriculture (with its Bureau of Fisheries) and State Oceanic Administration.

³⁶ In June 2006, USCGC *Rush* called in Qingdao.

³⁷ “Shanghai Hosts U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Boutwell during North Pacific Coast Guard Forum 2007,” U.S. Coast Guard Visual Information Gallery, Aug. 16, 2007, http://cgvi.uscg.mil/media/main.php?g2_itemId=159644.

³⁸ These include in the Coast Guard Academy in New London, CT and at the Kodiak, AK fisheries enforcement school.

³⁹ Unless otherwise specified, data for this paragraph is derived from Goldstein, Lyle, “China: A New Maritime Partner?,” U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, August 2007, p. 29.

⁴⁰ All quotations in the paragraph are taken from “China, U.S. Enjoy Active Military Exchanges in 2006,” *People’s Daily*, Dec. 28, 2006, http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200612/28/eng20061228_336342.html.

⁴¹ For an analysis of agenda items for the May visit, see Qiu Yongzheng, “Four Major Objectives of U.S. Admiral’s Visit to China,” *Qingnian Cankao*, May 12, 2006, OSC# CPP20060515504001.

⁴² Tian Yuan, “This is a Marine Corps That Has Left a Deep Impression on Us’ – Chinese Navy Marine Corps in the Eyes of U.S. Navy Pacific Fleet Commander,” *PLA Daily*, Nov. 17, 2006, p. 7, OSC# CPP20061117710021.

⁴³ Ye Pengfei, “Risk in Taiwan Straits Increases – China and United States Hold Frequent Dialogue,” *Lianhe Zaobao*, Sept. 3, 2007, OSC# CPP20070903530012.

⁴⁴ Xiong Zhengyan, Rong Yan, and Bai Ruishue: “2006: A Year of Most Active Exchanges Between Chinese and U.S. Militaries,” *Xinhua*, Dec. 27, 2006, CPP20061227045002.

⁴⁵ “Chinese Fleet Visits San Diego,” *People’s Liberation Army Daily*, Sept. 18, 2006, http://english.pladaily.com.cn/site2/special-reports/2006-09/19/content_591087.htm.

⁴⁶ Vessels from the U.S. and Chinese navies have previously participated in search and rescue exercises in Hong Kong (e.g., in 2003), but did not directly interact in the exercise. “U.S., Chinese Navies Complete SAREX Together,” *Navy Newsstand*, Sept. 21, 2006, http://www.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story_id=25702.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ The Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, “China’s National Defense in 2006,” Dec. 29, 2006, see www.chinaview.cn, pp. 31-33.

⁴⁹ “China, U.S. Hold Search-and-Rescue Exercise,” *Xinhua*, Nov. 19, 2006, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2006-11/19/content_5349057.htm.

⁵⁰ Xiong Zhengyan, Rong Yan, and Bai Ruishue: “2006: A Year of Most Active Exchanges Between Chinese and U.S. Militaries,” *Xinhua*, Dec. 27, 2006, CPP20061227045002.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* For a similarly positive analysis, see Li Xuanliang and Xiong Zhengyan, “Sino-U.S. Military Exchange Is Not ‘Empty Talk’ Anymore,” *Liaowang Dongfang Zhoukan* [*Oriental Outlook Magazine*], Nov. 30, 2006, No. 48, pp. 24-25, OSC# CPP20061221710018.

⁵² “U.S. Pacific Fleet Commander Visits China,” *Navy Newsstand*, Nov. 13, 2006, see www.news.navy.mil.

⁵³ Parameswaran, P. “U.S. Asks China to Help Maintain Global Maritime Security,” *Agence France Presse*, Apr. 5, 2007.

⁵⁴ Parameswaran, P. “Plea by Pentagon to Top Naval Visitor,” *The Weekly Standard*, Apr. 6,

2007, http://www.thestandard.com.hk/news_detail.asp?we_cat=3&art_id=41726&sid=13026608&con_type=1&d_str=20070406.

⁵⁵ “Transcript of Regular News Conference by P.R.C. Foreign Ministry on Apr. 5, 2007; Moderated by Spokesman Qin Gang,” OSC# CPP20070405071002.

⁵⁶ “中美海军上将握手大洋” [The Chiefs of the Chinese and U.S. Navies Shake Hands Over the Ocean], *当代海军* [Modern Navy], October 2007, title and facing page. Translated by Lyle Goldstein and Nan Li.

⁵⁷ This section draws heavily on Erickson, A. and L. Goldstein, “Hoping for the Best, Preparing for the Worst: China’s Response to U.S. Hegemony,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 6, December 2006, pp. 977-78.

⁵⁸ Christensen, Thomas J., “Clarity on Taiwan: Correcting Misperceptions on Both Sides of the Strait,” *Washington Post*, Mar. 20, 2000, <http://taiwansecurity.org/WP/WP-032000-Christensen.htm>.

⁵⁹ For a cogent summation of U.S. Taiwan policy, see “A Strong and Moderate Taiwan,” Thomas J. Christensen, Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Speech to U.S.-Taiwan Business Council Defense Industry Conference, Annapolis, Maryland, Sept. 11, 2007, <http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rm/2007/91979.htm>.

⁶⁰ Dutton, Peter A., “International Law and the November 2004 ‘Han Incident,’” in Erickson, Goldstein, Murray and Wilson, eds., *China’s Future Nuclear Submarine Force* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2007), pp. 162-81.

⁶¹ “U.S. Confirms Aircraft Carrier Had Close Brush with Chinese Submarine,” *Japan Today*, Nov. 14, 2006, <http://www.japantoday.com/jp/news/390343>.

⁶² Choe Sang-Hun, “Asian Ports Struggle to Keep Up with Shanghai,” Dec. 20, 2006, <http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/12/20/business/transcol21.php?page=1>. The author thanks Dr. Lyle Goldstein for directing him to this cite.

⁶³ Internet photos reveal this hospital ship, called Type 920 by Chinese sources, to be painted white with a large red cross. Apparently unarmed, the Type 920 has a rear helicopter hanger and flight deck sufficient to use a medium-size helicopter (e.g., one of the Chinese navy’s *Super Frelons* to evacuate injured persons. Built by Guangzhou Shipyard International, the 920 appears similar to China’s *Qiandaohu* (Fuchi) class 20,000 ton + fleet replenishment ships. See “Qiandaohu Class Fleet Replenishment Ship,” *China Defense Today*, <http://www.sinodefence.com/navy/support/qiandaohu.asp>.

⁶⁴ Erickson, Andrew S. and A. R. Wilson, “China’s Aircraft Carrier Dilemma,” in Erickson, Goldstein, Murray and Wilson, eds., *China’s Future Nuclear Submarine Force* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2007), p. 254.