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In the past 15 years, China has progressed from a regional actor with nascent military capability to the nation with the greatest potential to threaten US interests and allies in the Pacific.

The rise of China's capabilities from airpower to space launch to presumed acquisition and conversion of an aircraft carrier is well-documented in the Department of Defense's annual reports and in the testimony of other experts.

My testimony today will focus on the China gap: the gap between China's steady pursuit of military capabilities under an artful strategy, contrasted with US defense strategy, which has apparently chosen to downgrade and minimize the need for conventional deterrence in the Pacific. US policies and military capabilities have been oriented away from a realistic look at requirements for continued deterrence of China.

Along with most Americans, I acknowledge that China is an important economic partner. I had the privilege to visit several cities and military facilities in China as very junior member of an official US delegation some years ago. I am not a China expert, but as a defense expert, it is apparent to me that for too long, our view of China has been rudimentary. We look for "black and white" conflict akin to the US-Soviet confrontation in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. However, with China in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, we as a nation must confront a subtler duality. China will continue to be an economic partner; at the same time, we seek to balance or contain any rapid spread of Chinese military power in the Pacific. This deterrence relationship will take place alongside business relationships.

Should China continue its "peaceful rise" we will all benefit. However, the pace of Chinese military development entails an element of risk. Woe to any of us who believe that "trade" is inoculates nations against war and conflict – history suggests the reverse.

Unfortunately, our policy for balancing and deterring Chinese military power is in disarray. The United States has not structured its forces or its policy to hold up the deter and balance component of our relationship with China over the long term.

Decisions in 2009 deliberately accepted moderate risk in US military capabilities, particularly in the air and naval forces which are vital to balance and deter in the Pacific. Airpower is a case in point.

China has been watching US military operations and developments. They have taken note of the vital role of airpower, space power and cyber operations. Lieutenant General Liu Yazhou, of the People's Liberation Army Air Force, wrote a widely-circulated think piece in 2005.<sup>1</sup> "I believe that air power was the decisive force for the Iraqi War, though the US sent massive ground forces as well," he said. "Air power has

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<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant General Liu Yazhou, PLAAF, "China-America: The Great Game", *Eurasian Review of Geopolitics*, January 2005.

played a decisive role in all America's recent wars: the first Gulf War, the Kosovo War, the war in Afghanistan, the Iraqi War."

China is operating as a regional power seeking to extend its influence within its region. Some of this may be in reaction to the US posture in the region. Historians may look back on the period 1995-1996 as the turning point in China's military rise. In September 1995, China test-fired missiles in the Taiwan Strait. In December 1995, the USS *Nimitz* conducted a little-publicized transit of the Taiwan Strait. On March 10, 1996, Secretary of Defense William Perry deployed the USS *Nimitz* and the USS *Independence* for operations off Taiwan. At the same time, USS *George Washington* moved from the Mediterranean into the Persian Gulf. A 1997 Navy Posture Statement echoed the conclusion, citing: "the bold movement of carriers *Nimitz* (CVN 68) and *Independence* (CV 62) into the South China Sea during March 1996 provided the appropriate level of national resolve to contain a crisis between China and Taiwan."

Perhaps China's commitment to increasing its military ability to lock out US and other forces dates from this incident. At any rate, China has evidently chosen to expand its military power.

I will now address what to me is the core problem from the military perspective. China's military challenge is very straightforward. At the highest level, the strategy can simply seek to disrupt US capabilities that will be operating at extended ranges. China will have what 20<sup>th</sup> century strategist called strong interior lines of communication. In contrast, the US must reach across the Pacific with the more difficult aim of holding access open through a credible ability to withstand Chinese attacks and to hit key targets on China's mainland. Not that anyone wants to do that – but being prepared for it is the essence of deterrence in this theater.

Chinese military doctrine recognized this point in a 2004 Defense White Paper. It stated:

"The PLA Air Force is responsible for safeguarding China's airspace security and maintaining a stable air defense posture nationwide. In order to meet the requirements of informationalized air operations, the Air Force has gradually shifted from one of territorial air defense to one of both offensive and defensive operations. Emphasis is placed on the development of new fighters, air defense and anti-missile weapons, means of information operations and Air Force automated command systems. The training of inter-disciplinary personnel is being accelerated for informationalized air operations. Combined arms and multi-type aircraft combat training is intensified to improve the capabilities in operations like air strikes, air defense, information counter-measures, early warning and reconnaissance, strategic mobility and integrated support. Efforts are being made to build a defensive air force, which is appropriate in size, sound in organization and structure and advanced in weaponry and equipment, and which possesses integrated systems and a complete array of information support and operational means."

Two key elements stand out. First, China is shifting to more offensive capabilities, which are natural for the sophisticated application of airpower. Second, China is embarking on more of the integrated training needed to perform complex operations. The combination could give China the ability to very successfully battle against US force in the region.

Watch for these offensive capabilities to take the form of extending the range of air operations and missile attacks. Cyber attacks which can disrupt and confused deployed US forces will also be a major element. Remember that success in China's strategy does not require occupation of territory, sinking ships or fighting to a "win" over US forces. Currently, China has a capability to significantly interfere with US air operations. Over time, the US will find it more difficult to achieve objectives such as attacks against Chinese air defenses designed to re-open access. The balance today is somewhat in the favor of the US, but China may soon be able to achieve its goals not through outright defeat of US forces but via disruption and inflicting losses which make efficient operations difficult.

Success for China can come simply from counterattacks on US aircraft, ships, satellites and cyber links that disrupt operations. For example, missile attacks against carrier strike groups may need only to disrupt operations, depressing sortie generation rates as carriers struggle to launch and recover on normal deck cycles while struggling under missile attacks. Ships do not have to be sunk or even hit in order to throw the careful choreography of naval airpower into disarray.

Fighters that do launch from land or sea bases will immediately confront the integrated air defenses and superior numbers of the PLAAF. China now possesses variants fo the Russian S-300 surface to air missile which give it at least a 75 mile range against non-stealthy attacking aircraft. Reports indicate this missile can be mounted on barge platforms at sea.

Once beyond the missile fly-out rings, US aircraft would encounter large numbers of fighters on combat air patrol. China's fighters are not on a par with the F/A-18EF Superhornet, our more advanced F-16s and F-15s, and certainly not with the F-22. However, numbers can parry attacks especially if China's objective is not shooting down more US aircraft, but merely hitting enough to degrade operations. Barrage air-to-air missile tactics and the ability to swarm multiple aircraft against a two-ship or four-ship of US aircraft will likely result in losses to the US. The worst case would find Chinese fighters breaking through distracted combat air patrols to reach US tankers or battlespace control aircraft. While US forces would most likely prevail, the losses would shock the public and day after day, add up to unacceptable attrition. The worse this calculation gets over the years, the less the US will be able to balance and deter in a credible manner.

### **US Decisions Detracting from Balance and Deterrence**

Given the disadvantages in numbers and geography, the US must rely on extremely advanced capabilities to balance and deter China so that trade relations thrive in a peaceful atmosphere across the Pacific. Unfortunately, an informed Chinese military expert – or even the most casual observer – could not help but not that US defense policy has backed away from this strategy over the last two years. Key decisions stand out:

- **Trending away from advanced technology.** The articulated policy of seeking 75% solutions and turning away from so-called "exquisite" capabilities has been set against constant reminders from senior officials that America's air and naval assets outnumber others. This pointless bean counting does little to account for the fact that US air and naval forces must reach far across the globe to project power. It also does not account for the most basic rule of thumb in military strategy, which is that the attacking force must outmatch the defender by a factor

of 3 or more. That can be done with superior numbers or superior capability, but it cannot be done with low numbers and “medium” capability.

- **Early termination of the F-22.** 187 F-22s under the current program will yield too few for a Pacific scenario. Consider, for example, that current plans call for just 18 F-22s stationed in Hawaii with a further two squadrons in Alaska. The F-22 has tremendous ability to outmatch China’s fighters and torment its surface-to-air missiles, but numbers sufficient for 24-hour operations are not being bought.
- **Discussion of reducing aircraft carrier numbers or capabilities.** Although denied, the discussion of dropping aircraft carrier numbers must read to Pacific allies and adversaries alike as a sign of weakened commitment.
- **No new bomber program.** Secretary of Defense Robert Gates terminated the new bomber program in April 2009. While research is now under way for a so-called “family of systems,” the fact is that the Pentagon does not have a funded bomber replacement program. That will leave just 20 B-2s – perhaps 4 to 6 on any given day – available for one of the most difficult deterrence tasks: holding heavily defended enemy targets at risk.
- **Failure to acquire a new air refueling tanker.** The delayed tanker acquisition, currently a result of Pentagon decisions taken in 2008, has put power projection at risk. US and allied joint forces need tankers with the capacity, range and modern avionics to handle very tough scenarios in Pacific power projection.
- **Slow progress in streamlining military cyberspace operations.** While plans have been made for a US cyber command, the command has not stood up, and many issues remain. One suspects that the Chinese do not spend any time debating lines of control between active duty, reserve and intelligence authorities for military cyberspace operations, as we do here. It’s important to get cyber right but our slow progress does nothing to aid in balancing and deterring.

Taken together, this list stands in stark contrast to the active developments by China over the same period of time. Hot topics in US defense circles such as counterinsurgency manpower, small UAVs, and renewable battlefield energy sources have little bearing on deterring China. Unfortunately, sophisticated discussion of the balance of power in the Pacific takes place only on the margins of US defense dialogue today.

### **Regional Allies**

Overall provisions for working with allies and assessing the fine points of the military balance with China have been given short shrift for many years. While military to military contacts have occurred, along with visits of senior defense officials, the overall program is not robust enough.

The decline of US military capability in the Pacific as a result of US defense policies has been noticed by key allies. Australia’s 2009 Defence White Paper pointed out the unprecedented rise of military power in China and India and acknowledged doubts about the US security commitment to the region.

The blocked sale of the F-22 to the Japan’s air force foreclosed another opportunity to strengthen regional conventional deterrence.

Vietnam is increasingly concerned about maritime patrol along its lengthy coast, much of which faces China. The 1979 Chinese invasion of the so-called “renegade southern province” was a failure but the lingering threat remains.

Any confrontation with China will put the spotlight on the strength of Taiwan’s military forces. Taiwan is an important air base. However, its inventory of approximately 300 fighter aircraft is aging. Taiwan is attempting to acquire new F-16s and this sale would be of benefit to the balance of power in the region. Beyond this, US policy frowns on visits to Taiwan by senior US military and civilian leadership. This closes a good avenue for learning more of the intricacies of the region. The atrophy of some basic military exchanges with Taiwan symbolizes the overall lack of clarity about the military dimension of US policy in the Pacific.

### **Conclusion**

A peaceful Pacific for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century depends in my view on the US military’s ability to balance and deter Chinese military capabilities. The US should maintain the high-end forces capable of putting China’s strategy at risk. Disparity in power benefits no one.

As General Liu pointed out in his 2005 paper: “The more solid and credible out strategy deterrence becomes to the United States, the more careful it would be in considering forceful intervention.” The US and allies must uphold its side of that balance, too.