

CHAPTER 2

U.S.-CHINA SECURITY RELATIONS

SECTION 1: YEAR IN REVIEW: SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Key Findings

- China signaled a decisive end to its more than quarter century-old guidance to “hide your capabilities and bide your time, absolutely not taking the lead” as Chinese President and General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Xi Jinping issued a series of new foreign affairs and military policy directives calling on China to uncompromisingly defend its interests and actively promote changes to the international order.
- U.S.-China security relations remain tense due to serious disagreements over issues such as China’s continued coercive actions in regional territorial disputes, espionage and cyber activities, and influence operations. The tenor of the relationship was reflected in President Xi’s public warning to visiting U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis that China would not tolerate the loss of a “single inch” of its territorial claims.
- The People’s Liberation Army continues to extend its presence outside of China’s immediate periphery by increasing air and maritime operations farther from its shores, expanding presence operations in disputed areas in the East and South China seas, maintaining troops and building a pier at China’s sole overseas military base in Djibouti, deploying more advanced combat units to UN peacekeeping operations, and conducting more complex bilateral and multilateral overseas exercises.
- Tensions and the potential for accidents, miscalculation, and escalation between China and Japan intensified in the East China Sea as China sailed a number of naval vessels close to the Senkaku Islands and increased its military presence in the area. Based on the terms of the U.S.-Japan Mutual Defense Treaty, China’s increasing military activity near the Senkakus constitutes a challenge to U.S. security guarantees to Japan.
- China took new steps to consolidate its military posture and improve its ability to project power into the South China Sea, as President Xi proclaimed at the CCP’s 19th National Congress the success of China’s island-building efforts. Chinese forces

are now capable of overpowering any other South China Sea claimant, challenging U.S. presence operations in the region, and presenting a significant obstacle to the U.S. military during a conflict. China deployed advanced antiship and surface-to-air missiles to its Spratly Island outposts for the first time, demonstrating its ability to create a military buffer around the southern reaches of the South China Sea.

- Following their land border dispute in 2017, strategic jockeying in 2018 between China and India expanded to include New Delhi's maritime interests in the Indian Ocean.
- China continued to deepen its partnerships with Russia, Iran, and Pakistan, and leveraged the relationships to challenge U.S. security and economic interests. During a high-level visit to Russia, China's defense minister stated that China's visit was intended to demonstrate the depth of China-Russia strategic cooperation to the United States and to the world. China's purchase of advanced weapons systems from Russia resulted in the United States applying sanctions against China's Equipment Development Department, a key military body.
- China's arms exports continued to grow in volume and sophistication in 2018, although they remain limited to low- and middle-income countries and trail in value compared to U.S. and Russian sales.

Introduction

The year 2018 saw Beijing declare its intent to expand China's political, economic, and military presence both in its region and on the global stage. Chinese President and General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Xi Jinping announced new, far-reaching visions for China's military modernization and foreign policy; Beijing took new steps in advancing its maritime and territorial claims, to the frustration of its neighbors and the international community; and China expanded its global security engagement and international military footprint. This section examines important developments stemming from the CCP's 19th National Congress, Beijing's increasingly assertive efforts to elevate its regional and global leadership role, China's strategic partnerships and other important relationships with key countries, its territorial and maritime disputes in the region, expanding military presence overseas, and U.S.-China security ties. This section is based on Commission hearings and briefings, the Commission's May 2018 fact-finding trip to Asia, discussions with outside experts, and open source research and analysis. (For a full discussion of recent developments in China's military modernization, see Chapter 2, Section 2, "China's Military Reorganization and Modernization: Implications for the United States.")

Major Developments in China's Security and Foreign Affairs in 2018

CCP National Congress Highlights Global Leadership Ambitions

At the 19th National Congress of the CCP* in October 2017, President Xi presented a work report outlining his signature ideological contribution to CCP doctrine, since titled “Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.”¹ According to *Xinhua*, Xi Jinping Thought is intended, among other things, to build a “world-class” military, resolutely defend China’s sovereignty claims, and ensure CCP control over the military and all other government functions.² In his address to the CCP body, President Xi announced that China had begun a new era of confidence and capability on the global stage distinct from what he views as its previous two periods—those before and after reform and opening.³ To carry out this vision, the new political guidance signaled that in the coming years China will increasingly act as a formidable economic and military power, drive changes to the international order as it pursues geopolitical influence, and act as a political and economic model for others to emulate as it “moves closer to the world’s center stage.” It also indicated China will adopt a more uncompromising stance toward resolving outstanding sovereignty disputes in its favor, including unification with Taiwan.⁴ Despite President Xi’s assertive tone causing some alarm abroad and even at home, the CCP put its official stamp of approval on his approach, adding “Xi Jinping Thought” to its constitution, which will infuse this ideology into schools, the media, and all aspects of Chinese life and governance.[†]⁵

Following the 19th Party Congress, the CCP took significant steps to enhance its control over key law enforcement and paramilitary forces, as the China Coast Guard and People’s Armed Police became fully subordinate to the Central Military Commission (CMC).⁶ Reversing a 1980s-era reform granting the government shared control over the People’s Armed Police, this new reform consolidated the CCP’s control over the paramilitary force to “ensure the [CCP’s] absolute leadership,” according to the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) mouthpiece the CCP’s *People’s Daily*.⁷ The People’s Armed Police then gained control over the China Coast Guard in July 2018, emphasizing the increasingly military-oriented character of China’s law enforcement entities.⁸

The Increasing “Party-ification” of the Chinese Government and the Rise of President Xi

In one of the most significant developments of 2018, the CCP solidified its control over policy in China through what it called the

*At the CCP’s National Congress, which occurs every five years, delegates set the CCP’s national policy goals and choose new top leaders. Brookings Institution, “China’s 19th Party Congress,” 2017.

†Former Chinese paramount leader Deng Xiaoping had his ideological contribution added to the CCP Constitution, but his name was added to it only after his death in 1997. Former Chinese presidents Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao had their signature doctrines added without their names attached. Xi Jinping is the first Chinese leader since Chairman Mao Zedong to have both his name and doctrine added to the CCP Constitution during his lifetime. Ben Blanchard, Christian Shepherd, and Philip Wen, “China to Enshrine Xi’s Thought into State Constitution amid National Fervor,” *Reuters*, January 19, 2018; Chris Buckley, “China Enshrines Xi Jinping Thought, Elevating Leader to Mao-Like Status,” *New York Times*, October 24, 2017.

“deepen[ing] reform of party and state institutions.” The increase in Party control over governmental functions coincided with the additional consolidation of President Xi’s control over the Party, as the Chinese legislature unanimously approved President Xi’s reappointment as Chinese president and abolished limits on the number of terms he can serve in that role.⁹ The Party took control of a number of agencies previously overseen by the Chinese state, which indicated an overall “weakening of China’s government institutions,” according to the German think tank Mercator Institute for China Studies.¹⁰ These measures also expanded the authority of some of the CCP’s important “leading small groups”^{*} and committees by institutionalizing their decision-making power; for instance, the Propaganda Department of the CCP Central Committee gained direct oversight of film production and copyright, and Beijing established new central committees concerning governance and auditing.¹¹ The Chinese legislature also established the National Supervisory Commission, a new anticorruption agency with authority over the entire public sector.¹²

There has been some prominent pushback within China to the recent surge in “Party-ification,” although not without consequences. In a July 2018 essay excoriating the CCP for an apparent backslide to class struggle-based politics,[†] Tsinghua University law professor Xu Zhangrun wrote that Chinese people have recently been

*both critical and fearful of the meaning of the revision of the [CCP] Constitution and the abandonment of term limits on political leaders ... It is felt that this amounts to a negation of the last thirty years of the Reform and Open Door policy era. It is feared that ... China will be cast back to the terrifying days of [one-man rule under] Mao.*¹³

Professor Xu also argued the new National Supervisory Commission’s establishment had caused Chinese people to “feel no greater security in their legal rights [but] quite the opposite” and to fear “the advent of a form of KGB-style control ... embroiled in the factional politics of the [CCP].”¹⁴ According to Rong Jian, a prominent Chinese intellectual, Professor Xu was forced in September to return to China early from his post as a visiting scholar in Japan.¹⁵

In October 2018, almost two weeks after Meng Hongwei—concurrently Chinese vice minister of public security and president of INTERPOL—disappeared during a trip to China, China’s Minister of Public Security Zhao Kezhi announced Mr. Meng had been detained under suspicion of corruption. According to the *New York Times*, Mr. Meng’s detention dealt “a spectacular, self-inflicted blow to China’s efforts to prove itself ready for more prominent roles in global affairs.”¹⁶ Minister Zhao confirmed the involvement of the National

^{*}According to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, leading small groups are bodies that coordinate policy across different parts of the Chinese bureaucracy. CCP leading small groups predominantly address domestic political and security issues, and state leading small groups predominantly address domestic social and economic issues. Christopher K. Johnson, Scott Kennedy, and Mingda Qiu, “Xi’s Signature Governance Innovation: The Rise of Leading Small Groups,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, October 17, 2017.

[†]Veteran sinologist Geremie Barmé defines class struggle as “imposing artificial socio-political categories on individuals and groups and demonizing, ostracizing, or otherwise scapegoating them for political and economic ends.” Xu Zhangrun, “Imminent Fears, Immediate Hopes,” Geremie Barmé, trans., *China Heritage*, August 1, 2018.

Supervisory Commission—the Commission’s highest-profile detention since its establishment—meaning that Mr. Meng had likely been subjected to *liuzhi*, a new form of extrajudicial detention created when the National Supervisory Commission was established.*¹⁷ INTERPOL announced it had received Mr. Meng’s resignation but did not comment on the circumstances surrounding his disappearance.¹⁸ Julian Ku, professor at Hofstra University School of Law, argued that Beijing’s willingness to disappear Mr. Meng in spite of his role in INTERPOL “should cause the rest of the world to think harder about how to respond to China’s ... campaign to build legitimacy and influence among international organizations.”¹⁹

Elevation of the United Front Work Department

As the CCP has consolidated power over many aspects of Chinese society, President Xi has expanded the role of the United Front Work Department (UFWD),† a powerful Party entity responsible for securing the political support of or otherwise co-opting non-CCP entities within China and among the Chinese diaspora in foreign countries, including the United States.²⁰ President Xi designated United Front work as important for the “whole [Chinese Communist] party” and as a “magic weapon” for achieving the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.”²¹ To strengthen the CCP’s control over ethnic minorities, religious groups, and “overseas Chinese,” the State Administration for Religious Affairs, State Ethnic Affairs Commission, and Overseas Chinese Affairs Office—previously reporting to China’s State Council—were placed under the administrative authority of the UFWD.²² According to analysts Julia Bowie and David Gitter, the UFWD’s assumption of full control over the State Administration for Religious Affairs is the next step in the “sinicization” of religions in China, “a process intended to shape religious traditions and doctrine to better conform with Chinese society and CCP objectives.”²³

Charting a More Assertive Course on Foreign Affairs

In 2018, China took steps to implement President Xi’s call for a more assertive Chinese role in the world by increasing the authority of its foreign affairs apparatus and issuing a new foreign

*The National Supervisory Commission wields the power of a new form of extrajudicial detention called *liuzhi*, or “to set [someone] aside.” *Liuzhi* is a legally codified replacement of the extralegal detention system of *shuanggui*, or “double designation,” under which Party officials were required to report at a designated place and time to be detained and interrogated for alleged discipline violations such as corruption. Unlike *shuanggui*, *liuzhi* can be used to detain all Party and government employees. According to RSDL Monitor, an organization that raises awareness of China’s use of extrajudicial kidnappings and disappearances, one person has already died under this new form of detention. RSDL Monitor, “First Death Reported in New *Liuzhi* System,” May 9, 2018; Human Rights Watch, “China: Revise Draft National Supervision Law,” November 10, 2017; Congressional-Executive Commission on China, *2017 Annual Report to Congress*, November 5, 2017, 102–103.

†The UFWD is the CCP organ responsible for coordinating United Front work, which seeks to neutralize potential political opposition and incorporate new social groups to increase the CCP’s legitimacy within China and overseas. For more on United Front work, the UFWD, and the implications for the United States of this activity, see Chapter 3, Section 2, “China’s Relations with U.S. Allies and Partners,” and Alexander Bowe, “China’s Overseas United Front Work: Background and Implications for the United States,” *U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission*, August 24, 2018.

policy strategy that will ensure China's diplomats faithfully carry out President Xi's proactive foreign policy vision. In so doing, Beijing signaled it had overcome any remaining internal resistance to China adopting its new international posture, and that the more cautious, conservative approach its diplomats had taken since the Deng Xiaoping era—when China was instructed to “hide its capabilities and bide its time, absolutely not taking the lead”—had come to a decided end. In implementing this new approach, Beijing streamlined and elevated Chinese foreign affairs agencies to increase their power relative to other bureaucratic actors and ensure their responsiveness to Party guidance, boosted funding for diplomacy and foreign aid, and appointed experienced government officials who have demonstrated loyalty to the Party and President Xi to key foreign policy positions. (For more information on China's Belt and Road Initiative, which is a central component of China's more proactive foreign policy, see Chapter 3, Section 1, “Belt and Road Initiative.”)

In June, the CCP held a Central Foreign Affairs Work Conference—a meeting to coordinate foreign policy concepts and planning among all the country's major bureaucratic actors with a foreign affairs role—the first such meeting since November 2014.²⁴ At the conference, President Xi expanded on his foreign policy guidance from the 19th Party Congress and codified his personal doctrine, known as “Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era,” as the guiding principle for China's diplomatic work. In his conference address, President Xi repeatedly called for China to lead the construction of a “community of common human destiny”—what could be the CCP's ideological formulation for a revised global order. President Xi also exhorted China's diplomats to firmly uphold China's sovereignty and development interests, echoing the tone of unusually strong language from his 19th Party Congress address that “no one should have the fantasy of forcing China to swallow the bitter fruit of damaging its own interests.”²⁵

To achieve these goals, President Xi called for China to lead efforts to change global governance, build out China's network of international partnerships, and improve China's standing in its relationships with major countries, which he explained would both advance the “China Dream” and promote human progress.²⁶ At the end of the conference, Yang Jiechi, Politburo member and director of the CCP Central Committee Foreign Affairs Commission's (FAC) General Office, declared that Xi Jinping Thought had been established as the “fundamental guideline” for China's foreign policy.²⁷

China also took steps to restructure its agencies in charge of foreign affairs. In March 2018, the Chinese leadership converted what was previously the Central Leading Group for Foreign Affairs into the higher-level CCP Central Committee FAC.²⁸ President Xi is the head of the FAC—which is analogous to the Central Military Commission for military affairs.²⁹ During his Central Foreign Affairs Work Conference speech, President Xi stressed the need for Chinese diplomats to follow Party guidance closely.³⁰ To that end, the FAC

will help oversee foreign policy implementation and ensure its alignment with Party dictates.

Beijing also boosted funding for foreign affairs in 2018, increasing the foreign affairs budget 15 percent over 2017.³¹ With this year's increase, China's foreign affairs budget has doubled since 2011, increasing from \$4.53 billion (renminbi [RMB] 30 billion)* to \$9.06 billion (RMB 60 billion) in 2018.³² In addition, China created a new foreign aid agency called the China International Development Cooperation Agency to take on duties previously housed under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Commerce.³³

Finally, China's highest-ranking officials in charge of foreign affairs, including those known to be President Xi loyalists, were promoted to high-level Party positions as a means of increasing the influence of President Xi's foreign policy vision in broader government decision-making. State Councilor Yang Jiechi was promoted to be a member of the Politburo of the CCP Central Committee, and Foreign Minister Wang Yi received the higher-ranking title of state councilor.³⁴ Wang Qishan, former Politburo Standing Committee member and a key ally of President Xi, was appointed Chinese vice president. He is widely believed to have also been given a guiding role in foreign policymaking, based on his frequent meetings and experience working with global leaders.³⁵

China-Russia Relations

In 2018, China and Russia advanced their increasingly robust and pragmatic relationship through transfers of advanced weapons systems, high-profile combined military exercises, and a series of high-level meetings. These continued improvements to bilateral ties have been driven over the past decade by China and Russia's similar views on the international system. The two countries share hostility toward the United States and a desire to transition from a "unipolar" system dominated by the United States to a "post-Western" multipolar international order where China and Russia control regional spheres of influence and have increased influence in shaping international norms.³⁶ Following meetings in April 2018 between senior civilian officials and military officers, both sides extolled the strength of the bilateral relationship, with China's CMC Vice-Chairman Xu Qiliang declaring the relationship had reached "an all-time high."³⁷ At a bilateral summit on the sidelines of a Shanghai Cooperation Organization meeting in June, President Xi called China-Russia ties "the highest level, most profound and strategically most significant relationship between major countries in the world."³⁸

Major developments in the Sino-Russian security relationship in 2018 include:

- *Defense Industrial Cooperation:* China continues to acquire advanced military technology from Russia, which allows China to enhance its warfighting capabilities while acquiring important knowledge to drive improvements to its own military industrial

*Unless noted otherwise, this section uses the following exchange rate throughout: \$1 = RMB 6.62.

base.³⁹ In May 2018, China received a shipment completing its first regimental set of the S-400 surface-to-air missile (SAM) system, Russia's most advanced air defense system currently only fielded by Russia.⁴⁰ China is also due to receive ten additional Su-35 fighters by the end of 2018, after having received ten of the advanced aircraft in 2017 and four in 2016; it is the only country outside Russia to have fielded the Su-35 to date.⁴¹ Maintaining their upward trend in defense cooperation, China and Russia are also working on developing joint projects, including a heavy-lift helicopter.⁴² In September 2018, the United States imposed sanctions on China's Equipment Development Department for its purchases of the S-400 and Su-35 under the provisions of a 2017 U.S. law to counter the destabilizing activities of Iran, Russia, and North Korea, known as the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act.⁴³

- *Bilateral and Multilateral Exercises:* Reflecting their increasingly close defense relationship, Moscow invited Beijing for the first time to participate in one of its major annual military exercises, Vostok-2018 (for more information on the exercise, see the textbox below).⁴⁴ China also sent a number of advanced combat systems to the International Army Games in July and August, a series of military competitions founded by Russia in 2015 in which China has progressively expanded its involvement.⁴⁵ This year, China sent H-6K strategic bombers and Y-9 transport aircraft to participate in the competitions, which was the first time Beijing deployed these key power projection aircraft overseas.⁴⁶ Finally, Beijing and Moscow decided to conduct their 2018 Joint Sea naval exercise, held annually since 2012, in waters near the eastern Chinese city of Qingdao.⁴⁷
- *High-Level Contacts:* In April 2018, during Chinese Defense Minister General Wei Fenghe's first overseas trip as Defense Minister, he met with Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu to discuss bilateral defense cooperation on the sidelines of Russia's annual Moscow International Security Conference. During the visit, General Wei said in unusually pointed terms that "to support the Russian side in organizing the [conference], the Chinese side has come to show the Americans the close ties between the Armed Forces of China and Russia." He emphasized his visit was intended "to show the world the high level of development in [China-Russia] relations, [in addition to the] firm determination [of both countries] ... to strengthen strategic cooperation."⁴⁸ Later that month, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met in Beijing to affirm their countries' commitment to deepening their bilateral relationship.⁴⁹ Increasing numbers of high-level military contacts between China and Russia in recent years reflect a trend of closer cooperation between the two countries and provide opportunities for their national security establishments to facilitate arms packages, prepare for military exercises, and discuss regional and global security concerns.⁵⁰

Vostok-2018 Exercise Raises Profile of Defense Ties

In 2018, Moscow invited Beijing for the first time to participate in Vostok-2018, one of Russia's annual large-scale strategic exercises and the largest exercise Russia has held since 1981.⁵¹ The PLA sent the largest force it had ever deployed outside of China's borders to the exercise, which took place from September 11–17 in Eastern Russia, consisting of 3,200 troops and 900 tanks and armored vehicles from its Northern Theater Command, as well as six fixed-wing aircraft and 24 helicopters.⁵² China's participation marked an upgrade in defense ties, given that Russia had only previously invited its closest defense partners to participate in the exercise series. In a thinly disguised reference to the United States in its public messaging, China suggested its participation in the drill was in part a response to certain "hegemonic powers [that] target China and Russia ... severely threaten[ing] regional and even global peace and stability."⁵³ Unlike previous bilateral exercises involving the two countries' ground forces that have primarily focused on countering international terrorism, Vostok-2018 was designed to simulate a large-scale conventional campaign to halt an enemy invasion.⁵⁴ Further, both sides used a number of their most advanced weapons systems, signaling a greater willingness to display some of their most sensitive platforms.⁵⁵ During the exercise, Chinese and Russian air forces operated in a unified formation for the first time, marking further progress in operating as a combined force.⁵⁶ While the PLA Navy did not participate in the exercise, a Chinese intelligence ship reportedly monitored Russian naval assets during the exercise's at-sea training event.⁵⁷

Overall, participation in Vostok-2018 allowed the PLA to gain valuable experience in conducting and observing combined arms and joint operations,* bolstered its logistical capacity and ability to operate in unfamiliar environments, and signaled to the United States and other observers that the two countries' ties are deepening.⁵⁸ During the exercise, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and his Chinese counterpart Wei Fenghe agreed to conduct joint exercises on a regular basis.⁵⁹

China-Iran Relations

Since the Trump Administration announced in May 2018 it would withdraw from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action)† and reimpose sanctions, Beijing has moved

*The PLA noted that the Northern Theater Command joint operations command system made its debut at the exercise and was tested for the first time outside China's borders. For more information on the PLA's restructuring efforts to improve its ability to conduct joint operations, see Chapter 2, Section 2, "China's Military Reorganization and Modernization: Implications for the United States." Cai Pengcheng, "A Complete Structure with Joint Operations Command at the Two Levels of the Central Military Commission and the Theaters Is Being Built, the Leadership and Command System Is Achieving Historic Change," *PLA Daily*, September 26, 2018. Translation. http://www.81.cn/jfbmap/content/2018-09/26/content_216635.htm.

†The nuclear deal was reached between the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (the United States, United Kingdom, France, China, and Russia), Germany, the EU, and Iran. Under the agreement, Iran agreed to reduce its uranium enrichment and allow for international inspections of its nuclear facilities and other changes to its nuclear program in exchange for ending sanctions. The deal went into effect on January 16, 2016, one week before President Xi's visit

to further expand its economic footprint in Iran while engaging in diplomatic talks with the deal's signatories to try to save the agreement.⁶⁰ U.S. action has left European firms doing business in Iran with a choice to either stay and lose access to the U.S. financial system or leave Iran entirely, which has opened the door for Chinese firms to replace European business in Iran.⁶¹ In late May 2018, Iran's oil minister announced French energy giant Total had two months to secure an exemption from U.S. sanctions or Chinese state-owned China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) would take over Total's stake in the South Pars natural gas field.*⁶² Total, then the only Western energy firm investing in Iran, was unable to get a U.S. waiver and decided to leave the project, whose majority stake is now set to be transferred to CNPC.†⁶³

President Xi and other top Chinese officials have met with the other signatories to the Iran deal, expressing China's support for the deal to remain in place, despite the benefits Beijing may gain from the United States leaving it.⁶⁴ Retaining the deal helps China boost its oil imports from Iran and increases stability in Iranian markets for Chinese firms.⁶⁵ Between January and May 2018, China increased its oil imports from Iran by nearly 10 percent year-over-year, amounting for more than a quarter of Iran's oil exports (Chinese oil imports dropped nearly 20 percent between May and August).⁶⁶ Peter Harrell, an adjunct senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security, assesses Beijing will likely leverage its position as Iran's top oil importer to secure more favorable pricing following the November 2018 deadline for U.S. allies to cut off their purchases of Iranian oil.⁶⁷

Beijing also sees Iran as a critical hub in its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which since 2017 has resulted in several billion dollars in financing for infrastructure projects in the country; Chinese state-owned firms have won contracts for major railroad construction projects that may also be tied to BRI.⁶⁸ Given China's ongoing avenues of trade with Iran outside of the U.S. financial system, Beijing will likely continue to expand its economic and other cooperation with Iran, which have served as important initiatives within Beijing's broader increased strategic engagement with the Middle East in recent years.⁶⁹

China and Iran are also likely to continue expanding bilateral security cooperation, which could involve arms sales and technology transfers to Iran that undermine U.S. security interests.⁷⁰ Since the Iran nuclear deal was signed, diplomatic and security cooperation between the two sides have deepened. In 2016, the countries upgraded relations to a "comprehensive strategic partnership," and in 2017 conducted their second bilateral naval exercise, a component of which was conducted in the Strait of Hormuz—a strategic water-

to Tehran to upgrade bilateral ties. BBC, "Iran Nuclear Deal: Key Details," May 8, 2018; David E. Sanger, "Iran Complies with Nuclear Deal; Sanctions Are Lifted," *New York Times*, January 16, 2016; U.S. Department of State, *Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action*. <https://www.state.gov/e/eb/tfs/spi/iran/jcpoa/>.

*According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the South Pars natural gas field holds approximately 40 percent of Iran's natural gas reserves. U.S. Energy Information Administration, Country Analysis Brief: Iran, April 9, 2018, 2.

†Total, which has ceased work on the project, is in negotiations to transfer its 50.1 percent share to CNPC, but the Chinese state-owned energy firm is reportedly reluctant to accept full control and attract attention from the United States. Benoit Faucon, "As U.S. Sanctions Loom, Total SA Struggles to Exit Project in Iran," *Wall Street Journal*, August 20, 2018.

way transited by a significant percentage of China's oil imports.⁷¹ Defense industrial cooperation between Beijing and Tehran dates back to the 1980s and has included Chinese nuclear and missile technology transfers.⁷² As recently as March 2017, the U.S. government found Chinese proliferators violating U.S. export controls on Iran and facilitating Iran's ballistic missile program.⁷³

China-Pakistan Relations

The July 2018 election that resulted in Imran Khan becoming Pakistan's new prime minister created some uncertainty about the future of China-Pakistan relations due to Beijing's close relationship with the previous government in Islamabad and historically frosty relations with Prime Minister Khan's Tehrik-e Insaf party.⁷⁴ However, the two countries likely will stay aligned or even move closer given Pakistan's need for outside support and China's economic and strategic investments in Pakistan. As Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia Program and senior associate for South Asia at the Wilson Center, explains, "From Pakistan's perspective, there's never been a more important time for Islamabad to remain close to China, particularly given the importance of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the uncertain future of Pakistan's relationship with America."⁷⁵ The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor remains central to Pakistan's economic growth and infrastructure plans and is a linchpin of China's BRI.⁷⁶ However, the corridor creates challenges for both countries, as Beijing worries about the security of Chinese workers in Pakistan while Islamabad wants more transparency in projects given the corruption of the previous government and ballooning debt loads—especially with the potential for a contentious International Monetary Fund bailout in the offing.⁷⁷

China and Pakistan also share foreign policy concerns. China's involvement in Afghanistan grew in 2018 as Beijing made moves to facilitate talks with the Taliban.⁷⁸ Influencing the course of the war in Afghanistan remains a core aim for Pakistan, as well as an area where both China and Pakistan could cooperate with the United States, India, and Russia.⁷⁹ More broadly, however, security competition among major powers in the region is intensifying, which could prompt a shift in South Asia's geopolitics toward new regional blocs. As Andrew Small, senior transatlantic fellow with the Asia Program at the German Marshall Fund, explains, "Dynamics in South Asia are increasingly taking on a zero-sum quality. And with improving U.S.-Indian and Chinese-Pakistani relations set against a decline in U.S.-Pakistani and Chinese-Indian relations, such dynamics are becoming mutually reinforcing."⁸⁰

Increasing Geopolitical Tensions with Neighbors

East China Sea Tensions Increase

Overall, tensions and the potential for accidents, miscalculation, and escalation between China and Japan intensified in the East China Sea over the last year. The transit of a number of Chinese

naval vessels, including a submarine, through the contiguous zone* around the Senkaku Islands (known as the Diaoyu Islands in China) reflected the increasingly militarized nature of China's approach to contesting Japan's administrative control of the islands.⁸¹ Important Chinese activities in the East China Sea in 2018 include:

- *Changing nature of PLA threat:* A Chinese submarine and frigate entered the contiguous zone around the Senkakus in January 2018, drawing strong protests from the Japanese government.⁸² Japanese Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Shinsuke Sugiyama expressed “grave concern” to China's ambassador to Japan Chen Yonghua, and Japan's Minister of Defense Itsunori Onodera said the submarine entering the contiguous zone “unilaterally raises tensions.”⁸³ In June, the PLA Navy's hospital ship also entered the contiguous zone around the Senkakus, which an unnamed Japanese defense official called a “clear provocation.”⁸⁴ PLA Navy ships sailed within the Senkakus' contiguous zone for the first time in 2016, although there were no such occurrences in 2017.†

Submarine Incursion near the Senkakus

In January 2018, a submerged Chinese nuclear powered submarine transited through the contiguous zone of the Senkaku Islands, the first reported incident of a Chinese submarine entering those waters.⁸⁵ The Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force detected the submarine and issued multiple warnings to the boat while it was in the contiguous zone but it remained submerged and continued its transit.⁸⁶ However, once the submarine exited the contiguous zone, it surfaced and raised a Chinese national flag—an uncommon action for a submarine.⁸⁷ The transit of the submarine was almost certainly intended to challenge Japan's claim to the Senkakus and their surrounding waters. The boat also could have been gathering data on the underwater operational environment, acoustic signatures of nearby ships, and Japan's antisubmarine warfare capabilities.⁸⁸

- *Intensified Chinese aircraft training near Japan:* In 2018, the PLA Air Force continued its trend begun in 2015 of elevated levels of long-distance flight training over maritime areas along China's periphery, which has included areas near Japanese airspace. Flights near Japan have mostly occurred over the Miyako

*The contiguous zone is a 12-nautical mile (nm) area adjacent to the territorial sea, which is a 12 nm area extending out from a country's coastline, islands, or rocks. In its territorial sea, a state has full sovereignty, subject to the right of innocent passage. In its contiguous zone, a state can enforce customs-related laws. Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, foreign civilian and military ships may transit through a country's territorial sea according to the principle of innocent passage, which prohibits activities that are “prejudicial to the peace, good order or security of the coastal State,” such as military exercises or intelligence gathering. UN Convention on the Law of the Sea Part 2: Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone. http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/part2.htm.

†In June 2016, a Chinese frigate entered the contiguous zone around the Senkakus; a few days later, a PLA Navy intelligence-gathering ship entered the territorial sea. Previously, the only official Chinese ships to sail within 24 nm of the Senkakus were China Coast Guard and other Chinese maritime law enforcement ships. Ayako Mie, “Chinese Spy Ship Enters Japan's Territorial Waters for Second Time since End of WWII,” *Japan Times*, June 15, 2016; Ayako Mie, “First Chinese Warship to Skirt Senkakus Triggers Protest from Tokyo,” *Japan Times*, June 9, 2016.

Strait in the southern East China Sea between the Japanese islands of Miyako and Okinawa, although aircraft have also flown through the Tsushima Strait into the Sea of Japan⁸⁹ Given the history of close encounters between Chinese military aircraft and those of other countries, including Japan, the overall increase in training flights near Japan raises the risk of an accident.⁹⁰ (See “PLA Air Force Long-Distance Overwater Training Continues at Elevated Levels,” below.)

- *Other Chinese maritime activity around the Senkakus:* According to Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in 2018 an average of seven Chinese government ships entered the territorial sea around the Senkakus each month, representing a slight decrease from an average of nine ships per month in 2017.⁹¹ This could signal limited Chinese efforts to lower bilateral tensions in some areas, although Beijing’s placement of the China Coast Guard—which makes up most if not all of these incursions—directly in the military chain of command probably offsets any potential lowering of tensions from the slight decrease in incursions.⁹² Since September 2012, China’s maritime law enforcement and other ships have persisted in entering the territorial seas and contiguous zone around the Senkakus as part of Beijing’s broader challenge to Japan’s sovereignty and control over the islands.⁹³ Based on the terms of the U.S.-Japan Mutual Defense Treaty, this activity also constitutes a challenge to U.S. security guarantees to Japan.⁹⁴

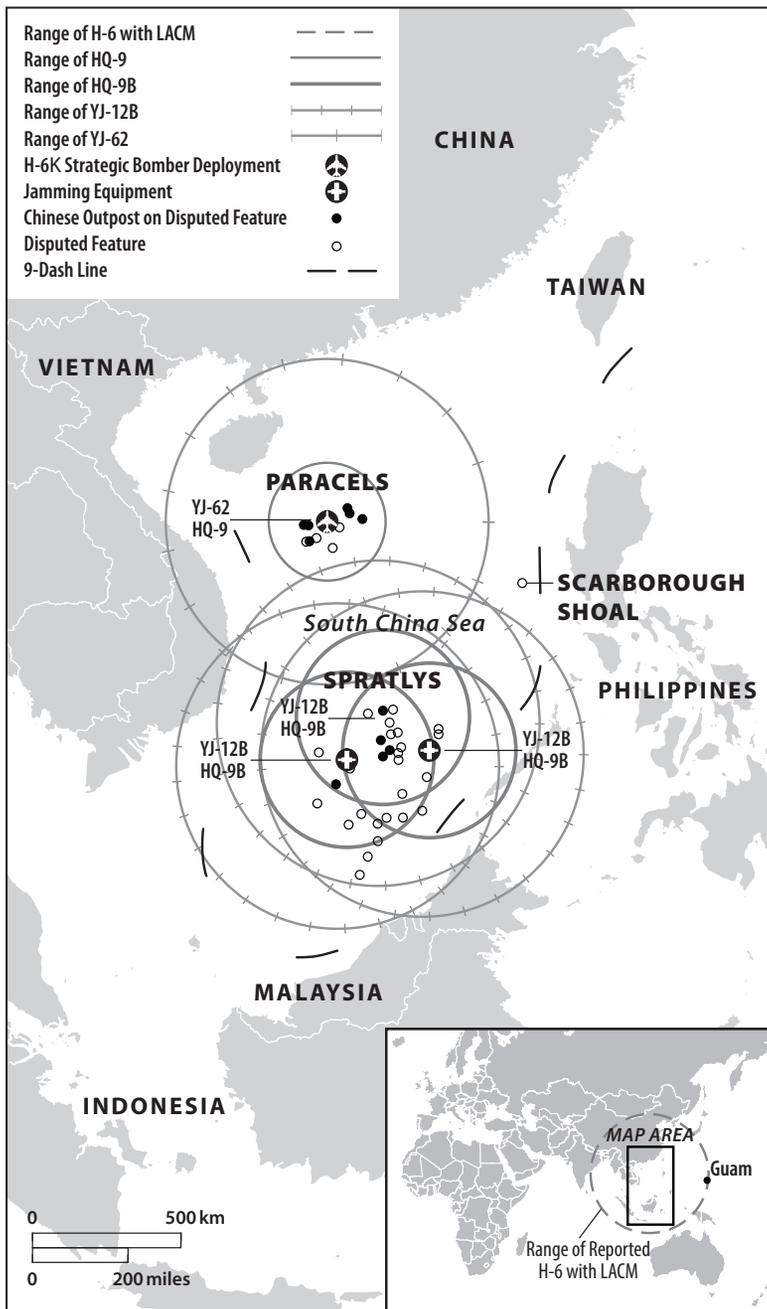
Continued Militarization and Consolidation of Control of the South China Sea

At the 19th Party Congress, President Xi publically proclaimed the success of China’s South China Sea island-building efforts. Following this top-level encouragement, in 2018 China took new and important steps to consolidate its control over and project power into the region. During Admiral Philip Davidson’s April 2018 confirmation hearing to be commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, in response to a question regarding China’s militarization activities in the South China Sea, the potential challenges these activities pose to U.S. forces, and their effect on China’s ability to project power in the region, he stated:

Once [its South China Sea bases are] occupied, China will be able to extend its influence thousands of miles to the south and project power deep into Oceania. The PLA will be able to use these bases to challenge U.S. presence in the region, and any forces deployed to the islands would easily overwhelm the military forces of any other South China Sea claimants. In short, China is now capable of controlling the South China Sea in all scenarios short of war with the United States.⁹⁵

According to U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis, China has continued to deploy new weapons for “intimidation and coercion” in the South China Sea, including advanced YJ-12B antiship and HQ-9B surface-to-air missiles on Mischief Reef, Fiery Cross Reef, and Subi Reef in the Spratly Islands, effectively creating a buffer around

Figure 1: Location and Effective Range of PLA South China Sea Deployments



Source: U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2018, adapted from Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative and BBC. Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, "China Power Projection"; BBC, "Why Is the South China Sea Contentious?" July 12, 2016.

this strategic area.*⁹⁶ In April 2018, U.S. officials revealed China had also installed jamming equipment on Fiery Cross Reef and Mischief Reef; Admiral Davidson testified that this equipment, in combination with other defense capabilities deployed to the outposts, presents a “substantial challenge” to U.S. operations in the region.⁹⁷ During the Commission’s May 2018 trip to Taiwan, a Taiwan Ministry of National Defense official told the Commission that China is trying to turn the South China Sea into its territorial waters and its ultimate objective is to replace the United States there.⁹⁸

As the PLA has deployed additional weapons systems, Beijing has improved its ability to operate in the region by conducting exercises and deploying strategic bombers to Woody Island in the Paracel Islands, marking the first-ever PLA bomber deployment to a base in the South China Sea.⁹⁹ During the deployment, PLA Air Force H-6K bombers conducted training that simulated strikes on maritime targets and probably developed an operational template Beijing could use in the future to deploy bombers farther south to the Spratly Islands.¹⁰⁰ The PLA Navy staged its largest-ever South China Sea exercise in March 2018, parading more than 40 ships—including submarines, surface combatants, and the aircraft carrier *Liaoning*—near Hainan Island in a military display personally presided over by President Xi.¹⁰¹

United States Disinvites China from 2018 Rim of the Pacific Exercise

In May 2018, the United States disinvited China from participating in the 2018 iteration of the U.S.-led Rim of the Pacific Exercise—a biennial, large-scale naval exercise near Hawaii that includes the participation of the navies of a number of U.S. allies and partners—due to China’s militarization of disputed features in the South China Sea.¹⁰² Senior Colonel Ren Guoqiang, spokesperson for China’s Ministry of National Defense, expressed opposition to the move, saying, “The U.S. decision is not constructive. Closing the door of communication at any time will not help enhance mutual trust and cooperation between the two militaries.”¹⁰³ China dispatched an intelligence collection ship that arrived on July 11 to monitor the exercise.¹⁰⁴ The United States had previously invited China to participate in the 2014 and 2016 iterations of the exercise.¹⁰⁵

While militarizing the South China Sea, China held several meetings with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) representatives which resulted in a finalized negotiating framework for a future South China Sea Code of Conduct. The finalization of this framework suggests there may be political will in the region to finalize a Code of Conduct, although concerns remain that China may ultimately use any future agreement to “legitimize its actions in the South China Sea by engaging in the process while subverting its spirit,” according to Huong Le Thu, senior analyst at the Australian

*YJ-12B antiship missiles and HQ-9B anti-air missiles have reported ranges of 295 nm and 160 nm, respectively. Amanda Macias, “China Quietly Installed Defensive Missile Systems on Strategic Spratly Islands in Hotly Contested South China Sea,” *CNBC*, May 2, 2018; Bonny Lin and Cristina Garafola, “Training the People’s Liberation Army Air Force Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) Forces,” *RAND Corporation*, 2016, 4.

Strategic Policy Institute.¹⁰⁶ Bill Hayton, associate fellow at Chatham House, argues ASEAN countries want to try to maintain the status quo and limit China's potential for further encroachment, but China will not agree to limits to its own behavior.¹⁰⁷ For example, Beijing has proposed to ASEAN that they both promise not to hold joint military exercises with any extraregional country absent prior notice or agreement, which could in effect give China a veto over any joint exercises between ASEAN countries and the United States or U.S. allies and partners; at the same time, China has reportedly proposed its own regular joint exercises with ASEAN.¹⁰⁸

Obstacles remain to finalizing a Code of Conduct, however, as signatory countries would first need to fully and effectively implement their earlier Declaration of Conduct.*¹⁰⁹ Tensions also remain between China and countries in the region; in August 2018, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte told China to “temper” its behavior in the region and threatened China with war if it moved ahead with oil exploration in disputed areas or took other provocative steps.¹¹⁰

PLA Air Force Long-Distance Overwater Training Continues at Elevated Levels

This year, the PLA Air Force continued to conduct long-distance overwater training, representing a continuation of a trend begun in 2015 for the PLA Air Force to operate with greater frequency and with a wider variety of aircraft in areas where it had not previously flown.†¹¹¹ This training is part of a broader PLA Air Force effort to transition from a service focused on territorial air defense to one capable of strategic power projection beyond China's coast.¹¹² This training likewise reflects senior Chinese military leaders' emphasis on the importance of maritime operations for the PLA Air Force.¹¹³

These training activities serve various purposes, many of which affect U.S. interests in the Pacific:

- Improving the PLA Air Force's capability to execute maritime missions in contingencies involving countries along China's maritime periphery—many of which are U.S. allies and partners—and the United States.¹¹⁴
- Gathering intelligence on militaries of neighboring countries and other foreign militaries operating in the East and South China seas.¹¹⁵
- Reinforcing Beijing's claims over portions of the East and South China seas while increasing pressure on Taiwan.‡

H-6K bombers—China's newest and most capable bombers—have participated in the majority of these flights.¹¹⁶ When equipped with

*The Declaration of Conduct calls for international cooperation in marine environmental protection; marine scientific research; safety of navigation and communication at sea; search and rescue operations; and combating transnational crime. Carl Thayer, “ASEAN and China Set to Agree on Single Draft South China Sea Code of Conduct,” *Diplomat*, July 27, 2018.

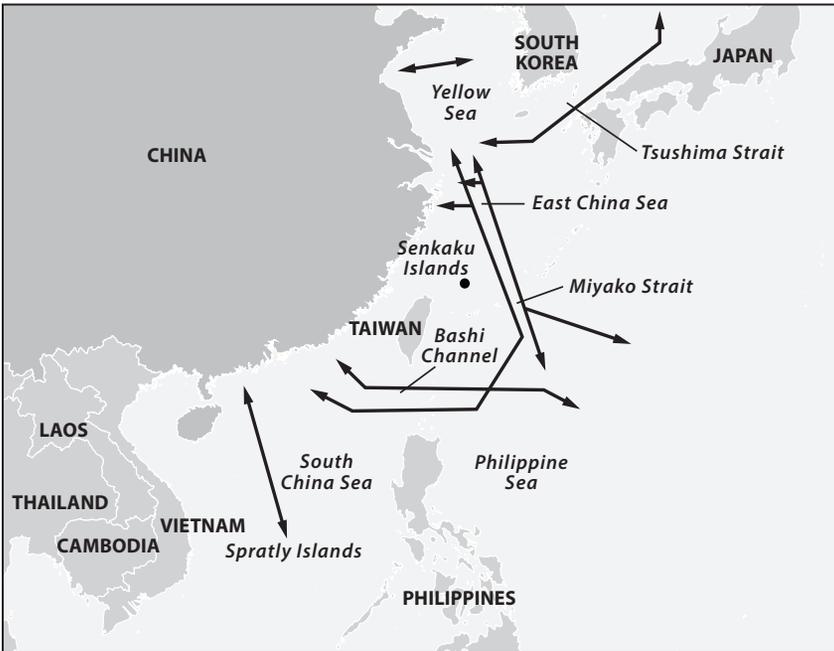
†For more information about these flights, see Matthew Southerland, “Chinese Air Force's Long-Distance Training over Water Continues to Increase and Expand,” *U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission*, March 22, 2018.

‡Several of the flights have involved patrols of China's East China Sea air defense identification zone, which includes the airspace over the Senkaku Islands. In 2016, the PLA Air Force also conducted several long-distance training flights in the South China Sea following the release by the intergovernmental Permanent Court of Arbitration of the ruling on a case on China's claims

PLA Air Force Long-Distance Overwater Training Continues at Elevated Levels—*Continued*

air-launched CJ-20 land-attack cruise missiles, the H-6K gives China the ability to conduct precision airstrikes with air-launched weapons against U.S. military facilities in Guam.¹¹⁷ The first two long-distance PLA Air Force flights over water in 2015 were conducted by H-6K bombers operating alone, but most subsequent flights have also included fighters, tankers, electronic warfare, electronic intelligence, and early warning and control aircraft.¹¹⁸

Figure 2: PLA Air Force and Navy Long-Distance Training Flights over Water



Source: Adapted from D-maps.com. http://www.d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=78&lang=en and Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense, 2017 *National Defense Report*, December 26, 2017, 38. Translation. goo.gl/mZURKW. With additional information from *Xinhua*, "Chinese Aircraft Conduct Drills in Yellow Sea, East China Sea," December 4, 2017; *CCTV-7*, "Military Report," Television, November 20, 2017. Translation. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oszcUuNYY30>; *Xinhua*, "Chinese Military Aircraft Patrol South China Sea," August 6, 2016; Peter Wood, "Chinese Military Aviation in the East China Sea," *China Brief*, October 26, 2016.

China on India's Periphery

In 2018, China opened new fronts to pressure India and assert its presence along India's land and maritime periphery. Significantly, Beijing's attempts to improve bilateral relations through lead-

and activities there. Mark R. Cozad and Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga, "People's Liberation Army Air Force Operations over Water: Maintaining Relevance in China's Changing Security Environment," *RAND Corporation*, 2017, 23; *Xinhua*, "Chinese Military Aircraft Patrol South China Sea," August 6, 2016; *Xinhua*, "China's Air Force Conducts Combat Air Patrol in South China Sea," July 18, 2016.

er-level summits appear to have failed to overcome India's deeper concerns about China's continued regional expansionism and unyielding position on sovereignty disputes.¹¹⁹ A political crisis in the island country of the Maldives—set off by Maldivian President Abdulla Yameen's declaration of a state of emergency—and subsequent crackdown on opposition leaders to consolidate power ahead of an election led India to consider armed intervention, which China opposed.¹²⁰ President Yameen maintained close ties to China and courted investment for infrastructure projects under the BRI.¹²¹ In September 2018, however, opposition candidate Ibrahim Mohamed Solih won a surprise presidential election victory over President Yameen in a development that was widely viewed as a positive sign for the fragile democracy and, at least in part, a rejection of a policy of alignment with China over India.¹²² Meanwhile, India's plans for its first overseas military base in the Indian Ocean archipelago country of the Seychelles appear to have stalled amid protests in the Seychelles and concerns there about being embroiled in a geopolitical contest between India and China.¹²³ As Manoj Joshi, distinguished fellow at the New Delhi-based Observer Research Foundation, explains, "China is the subtext of India's troubles in both the Maldives and the Seychelles, though its hand in the Maldives is clearer."¹²⁴ In Sri Lanka, China took a controlling equity stake in and a 99-year lease for Hambantota Port after Colombo could not pay debts owed to Beijing, although the current lease terms forbid China from using the port for military purposes without Sri Lanka's permission.¹²⁵

China continued to make inroads in continental South Asia as well. China and Nepal agreed to a number of new infrastructure projects, including an internet connection through China that would end India's monopoly on providing internet services, and a rail link connecting Tibet with Kathmandu.¹²⁶ In addition, China continued fortifying its position on the Doklam Plateau in Bhutan. A recent study found that in the year since the standoff, "China has quietly deployed troops and built new infrastructure in the area, slowly but steadily gaining advantage in the contested region."¹²⁷

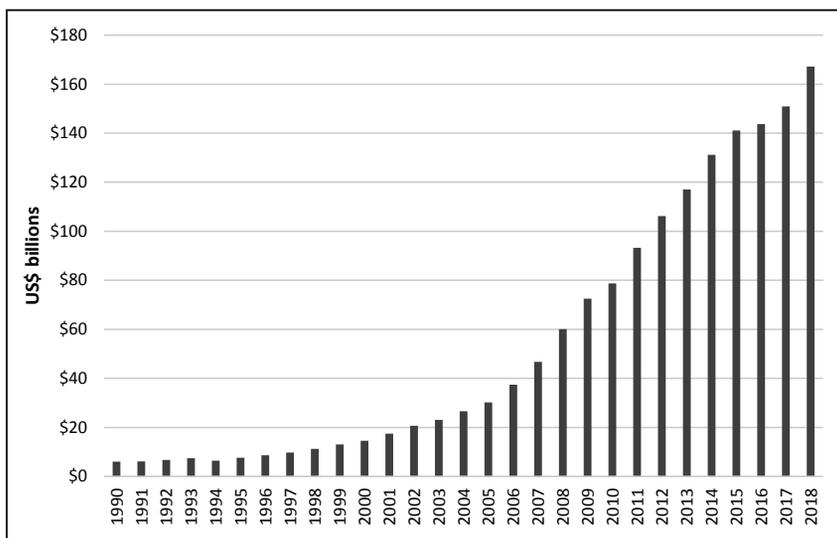
In an attempt to reduce tensions, President Xi joined Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in April for an "informal meeting" in Wuhan, capital of China's Hubei Province.¹²⁸ Chinese official statements sought to portray the meeting as a "new starting point" in relations.¹²⁹ The pair met again on June 9, 2018 in Qingdao, a port city in China's Shandong Province, on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit.¹³⁰ Despite the leader-level summits, frictions between the two countries probably will not abate without a fundamental change in approach from one or both sides.¹³¹ Rather, "the differences between India and China are therefore still as wide as they were before Wuhan."¹³²

Substantial Increase in 2018 Defense Budget

In March 2018, China announced a 2018 military budget of \$167.2 billion (RMB 1.107 trillion), an increase of 8.1 percent over its announced budget for 2017 and the largest increase in three years.¹³³ This year's announced defense budget represents approximately 1.3 percent of China's projected gross domestic product and 10.7 percent

of total government spending.*¹³⁴ However, observers note the impossibility of accepting China's official figures at face value due to Beijing's provision of only top-line numbers and its omission of major defense-related expenditures (e.g., research and development programs, foreign arms purchases, and local government support to the PLA).¹³⁵ The U.S. Department of Defense routinely added an additional 25 percent to China's official budget numbers from 2012 to 2017, and well-regarded think tanks estimate China's military budget to be between 40 and 50 percent higher than reported, suggesting China's real defense spending for 2018 was between \$209 billion and approximately \$250.8 billion.¹³⁶ Since 2002, China's military budget has trailed only the United States, representing a significant investment for a force primarily operating within its own region.¹³⁷

Figure 3: China's Announced Defense Spending, 1990–2018



Note: This graphic uses the average yearly exchange rate to calculate the U.S. dollar value of China's defense spending in each year, except the 2018 number which uses the exchange rate used throughout this report of \$1 = RMB 6.62. These numbers represent only announced defense spending by the Chinese government since 1990. They do not account for inflation or the appreciation in the value of China's currency, nor do they represent the true amount of Chinese defense spending.†

*It is impossible to ascertain the exact composition of China's official defense budget. China's defense spending as a percentage of total announced government expenditures was calculated by Commission staff using official figures provided by the Chinese government, and could vary considerably given the unreliability of these figures. In March 2018, China's Ministry of Finance announced its projected total government expenditures for the year would be \$1.526 trillion (RMB 10.331 trillion) and its projected national defense spending as \$167.2 billion (RMB 1.107 trillion). China's projected total government spending includes central government expenditures, tax rebates and transfer payments from the central government to local governments, and reserve funds. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, which uses its own methodology for calculating Chinese defense spending, the defense spending as a percentage of overall government expenditures was between 6 and 6.6 percent from 2013 to 2017. China's Ministry of Finance, *Report on the Execution of the Central and Local Budgets for 2017 and on the Draft Central and Local Budgets for 2018*, First Session of the 13th National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, March 5, 2018; Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database." <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>.

†This figure reflects Commission judgments based on several sources, each of which provides data for part of the period 1990–2018. The most recent source is used when these sources disagree. For 2018, *Xinhua*, "China Focus: China to Increase 2018 Defense Budget by 8.1. Percent,"

China's Global Security Activities in 2018

Increasing Overseas Military Presence

Construction Continues at the PLA's Djibouti Military Base

In May 2018, *IHS Jane's Defence Weekly* reported that a pier was under construction at China's military base in Djibouti, China's first permanent overseas military base which officially opened in August 2017.¹³⁸ The base could support a range of PLA operations in the region—including antipiracy, peacekeeping, noncombatant evacuation, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations—and could allow Beijing to more quickly respond to other incidents threatening Chinese interests.¹³⁹ According to China's Ministry of National Defense, the base—which China calls a “military support facility”—will be “mainly used to provide rest and rehabilitation for the Chinese troops taking part in escort missions in the Gulf of Aden and waters off Somalia, UN peacekeeping, and humanitarian rescue [operations].”¹⁴⁰ The Djibouti base, which occupies a key chokepoint for sea lines of communications between the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, serves as a strategic asset for China and represents an initial step allowing Beijing to expand its military presence in the region.¹⁴¹

The location of the PLA's Djibouti base also presents problems for the United States because it is located several miles away from Camp Lemonnier, a hub for U.S. counterterrorism operations in North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, as well as a number of bases used by U.S. allies.¹⁴² Notably, in April 2018 the U.S. military issued a Notice to Airmen in which it warned of “unauthorized laser activity” occurring in the vicinity of the PLA base which had resulted in two U.S. airmen sustaining injuries.¹⁴³ A U.S. Department of Defense spokesperson said the Department was confident the activity was conducted by China, and the U.S. government issued a demarche to China in response.¹⁴⁴ According to *IHS Jane's*, multiple intelligence sources indicated that the laser activity originated from a “high-power lasing weapon” operated by the Chinese Navy at the base or on a ship offshore.¹⁴⁵ A Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson has denied responsibility for the lasing.¹⁴⁶

Gulf of Aden Deployments Continue to Exceed Antipiracy Requirements

In August 2018, China's 30th consecutive naval task group set sail from China to conduct an antipiracy mission in the Gulf of Aden.¹⁴⁷ Between 2008—when China began its Gulf of Aden antipiracy operations—and July 2017, the PLA Navy escorted 6,400 Chinese and

March 5, 2018; for 2017, *Xinhua*, “China Focus: China's 2017 Defense Budget to Grow 7 Pct: Finance Official,” March 6, 2017; for 2016, Andrew S. Erickson and Adam P. Liff, “The Limits of Growth: Economic Headwinds Inform China's Latest Military Budget,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 5, 2016; for 2015, Andrew Erickson and Adam Liff, “China's Military Spending Swells Again despite Domestic Headwinds,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 5, 2015; for 2014, Andrew Erickson and Adam Liff, “The Budget This Time: Taking the Measure of China's Defense Spending,” *Asan Forum*, March–April 2014; for 2013, Jeremy Page, “China Raises Defense Spending 12.2% for 2014,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 5, 2014; for 2002–2012, Andrew Erickson and Adam Liff, “Demystifying China's Defense Spending: Less Mysterious in the Aggregate,” *China Quarterly*, December 2013, 805–830; for 1994–2001, Dennis J. Blasko et al., “Defense-Related Spending in China: A Preliminary Analysis and Comparison with American Equivalents,” *United States-China Policy Foundation*, 2007, 19; for 1989–1993, David Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military: Progress, Problems, and Prospects*, University of California Press, 2002, 189.

foreign vessels and rescued or assisted more than 60 Chinese and foreign ships, although the task groups China has deployed have long exceeded the actual requirements for antipiracy operations.¹⁴⁸ China has also used its antipiracy task groups as cover for deploying submarines to the region since 2013, when the PLA Navy conducted its first known submarine deployment to the Indian Ocean.¹⁴⁹ In December 2017, Admiral Sunil Lanba, chief of naval staff of the Indian navy, claimed that the PLA Navy has deployed submarines to the Indian Ocean region twice a year since then, including deployments of both nuclear and conventional submarines.¹⁵⁰ PLA Navy submarine deployments to the Indian Ocean have raised anxiety in New Delhi over its ability to protect its sea lines of communication.¹⁵¹ They have also provided the PLA Navy opportunities to test and improve the ability of China's submarine crews to operate for long durations at extended distances from the Chinese mainland; collect intelligence on U.S., Indian, and other forces in the Indian Ocean; prepare for potential crises and wartime operations in the Indian Ocean; and demonstrate China's growing strategic interests in the region.

UN Peacekeeping Operations Provide Deployment Experience and Opportunity to Test Battlefield Skills

In December 2017, a PLA Army helicopter unit deployed to Sudan in support of a UN peacekeeping operation (PKO) completed its first mission, marking the PLA's first operational employment of a helicopter unit during a PKO and providing it with opportunities to test and improve capabilities that could be applied to warfighting missions. According to official Chinese media, the unit transported personnel and equipment during its deployment and would also conduct battlefield reconnaissance and air patrol.¹⁵² In August 2018, the PLA established a second helicopter detachment to deploy to Sudan, which like the first was drawn from the PLA Central Theater Command's 81st Group Army.¹⁵³ In November 2017, Chinese medical personnel in Mali treated peacekeepers from Niger who were injured in an attack carried out by militants.¹⁵⁴

More broadly, the PLA's involvement in PKOs allows China to increase its influence in Africa (where most Chinese peacekeepers are deployed),* gain experience deploying troops overseas, increase intelligence collection opportunities, and improve skills that could be used during actual combat.¹⁵⁵ Nevertheless, according to Dennis Blasko, former U.S. Army attaché in Beijing and Hong Kong, "[these missions] do not substitute for the kind of warfighting experience necessary for future mid- or high-intensity combined arms and joint operations."¹⁵⁶

China's Space Program Makes Progress on Key Milestones

China has made progress in important projects deemed crucial for Beijing's space ambitions, including heavy-lift launch vehicles and a future long-term space station, intensifying competition with the

*As of June 2018, 2,514 Chinese personnel were active in the following countries: Cyprus, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Israel, Lebanon, Mali, South Sudan, Sudan, and the Western Sahara. This number of deployed personnel ranked China 11th among all UN PKO contributor countries. United Nations, "Country Contributions by Mission and Personnel Type (as of 30 June 2018)." <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>.

United States for military dominance of space.¹⁵⁷ In March 2018, a Chinese official confirmed work had begun on a demonstration version of an engine for the as-yet unapproved Long March-9 (LM-9) heavy-lift rocket—which China will need for a potential future crewed lunar mission—and would potentially be completed by the end of 2018.¹⁵⁸ The next launch of the new LM-5 rocket—intended to be China’s “flagship rocket,” according to Harvard astrophysicist Jonathan McDowell—has been pushed back to 2019 after its second attempted launch failed in July 2017, delaying several important upcoming milestones, including China’s launch of the first component of the China Space Station (CSS), a lunar probe, and a Mars probe.*¹⁵⁹ China is also working on reusable rocket technology, which will debut with the medium-lift LM-8 launch vehicle around 2021 and likely be used in other LM generations.¹⁶⁰ After the International Space Station is retired in 2024, the CSS may be the world’s only active space station;† in May 2018, the China Manned Space Agency announced UN member countries would be permitted to use the CSS for scientific research.¹⁶¹

Several important future projects to make China a stronger space power are underway.¹⁶² In the next several years, official approvals of the LM-9 rocket, a robotic mission to Jupiter, and a crewed mission to the lunar surface will likely be forthcoming.¹⁶³ Despite setbacks to the LM-5 program, it remains highly likely China will officially approve a crewed lunar mission in time to complete the lunar mission by the 2030s; if the LM-9 is approved, it may be used instead of the LM-5 for the crewed lunar mission, the Mars probe, and future deep space probes.¹⁶⁴ The planned Xuntian space telescope—which will have a similar resolution to that of the Hubble, but a much wider field of view—is still undergoing feasibility studies, and Chinese authorities are studying the potential objectives of a robotic mission to rendezvous with an asteroid.¹⁶⁵ Beijing has scheduled the launch of a fourth moon probe in December 2018 and a fifth probe and the core CSS module in 2020, followed by the first CSS crewed mission, as well as a first Mars probe and the second CSS module in 2020.¹⁶⁶ China’s Beidou positioning, navigation, and timing satellite network—which will allow China to complete its shift away from reliance on the U.S.-maintained Global Positioning System for precision strike capabilities and other military uses and will strengthen Beijing’s economic diplomacy with countries partici-

*According to Dr. McDowell, the LM-5 will be China’s “flagship rocket” once it is perfected. It is necessary for China’s plans for the Chang’e-5 moon lander, a crewed space station beginning in 2019, a Mars probe mission in 2020, and a probe mission to Jupiter in the 2020s. Zhao Lei, “Long March Rocket Launch a Success,” *China Daily*, September 29, 2017; Loren Grush, “China’s Most Powerful Rocket Failed Yesterday. What Does That Mean for the Country’s Space Plans?” *Verge*, July 3, 2017.

†The CSS core module will launch in 2020 and two science modules will launch by 2022, with the option for more. The station will be accessible to both crewed and cargo flights, and crew will be able to conduct extravehicular activities and use on-orbit robotic arms. It will support three-person crews for three- to six-month tours or crews of six for shorter tours, and some racks in the science modules will be reserved for foreign partners. UN Office for Outer Space Affairs, “United Nations/China Cooperation on the Utilization of the China Space Station: First Announcement of Opportunity,” May 28, 2018, 3; Andrew Jones, “Launch of First Chinese Space Station Module Delayed to 2020,” *GB Times*, March 5, 2018; Andrew Jones, “China’s Long March 5 Heavy-Lift Rocket to Fly Again around November in Crucial Test,” *Space News*, March 14, 2018; Andrew Jones, “China Progressing with Work on New Medium, Heavy, and Super-Heavy Long March Launch Vehicles,” *GB Times*, October 17, 2017.

pating in the BRI¹⁶⁷—is expected to achieve global coverage with a total of 35 satellites by 2020.*¹⁶⁸

China has consistently been critical of U.S. space operations. In June, China Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Geng Shuang criticized the U.S. Administration's decision to create a sixth, space-centric military service,[†] claiming China opposes “turning outer space into a battlefield” and “always advocates the peaceful use of outer space and opposes an arms race” there.¹⁶⁹ China supports its and Russia's proposed international treaty that leaves open the possibility of deploying and testing ground-based counterspace weapons, which would allow Beijing to continue developing military space capabilities while appearing to oppose militarization of space.¹⁷⁰

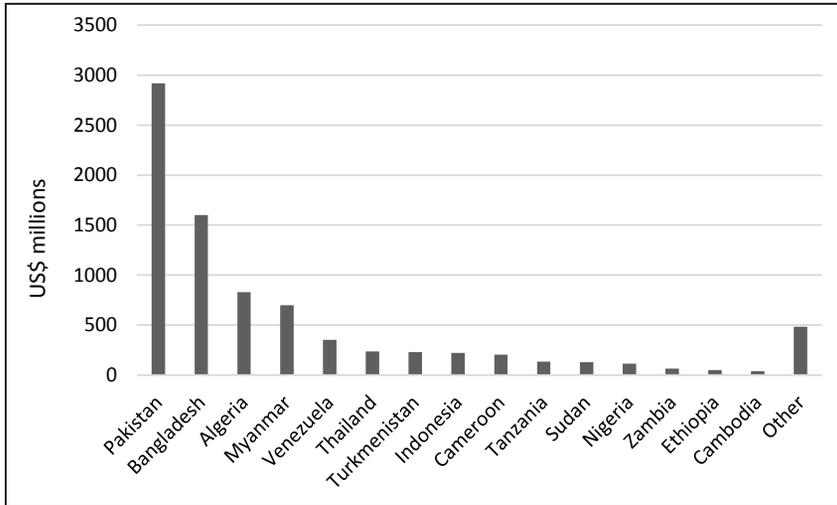
Seeking Increased Influence through Military Sales

In 2018, China continued to increase its share of the global arms trade, particularly within the Indo-Pacific region through arms sales to Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Burma (Myanmar).¹⁷¹ China also sold arms to some countries prohibited from purchasing certain U.S. weapon systems, including the sale of advanced unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to multiple countries in the Middle East.[‡] China was the fifth-largest arms exporter worldwide in aggregate terms during the 2013–2017 period, with \$8.3 billion in exports, following the United States with \$50.1 billion, Russia with \$31.7 billion, France with \$9.7 billion, and Germany with \$8.5 billion.¹⁷² China's exports of major arms rose by 38 percent between 2008–2012 and 2013–2017.¹⁷³ Over that same period, China's share of the global arms trade increased from 4.6 percent in 2008–2012 to 5.7 percent from 2013–2017.¹⁷⁴ From 2013 to 2017, China delivered major arms to 48 countries, with Asia and Oceania accounting for 72 percent of China's arms sales, Africa accounting for 21 percent, the Americas accounting for 4.9 percent, and the Middle East accounting for 2 percent.¹⁷⁵ China's largest arms sales clients were Pakistan, which received 35 percent of China's arms exports; Bangladesh, which received 19 percent; and Algeria, which received 10 percent.¹⁷⁶ Much of China's growth in international arms sales from 2008–2012 to 2013–2017 was driven by increased demand by Bangladesh and Algeria.¹⁷⁷ China's arms sales to Indo-Pacific countries serve to contain the influence of regional competitors, including the United States and India.¹⁷⁸

*According to the Test and Assessment Research Center of the China Satellite Navigation Office, as of October 2018 there were 17 operational Beidou satellites, comprising 15 Beidou-2 and two Beidou-3 satellites, plus 18 Beidou-3 satellites in testing. Test and Assessment Research Center of China Satellite Navigation Office, “System Basic Info.” Translation. <http://www.cnsno-tarc.cn/system/constellation>.

†In August 2018, the Trump Administration announced a plan—which requires Congressional approval—to establish a Space Force by 2020. In a report that same month, the Department of Defense wrote, “The Space Force will protect our economy through deterrence of malicious activities, ensure our space systems meet national security requirements, and provide vital capabilities to joint and coalition forces across the spectrum of conflict.” U.S. Department of Defense, “Final Report on Organizational and Management Structure for the National Security Space Components of the Department of Defense,” August 9, 2018, 3; Mike Stone, “U.S. Space Force Estimated to Cost \$13 Billion in First Five Years: Memo,” *Reuters*, September 17, 2018.

‡These include Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), who were previously denied requests to purchase U.S.-made drones under the Missile Technology Control Regime. Daniel Cebul, “Strict Export Regulations May Be Costing U.S. Industry Billions in Foreign Sales.” *Defense News*, June 18, 2018.

Figure 4: China's Arms Sales by Recipient, 2013–2017

Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "SIPRI Arms Transfer Database."

Significant Chinese arms exports agreed upon or reported in 2018 include:

- In March 2018, China supplied Pakistan with an advanced missile tracking system which observers believe is intended to assist Pakistan's ongoing development of multiple independently targetable reentry vehicle (MIRV) technology.¹⁷⁹ The transfer of the sophisticated missile tracking system is most likely intended to assist Pakistan's Abadeel medium-range ballistic missile, the first missile to boast a MIRV capability developed by a South Asian state.¹⁸⁰ In June, the Pakistan Navy announced it had signed a contract to purchase an additional two Type 054A frigates after having purchased two from China in June 2017.¹⁸¹ This purchase constitutes a significant addition to Pakistan's navy, which currently operates nine older-model frigates, and will further enhance China's military influence over Pakistan while worsening India's security dilemma.¹⁸²
- In 2018, China launched the third and fourth Type C13B corvettes on order for the Bangladesh Navy.¹⁸³ The first two Type C13B corvettes were commissioned into the Bangladesh Navy in 2016 and constitute half of its total corvette inventory.¹⁸⁴ Additionally, Bangladesh signed an agreement in June 2018 to procure an undisclosed number of K-8 trainer jets from China.¹⁸⁵
- In January 2018, *IHS Jane's Defence Weekly* reported that satellite imagery from October 2017 indicates the presence of Chinese manufactured Wing Loong II UAVs at Qusahwurah Air Base in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).¹⁸⁶ In February 2017, Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC) announced it had signed a contract to export the Wing Loong II to an unnamed client.¹⁸⁷ *Jane's* reporting suggests the UAE is the unnamed

client.¹⁸⁸ Neither China nor the UAE government have publicly confirmed the purchase.¹⁸⁹ The UAE purchased the Wing Long II after being denied requests to purchase UAVs from the United States.¹⁹⁰

PLA Exercises with Foreign Militaries

In addition to the PLA's first-time participation in Russia's Vostok strategic, large-scale exercise, since late 2017 the PLA has expanded its participation in bilateral and multilateral exercises with foreign militaries, primarily focused on maritime operations, counterterrorism, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Several of these exercises were also firsts of their kind, either in terms of the partnering foreign country or type of exercise. In December 2017, the PLA conducted its first military exercise with Timor-Leste, a rescue operation involving a Chinese hospital ship and Timor-Leste soldiers.¹⁹¹ In March 2018, the PLA Hong Kong Garrison participated in its first exercise with a foreign military, the French navy (this time reportedly without using the pretext of joining personnel from another theater command as it did during a 2016 exercise with Malaysia).¹⁹² The exercise was another step in working to improve the Garrison's professionalism and combat-realistic training geared toward missions beyond the defense of Hong Kong.¹⁹³ The PLA also participated in several new multilateral exercises, including Kaka-du-2018 (Australia's largest naval exercise), the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise, and the inaugural China-ASEAN maritime exercise (see Addendum I, "Select PLA Exercises with Foreign Militaries, October 2017–September 2018"). Through military exercises with foreign counterparts, the PLA is able to improve its defense ties with foreign countries, gain operational knowledge and experience, bolster its logistics capabilities operating in unfamiliar environments, and facilitate its other military modernization goals.

U.S.-China Security Relations in 2018

U.S.-China security relations grew more strained in 2018, particularly regarding the South China Sea, Taiwan, and Chinese arms purchases, and multiple high-level engagements resulted in little or no visible progress in expanding security ties and cooperation. In his address at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore,* Secretary of Defense Mattis said that the Asia Pacific is a priority region for the United States, and that the United States remains committed to reinforcing the rules-based international order.¹⁹⁴ He also noted the United States' opposition to actions taken by China to undermine that order, specifically criticizing China's unilateral actions in the South China Sea.¹⁹⁵

In September, citing the U.S. imposition of sanctions on its Equipment Development Department, China recalled the PLA Navy Commander from a visit to the United States. Shortly afterward, China denied a U.S. Navy ship, the *Wasp*, a routine port call in Hong Kong.¹⁹⁶ In October, Secretary of Defense Mattis canceled plans to

*The Shangri-La Dialogue, or Asia Security Summit, is hosted annually by the London-headquartered International Institute for Strategic Studies. It is attended by defense ministers and their civilian and military chiefs of staff from over 50 Asia Pacific countries. International Institute for Strategic Studies, "About the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue."

visit Beijing for defense talks after China declined to make its counterpart available and the Chinese Navy conducted what the Pentagon described as an “unsafe and unprofessional” maneuver that approached within 45 yards of a U.S. Navy ship conducting a freedom of navigation exercise in the Spratly Islands.¹⁹⁷

Areas of Engagement

Secretary of Defense Visits China: Dialogue Continues and President Xi Delivers a Warning

During Secretary of Defense Mattis’ late June 2018 visit to China, President Xi delivered a strong warning on China’s unwavering commitment to defending its territorial claims. In addition to meeting with President Xi, Secretary Mattis met with Politburo Member and Director of the General Office of the FAC Yang Jiechi, Vice Chairman of the CMC Xu Qiliang, and Minister of Defense Wei Fenghe.¹⁹⁸ Among the topics discussed during the meetings were bilateral defense relations, North Korea, Taiwan, and the South China Sea.¹⁹⁹ Chinese state-run media outlet *Xinhua* reported that President Xi spoke with Secretary Mattis about the importance of U.S.-China relations and military-to-military ties and the shared interests and common ground between the China and United States.²⁰⁰ However, *Xinhua* reported President Xi also warned that “on the issue concerning China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, our attitude is firm and clear. Not an inch of the territory left by the ancestors can be lost, and we do not want anything that belongs to others.”²⁰¹

Other High-Level Official Visits

On February 1, 2018, U.S. and Chinese defense officials met in Beijing for the Defense Policy Coordination Talks.²⁰² Brigadier General Roberta Shea, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asia, led a delegation for talks with Major General Huang Xueping, Deputy Director of the CMC Office for International Military Cooperation.²⁰³ The participants discussed key regional and global issues. The talks also included the annual meeting of the U.S.-China Notification of Major Military Activities Confidence Building Measures Working Group.²⁰⁴ Notably, the United States and China have not held their highest-level defense dialogue, the Defense Consultative Talks, since 2014; the meeting is usually held at the Department of Defense undersecretary and PLA deputy chief of the joint staff level.²⁰⁵

Areas of Tension

China Responds to U.S. National Security Policy Documents

Chinese officials responded negatively to the release of the U.S. *National Security Strategy* in December 2017, the *National Defense Strategy* in January 2018, and the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) in February 2018, and threatened responses that would further intensify U.S.-China strategic competition.²⁰⁶ Taken together, the major theme of these documents was positioning the United States for an era of great power competition with China and Russia.²⁰⁷ The Chinese Embassy in Washington released a response to the National Security Strategy, noting what China views as a contradictory position:

“On the one hand, the U.S. government claims that it is attempting to build a great partnership with China. On the other hand, it labels China as a rival.”²⁰⁸ The statement also called on the United States to abandon what China called “outdated zero-sum thinking”; a similar article by *Xinhua* said the “confrontational” strategy displayed “an outdated Cold War mentality.”²⁰⁹ Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Hua Chunying accused the United States of “deliberately distorting China’s strategic intentions.”²¹⁰

Responding to the National Defense Strategy, Chinese Ministry of National Defense spokesperson Ren Guoqiang said the document was full of “unreal assertions of ‘zero-sum’ games and confrontations” and argued, instead, the United States was the “backstage manipulator for militarizing the region.”²¹¹ The NPR received a similar response, with Chinese analysts focusing on its discussion of developing new U.S. nuclear capabilities.²¹² The NPR concluded broadly that “while China’s declaratory policy and doctrine have not changed, its lack of transparency regarding the scope and scale of its nuclear modernization program raises questions regarding its future intent.”²¹³ Michael Chase, a senior political scientist at the RAND Corporation, concludes Beijing will view the

*NPR as underscoring the need to ... [move] ahead with a nuclear force modernization program that ... increase[s] the quality and quantity of Chinese nuclear forces, albeit in ways ... largely consistent with China’s longstanding no first use ... policy, and an approach to nuclear strategy that focuses on providing China with a modern and secure nuclear retaliatory capability.*²¹⁴

In considering how Beijing might respond to a more competitive U.S. stance toward China, a commentary by *China Military Online* (the online version of the official newspaper of the PLA) suggested, “China will surely strengthen its strategic posture and improve its combat readiness. Furthermore, China will definitely deepen the comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination with other countries, including Russia, who was also stigmatized by the [National Security Strategy] and [National Defense Strategy]. All of this will make a new Cold War a possibility.”²¹⁵

Significant Chinese Espionage Cases in 2018

The United States faces a continuing threat to its national security from Chinese intelligence collection operations, with several revelations, arrests, or convictions of Chinese espionage activity occurring in 2018. Among the most serious threats are China’s efforts at cyber and human infiltration of U.S. national security organizations.²¹⁶ China has long targeted the United States with these operations, but reporting of Chinese espionage has increased significantly in recent years.

Select cases of Chinese espionage in the United States in 2018 include the following:*

*For more on Chinese espionage threats to the United States, see U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, Chapter 2, Section 3, “Chinese Intelligence Services and Espionage Threats to the United States,” in *2016 Annual Report to Congress*, November 2016, 289–304.

Significant Chinese Espionage Cases in 2018—*Continued*

- *Conviction of a Former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Officer:* On June 8, 2018, a federal jury in Virginia convicted Kevin Mallory, a former CIA officer, of transmitting secret and top secret documents to China in exchange for \$25,000.²¹⁷ Using a Chinese-provided phone, Mr. Mallory transmitted to a Chinese agent four documents, one of which contained unique identifiers for human sources who had helped the U.S. government.²¹⁸ Mr. Mallory was convicted of conspiracy to deliver, attempted delivery, and delivery of defense information to aid a foreign government, as well as making material false statements; the Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Washington Field Office said the trial "[highlighted] a serious threat to U.S. national security."²¹⁹
- *Arrest of a Former Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) Officer:* In June 2018, former DIA officer Ron Rockwell Hansen was arrested on federal charges, including the attempted transmission of national defense information to China.²²⁰ Between 2013 and 2017, Mr. Hansen attended military and intelligence conferences in the United States and provided the information he learned to Chinese intelligence contacts.²²¹ He also improperly sold export-controlled technology to persons in China. Mr. Hansen received at least \$800,000 in funds originating from China.²²²
- *Former CIA Officer Indicted:* In May 2018, former CIA officer Jerry Chun Shing Lee was indicted by a federal grand jury with one count of conspiracy to gather or deliver national defense information to aid a foreign government.²²³ Mr. Lee was initially arrested in January 2018 on two counts of unlawfully retaining documents related to national defense.²²⁴ According to prosecutors, Lee provided classified information regarding CIA covert operations to Chinese intelligence officers from April 2010 until at least 2011.²²⁵
- *Sea Dragon Cyber Attack:* In January and February 2018, cyber attacks sponsored by the Chinese government infiltrated a U.S. Navy contractor's computers, stealing 614 gigabytes of material on an undersea warfare project known as "Sea Dragon."²²⁶ The information was stolen from the contractor's unclassified network despite being "highly sensitive" in nature.²²⁷ Officials have not identified the contractor.²²⁸ Sea Dragon, contracted for the U.S. Naval Undersea Warfare Center, aims to develop a supersonic antiship missile for use on U.S. submarines.²²⁹

**Addendum I: Select PLA Exercises with Foreign Militaries,
October 2017–September 2018**

Date (Duration)	Exercise Name or Type (Location)	Other Participants (Number)	Type of Exercise	Details
Oct. 2017 (1 day)	Maritime Exercise (France)	France (two frigates and a supply ship from the PLA Navy, one destroyer from French navy)	Maritime	China's 26th naval escort taskforce conducted a port call in France on its return trip to China after Gulf of Aden antipiracy operations. The ships conducted communication, group sailing, at-sea replenishment, and antipiracy drills.
Nov. 2017 (7 days)	U.S.-China Disaster Management Exchange (Oregon, USA)	United States (96 PLA soldiers from Southern Theater Com- mand, 96 from U.S. Army)	Human- itarian As- sistance/ Disaster Relief (HA/DR)	In the 13th annual exercise, the two sides simulated a combined response using a multinational coordination center to assist a third country suffering severe flooding.
Nov. 2017 (3 days)	IONS Inter- national Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise (Bangladesh)	At least nine countries, includ- ing Bangladesh, India, Iran, and Kenya	Maritime	Participating for the first time in the exercise after observing since 2014, the PLA Navy sent a Type 054A (JIANKAI II-class) frigate with an onboard helicopter. The exercise involved establishing communication mechanisms and tactical cooperation responding to a maritime disaster.
Dec. 2017 (1 day)	HA/DR Exer- cise (Timor-Leste)	Timor-Leste	HA/DR	During the PLA Navy hospital ship <i>Peace Ark's</i> eight-day visit to Timor-Leste, the ship conducted a rescue exercise with Timor-Leste soldiers and officers. This was the first such exercise between the two countries.
Dec. 2017 (3 days)	Friend-2017 (near Shang- hai, China)	Pakistan (one frigate each)	Maritime	The fifth combined exercise between the two navies included coordination meetings and a live-fire portion that focused on firing practice, search and rescue, and driving away adversaries.

**Addendum I: Select PLA Exercises with Foreign Militaries,
October 2017–September 2018—Continued**

Date (Duration)	Exercise Name or Type (Location)	Other Participants (Number)	Type of Exercise	Details
Dec. 2017 (6 days)	Aerospace Security-2017 (Beijing, China)	Russia	Missile Defense	In a continuation of growing missile defense cooperation in recent years, the two countries held their second computer-simulated tabletop exercise designed to “practice cooperation of [both sides] to repel missile threats from third countries.”
Mar. 2018 (17 days)	Gold Dragon-2018 (Cambodia)	Cambodia (496 troops total)	HA/DR; Counter-terrorism	The second iteration of the exercise increased in scale, added a counterterrorism element, included more personnel and equipment, and was longer in duration. Both sides used a mixed formation to conduct mine and chemical weapon neutralization, terrorist base assaults, hostage rescue, and humanitarian assistance.
Mar. 2018 (1 day)	Search and Rescue Exercise (waters near Hong Kong)	France	Maritime	In the PLA Hong Kong Garrison’s first exercise with a foreign military, the two sides conducted search and rescue and communication drills.
May 2018 (5 days)	Komodo-2018 (Indonesia)	33 other countries (China sent a destroyer and frigate)	Maritime	In addition to multilateral military exchanges, the exercise sea phase involved aerial photography, cross-ship replenishment, search and rescue, helicopter landings on ships, and other drills.
Aug. 2018 (2 days)	ASEAN-China Maritime Exercise (Singapore)	10 ASEAN countries	Maritime	China conducted its first maritime exercise with ASEAN, which was in a table top format. The exercise focused on cooperation in safety-related incidents at sea and confidence building. An October 2018 follow-on exercise is planned in waters near China.

**Addendum I: Select PLA Exercises with Foreign Militaries,
October 2017–September 2018—Continued**

Date (Duration)	Exercise Name or Type (Location)	Other Participants (Number)	Type of Exercise	Details
Aug. 2018 (6 days)	Peace Mission-2018 (Chebarkul, Russia)	Multiple; Shanghai Cooperation Organization [SCO] members (China sent 700 troops from the Western Theater Command, including an armored tank battle group, an Air Force battle group, and a special operations unit)	Counterterrorism	In the ninth SCO exercise since they commenced in 2005, the SCO member militaries conducted a joint, live-fire drill surrounding and defeating a terrorist camp involving air and ground forces. India and Pakistan notably participated in their first exercise since becoming full SCO members in 2017.
Aug.–Sept. 2018 (17 days)	Kakadu-2018 (waters near Darwin, Australia)	26 countries, including the United States (China sent a Type 054A [JIANGKAI II-class] frigate)	Maritime	China participated for the first time in Australia's major biannual multilateral maritime exercise after being an observer in 2016. During the exercise, a PLA frigate participated in anti-submarine warfare, gunnery, and air defense drills, along with several noncombat drills, involving replenishment at sea and rescue operations.
Sept. 2018 (10 days)	Sagarmatha Friendship-2 (Chengdu, China)	Nepal (each side contributed a platoon of around 15 personnel)	Counterterrorism; HA/DR	Building off their first ever exercise together in 2017, the two countries conducted counterterrorism and disaster management drills.
Sept. 2018 (7 days)	Vostok-2018 (Trans-Baikal region, Russia)	Russia and Mongolia (Russia contributed 290,000 troops from its army, air force, and navy. China sent around 3,200 troops from the Northern Theater Command, including Type 99 main battle tanks, six JH-7A fighter-bombers and 24 WZ-9 and WZ-19 helicopters.)	Land, Maritime, and Air	Russia for the first time invited China to participate in one of its large-scale, joint, strategic exercises—the largest of its kind since 1981—and China's contribution to the exercise was the biggest it has sent abroad. The exercise was designed to simulate a conventional campaign to counter an enemy invasion, and intended to deepen cooperation between the two militaries.

**Addendum I: Select PLA Exercises with Foreign Militaries,
October 2017–September 2018—Continued**

Date (Duration)	Exercise Name or Type (Location)	Other Participants (Number)	Type of Exercise	Details
Sept. 2018 (18 days)	Falcon Strike-2018 (Udon Thani, Thailand)	Thailand	Air	In the third such combined exercise between the Thailand and China air forces, both sides aimed to improve cooperation, while testing combat tactics and methods and bolstering real combat training.
Late 2018	Joint Sea-2018 (Qingdao, China)	Russia	Maritime	To be announced

Note: From late July to mid-August, the PLA participated in the International Army Games-2018, a Russia-led annual military competition that has been held since 2015. For the second year in a row, China hosted some of the events (four of 18 events). The competition serves as a venue for the PLA to train with the Russian Armed Forces and other militaries, and helps build mutual trust. Participants for the exercise in China include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe. *China Military Online*, "Defense Ministry's Regular Press Conference on April 26," April 27, 2018.

Source: Various.²³⁰

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