

# **China's Offshore Active Defense and the People's Liberation Army Navy**

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## **Abstract**

In the past decade there has been rapid expansion and modernization of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN). This build-up of naval strength, along with antagonistic behavior towards the United States Navy (USN) has sparked much discussion on the intentions of the PLAN's military build-up and its implications to the security of the United States and the international community. This paper examines the possible intentions of the PLAN's expansion of capabilities by examining (1) Chinese claims to maritime sovereignty, (2) China's perceived threats to its sovereignty that have been shaped by contemporary and historical events, (3) the PLAN's offshore active defense and its origins, (4) the capabilities of the PLAN to conduct conventional and asymmetrical warfare, and (5) the contested area of interest and confrontations between the PLAN and USN. The PLAN is developing the means of deterring foreign naval presence in the Western Pacific, which would disrupt the balance of powers in East Asia and place the maritime sovereignty of littoral states of East and Southeast Asia at risk. This paper also recommends a policy of diplomacy, multilateralism, and an arms build-up to maintain a balance of powers in East Asia.

**Key words:** China, East Asia, International Security, Maritime Strategy, and National Security

## **Introduction**

Beginning on March 4, 2009, the USNS Victorious and USNS Impeccable, two unarmed oceanographic survey vessels, were harassed for four days straight in the international waters of the Yellow Sea and South China Sea by Chinese naval vessels and aircraft. According to a Pentagon statement, "five Chinese vessels shadowed and aggressively maneuvered in dangerously close proximity to USNS Impeccable, in an apparent coordinated effort to harass the US ocean surveillance ship while it was conducting routine operations in international waters." The harassment of the USN vessels included, the use of spotlights, low altitude flyovers, crossing of bows at close range, and a bridge-to-bridge warning "calling Impeccable's operations illegal and directing Impeccable to leave the area or suffer the consequences."<sup>1</sup> According to Major Stewart Upton, a Pentagon spokesperson, "Chinese ships and aircraft routinely steam or fly near US Navy Ships in this area. However these actions were considerably more aggressive and unprofessional than we have seen, and greatly increased the risk of collision or miscalculation."<sup>2</sup> On March 10, 2009, two days after the incident had concluded, Director of National Intelligence Denis Blair testified before the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee on the incident. He classified the event as the most serious incident between the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) and the U.S. Navy (USN) in eight years. In his testimony he questioned

whether or not China's increase in military strength is 'for good or for pushing people around.'<sup>3</sup>

Instances such as the Impeccable incident bring into question whether or not China's rise as a maritime military power is one of peace. Such incidents may suggest that the increase in China's military strength, particularly its naval power, is not one of peace, but for the purposes of deterring U.S. naval presence in the Western Pacific through the implementation of an aggressive offshore defensive strategy.

This paper will support its thesis by conducting an analysis of PLAN doctrine and strength through the examination of: (1) Chinese claims to maritime sovereignty, (2) China's perceived threats to its maritime sovereignty that have been shaped by contemporary and historical events, (3) the PLAN's offshore active defense and its origins, (4) the capabilities of the PLAN to conduct conventional and asymmetrical warfare, and (5) the contested area of interest and confrontations between the PLAN and USN. After this examination, there will be a discussion of implications that the expansion of PLAN doctrine and strength have for U.S. national security. Finally, the paper will present policy recommendations for addressing the PLAN.

### **Chinese Maritime Sovereignty**

Navies serve to protect the sovereignty and interests of their respective state. China is no different. The mission of the PLAN, expressed by the People's Republic of China's (PRC) leadership, is to protect China's national sovereignty, to safeguard China's maritime rights, and to resist sea borne aggression.<sup>4</sup> With that mission in mind, the core of China's strategic guidelines is to engage in war only to defend its national sovereignty and territorial integrity.<sup>5</sup> In order to comprehend the expanse of what China considers to be its territorial waters one must look to the Chinese government for a definition. China defines the extent of its territorial waters in a law passed by the Chinese People's Congress on February 25, 1992, stating:

'The PRC's territorial waters refer to the island waters contiguous to its territorial land. The PRC's territorial land includes the mainland and its offshore islands, Taiwan, and the various affiliated islands, including Diaoyu Dao (Senkaku Islands), the Penghu Islands (Pescadores), the Dongsha Islands (Pratas Islands), the Xisha Islands (Paracel Islands), the Nansha Islands (Spratly archipelago), and other islands that belong to the PRC.'<sup>6</sup>

In essence, the PRC claims maritime sovereignty over the majority of the East and the South China Seas.<sup>7</sup>

### **Perceived Threats to Chinese Maritime Sovereignty**

Today, China fears that its maritime sovereignty may be threatened by foreign maritime powers such as Japan, India, and the United States. This fear is expressed in China's 2004 Defense White Paper, in which it states that there is a power imbalance in East Asia because the U.S. is 'realigning and reinforcing its maritime presence in this region by buttressing military alliances,' Japan is 'adjusting its military and security policies,' and Taiwan is 'waiting for the opportune moment to engineer a major 'Taiwan independence' incident.'<sup>8</sup> When examining the geopolitical situation from China's perspective, the legitimacy of China's concern becomes

obvious. The U.S. Pacific Fleet is the largest naval command in the world consisting of 190 ships (including 6 aircraft carriers and 27 nuclear submarines), 1,400 Navy/Marine Corps aircraft, 35 coastal installations, and over 300,000 personnel. The U.S. Pacific Fleet dominates the western Pacific with its naval presence in South Korea, Japan, and various archipelagoes and its influence in Taiwan. The U.S. also sends its naval vessels through waters close to China and patrols Chinese sea-lines of communication.<sup>9</sup> Japan possesses the second largest navy in Asia, after China, and is situated only a few hundred miles off China's coast. India, possessing the third largest Asian navy, is also perceived by China to be a threat despite having peace and trade agreements. India's navy is expanding in capabilities and has demonstrated an interest in major sea-lines of communication vital to China's energy security.<sup>10</sup>

### **Historical Violations of Chinese Maritime Sovereignty**

China's concern for its maritime sovereignty is not without reason. China has a history of violations to its sovereignty perpetrated by foreign maritime powers. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries Britain, France, Japan, and Russia conducted land and maritime assaults on China leading to the partitioning of its territory. Through the Opium Wars, Britain forced colonization and trade upon China through the decimation of the Chinese navy.<sup>11</sup> The Sino-French War resulted in French conquest of Indochina from China. The first Sino-Japanese War of 1890s resulted in Japan occupying Taiwan, the Pescadores Islands, Korea, and the Ryukyu Islands. Later in 1932, Japan took Manchuria from China and later invaded China where it committed unspeakable atrocities such as the infamous "Rape of Nanking." During this prolonged period of foreign involvement China also lost influence over Mongolia and Tibet.<sup>12</sup> All of the foreign powers that exercised influence over China until 1949 were strong maritime powers with blue water capabilities. The Chinese social and political elite characterizes these past violations of China's sovereignty as a "national humiliation."<sup>13</sup> This has led to the development of a nationalist sentiment within the Communist Party of China that centers on the issues of sovereignty and territory. Admiral Zhang Lianzhong, of the PLAN, reflected this sentiment when he stated, "We will never forget that China was invaded several times by imperialist troops from the sea. The nation's suffering from lack of sea defense still remains fresh in our minds; and the history should not repeat itself."<sup>14</sup>

### **PLAN's Offshore Active Defense and Its Origin's**

In order to prevent a repeat of sovereignty violations and "national humiliation," the Chinese leadership has expressed a desire to become a major maritime power. In 2006 during a speech before the Communist Party of China Congress, Chairman Hu Jintao referred to China as a "sea power" and advocated a "powerful people's navy" in order to "uphold our maritime rights and interests."<sup>15</sup> He also said that the "navy force should be strengthened and modernized" and to continue towards the goal of "blue water" capabilities.<sup>16</sup> PLAN leaders have also suggested implementing a multiphase maritime defense strategy known as an "Offshore Active Defense" that is designed to preserve China's maritime territorial integrity.<sup>17</sup> What they refer to is a defensive plan devised by former PLAN Admiral Liu Huaqing. The primary phase of the "offshore active defense" is the development of naval power sufficient to establish control over the waters of the "first island chain" or the islands running approximately parallel to China's coastline from southern Japan, through Taiwan, to the Philippines. The first island chain extends

200 to 700nm off the coast of China. The secondary phase, is to gain control to the "second island chain" or the islands that run north to south from the Kuriles, through the Bonins, the Marianas, and the Carolines. The second island chain extends as far as 1,800nm off the coast of China.<sup>18</sup> The final phase is the procurement of a blue water navy centered on multiple aircraft carriers to project force with a more global reach. The PLAN hopes to fulfill these goals by 2050.<sup>19</sup> Through this active maritime defense strategy, it is obvious that the PLAN wishes to occupy islands off its coast in order to develop a maritime defense network, but what is the PLAN referring to by an "active defense"? What the PLAN is referring to is a military defense strategy devised by Mao Zedong.

"As far as I know, there is no military manual of value nor any sensible military expert, ancient or modern, Chinese or foreign, that does not oppose passive defense, whether in strategy or tactics—that is an error in war, a manifestation of conservatism in military matters, which we must resolutely oppose."<sup>20</sup>

"Defensive warfare, which is passive in form, can be active in content, and can be switched from the stage in which it is passive in form to the stage in which it is active both in form and in content. In appearance a fully planned strategic retreat is made under compulsion, but in reality it is effected in order to conserve our strength and bide our time in order to defeat the enemy, to lure him in deep and prepare for our counter offensive."<sup>21</sup>

Mao devised his military doctrine in the context of fighting a war with a much stronger enemy, such as the Chinese Nationalist Army and the Imperial Japanese Army. In his doctrine, Mao discusses encirclement and suppression as a tactic utilized by the Chinese Nationalist Army against his revolutionary forces. In his doctrine he refers to the surrounding enemy as the exterior line and the surrounded forces as the interior line.<sup>22</sup> Today China faces a similar situation in a naval context with the U.S., Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan surrounding the coast of China. The key to Mao's strategy was not to seek large decisive victories but to bide time and attack the enemy's weak points in its exterior line to assure success in battle. This relied on a high level of mobility to avoid being cornered by the enemy and to seek opportunities where it could reverse its situation.<sup>23</sup> This is a reflection of an Eastern style of warfare advocated by past Chinese military strategists such as Sun Tzu who wrote, "Avoid the enemy when he is full of vigor, strike when he is fatigued and withdraws."<sup>24</sup> It appears that the PLAN's active maritime defense strategy could very well be a defense in depth strategy that leans heavily on Maoist military doctrine, where the objective is not to prevent the loss of territory, but to slow down the advance of the enemy with counter attacks, which are meant to bleed the enemy of its offensive forces and place a strain on its logistics. In other words it is a war of attrition bent on destroying the enemy's will.

### **PLAN Capabilities**

If China is attempting to implement a defense in depth strategy, then the most logical approach for China is to concentrate its forces in the western Pacific and focus on an area-denial strategy for the purposes of denying foreign navies, such as the USN, access to the waters of the

western Pacific. Area-denial strategy is included in PLAN doctrine. In fact, the PLAN doctrine emphasizes anti-sea lines of communication and anti-ship tactics.<sup>25</sup> To assess the possibility of an area-denial strategy as being the core of an offshore active defense the PLAN's strength must be assessed.

The PLAN is the largest navy in Asia and one of the largest navies in the world, consisting of three fleets made up of 260 vessels. These forces can be divided into three primary categories: surface combatants, under water combatants, and aerial combatants.

In terms of surface combatants (excluding unarmed logistics vessels), the PLAN consists of 27 destroyers, 48 frigates, and 70 missile boats.<sup>26</sup> In recent years, the PLAN has purchased new Russian destroyers and has developed its own domestic warship industry, which has become one of the largest in the world.<sup>27</sup> This has led to the rapid modernization and expansion of the PLAN's surface combatants. In 2000, approximately three percent of surface forces were modernized. In 2004, just over five percent of its surface forces were modernized. By 2008, 25 percent of surface combatants were modernized.<sup>28</sup> In the active offshore defense it is likely that larger combatants such as destroyers and frigates would be used in the first and second island chains because of their size and navigational capabilities, while smaller missile patrol boats would be used closer to China's shore within the first island chain to harass larger opposing forces.

In terms of underwater combatants, the PLAN possesses more than 60 submarines. Of this number, 54 are quiet diesel attack submarines and six are nuclear powered. Just as the PLAN has modernized its surface combatants, it has also modernized its under water combatants. Since 1992, the PLAN has obtained twelve Russian Kilo-class submarines. It has also domestically produced twelve Song-class submarines and several Yuan-class submarines.<sup>29</sup> The PLAN has experienced the highest rate of modernization within its submarine forces. In 2000, only eight percent of its submarine combatants were modernized. In 2004, less than nine percent of the PLAN's submarine forces were modernized. However by 2008, nearly 50 percent of the PLAN's of submarine forces met modern capabilities.<sup>30</sup> The Office of Naval Intelligence reported in its August 2009 report that "over the next ten to fifteen years, primarily due to the introduction of new diesel-electric and air independent power submarines, the force is expected to increase incrementally in size to approximately 75 submarines."<sup>31</sup> In the active offshore defense submarines would be in both the first and second island chain areas for area denial due to their long-range, stealth, and are not subject to wave action when submerged.

Today no naval power is complete without air power to act as an extension of its offensive and defensive capabilities. For this reason, China's aerial combatants must also be taken into consideration as an instrument of area-denial. China's air power consists of 1,650 fighters and 645 bombers.<sup>32</sup> In recent years, Chinese air power has expanded its influence over the maritime environment. The Office of Naval Intelligence stated in its August 2009 report that the People's Liberation Army Navy Air Force's (PLANAF) role has expanded to cover maritime patrol, anti-submarine warfare, maritime strike, logistical support, and even airborne early warning. So far China's air power is a land-based force, but its emphasis on the maritime environment is evident with the positioning of 22 fighter and bomber divisions on China's mainland coast.<sup>33</sup> This places China's air power in a position to strike at threats emanating from the sea. However from the coast, aerial combatants would only be able to reach the first island chain due to their limited range and the lack of tanker aircraft for in-flight refueling. The Su-27 and Su-30, two of China's main combat aircraft only have a range of 800 to 1,600nm respectively.<sup>34</sup> In time however, China's air power will most likely be able to reach the second

island chain with the possible development of aircraft carriers. China has an active research and design program for aircraft carrier development with the first carrier projected to be made available by 2015 and two more by 2020.<sup>35</sup>

The PLAN is a force that is not lacking in quantitative strength, but it is one that is lacking in qualitative strength. Despite China possessing a domestic ship building industry, it has not innovated new weapons technologies and is heavily dependent on imported technology from Russia.<sup>36</sup> For this reason, China would not be able to contend with more sophisticated and technologically innovative navies such as the USN. In order for China to have a chance at confronting a more technologically independent navy in an armed conflict, China would have to resort to asymmetrical warfare to exploit the weaknesses of the opposing force. Many military analysts have come to a similar conclusion. In the paper *Change and Transformation in Military Affairs*, the author, Eliot Cohen claims that, "China's response has been one of selective transformation with a view to neutralizing those American advantages such as stealth aircraft. The idea is not to counter American strength across the board, but rather to negate American capabilities that could threaten Chinese superiority where it counts most: in the Taiwan Strait and adjoining waters."<sup>37</sup> Claims that China would try to undermine the military advantages of foreign maritime powers are reflected through the examination of China's asymmetrical warfare capabilities. Apart from the acquisition of large maritime combat vessels and aircraft, China has also been stockpiling asymmetrical weapons systems such as ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, surface-to-air missiles, and sea mines.<sup>38</sup> Such weapons systems are of low cost relative to those of large combat vessels and have the capability to inflict severe casualties on an enemy.

Sea mines pose a serious threat to any navy due to the fact that they are often simple and inexpensive, but highly lethal. Early in the 2003 Iraq war, Iraq deployed a small number of mines in the port of Umm Qasr. No ships were sunk, but it took U.S., British, and Australian forces a week to clear the port of eleven mines.<sup>39</sup> The PLAN has a large number of sea mines and has recently updated their inventory from pre-World War II designs to the most sophisticated of sea mine designs.<sup>40</sup> Even if Chinese mines do not sink any ships they still present a major obstacle to even the most advanced navy.

China's surface-to-air missile (SAM) defense sites are extensive and lethal as well. As of 2009, China has stockpiled over 2,500 surface-to-air missiles, most of which are located on the coast.<sup>41</sup> The placement of SAM sites on the coast could indicate a possible concern of threats emanating from across the sea and would be used to deny access to Chinese airspace. China's surface to air missile defenses has also experienced an increased modernization. In 2000, only five percent of China's SAM were modernized. In 2004, only ten percent were modernized. However by 2008, 20 percent of all China's SAMs were modernized.<sup>42</sup> Despite failure to field a large number of modern SAM, these missiles are still capable of bringing down modern combat aircraft and the current trend of modernization indicates that improvements in air defense will only continue.

The case of ballistic missiles is an interesting one. As of 2008, the PLA has nearly 1,200 short-range ballistic missiles stockpiled and has been increasing its stockpile at a rate of 100 ballistic missiles a year. Many of the new ballistic missiles being produced by China possess a high level of precision in their targeting.<sup>43</sup> This increased level of targeting precision has given way to the emergence of anti-ship ballistic missiles. Anti-ship ballistic missiles have the capability of traveling over 1,500km, putting them in range of the second island chain, and striking a moving ship. The Chinese have obtained this weapon system in order to undermine one of the most significant advantages of modern navies, the aircraft carrier. This is evident

through the testimony of Colonel Larry Wortzel (Ret.) of the U.S. Army following the U.S. intervention in the 1995-1996 Sino-Taiwan Cross Strait Crisis.

“The first time a senior Chinese military officer of the General Staff Department mentioned ballistic missiles attacking aircraft carriers was after our two carriers showed up, and he put his arm around my shoulder and said we’re going to sink your carriers with ballistic missiles, and we had a long conversation about it. I don’t know if they were doing research before that – the first time it got thrown in my face was 1996.”<sup>44</sup>

Such statements may be taken by some to be exaggerated forms of “saber rattling,” however such threats should be taken seriously considering that the PLA has developed and published studies on the technical details of the application of anti-ship ballistic missiles against aircraft carriers and has a large number of mobile ballistic missile launchers in China’s coastal regions.<sup>45</sup>

### **Maritime Zone of Contention**

Having considered China’s naval strength in terms of conventional and asymmetrical strength, it is now necessary to consider the zone of contention. In the context of China, China finds itself competing for influence over the majority of the South and East China Seas with other littoral states as well as the United States. In *Command of the Commons: the Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony*, Barry Posen makes the observation that:

“the closer the U.S. military forces get to enemy-held territory, the more competitive the enemy will be. This arises from a combination of political, physical, and technological facts. These facts combine to create a contested zone – areas of conventional combat where weak adversaries have a good chance of doing real damage to U.S. forces.”<sup>46</sup>

The behavior that Posen discusses is reflected by China’s increased hostile behavior towards the USN. On 24 March 2001, the U.S.S. *Bowditch* was harassed by the PLAN while in the international waters of the Yellow Sea. A PLAN reconnaissance aircraft and a PLAN frigate passing within close proximity conducted the harassment of the USS *Bowditch* over a period of several months. On 1 April 2001, a PLAN fighter was harassing a U.S. reconnaissance aircraft over the South China Sea, which resulted in a mid-air collision of the two aircraft.<sup>47</sup> Five years later on 26 October 2006, a PLAN attack submarine surfaced within close proximity to the U.S.S. *Kitty Hawk* near Okinawa, Japan.<sup>48</sup> Then there was the most recent incident in 2009 involving the USS *Impeccable* and the USS *Victorious* as mentioned earlier.<sup>49</sup> All of these maneuvers were considered to be a highly aggressive and threatening acts by the U.S. government. These aggressive acts conducted by the PLAN against the USN demonstrate a reactionary response to U.S. naval presence in a region that China claims sovereign rights over and is in competition with other littoral states. The PLAN’s response to the U.S.’s presence could be a symptom of their offshore active defense strategy and their determination to defend waters that they claim sovereignty over. If this is so, there is the possibility of future escalations in military actions and the possibility of military miscalculation, especially since the USN is within the operational range of many of China’s weapon systems.

## International Security

China's offshore active defense will present many challenges to the security and stability of the international community, especially East and Southeast Asia. In the past, China has behaved antagonistically towards many of the littoral states in the region over issues of territorial claims, Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ), and offshore natural resources. China has pursued its agenda of expansion aggressively by occupying the disputed archipelagos of the South China Sea, entering the territorial waters of neighboring states, and searching for natural resources in disputed waters. Considering China's interest in expanding the range of its maritime defense in the surrounding waters and its history of aggressive behavior, it does not seem unreasonable that China may use coercive force in order to obtain islands in the first island chain for its defense strategy. A direct result of this will be violations to the sovereignty of littoral states because these islands will be taken from their parent state by way of coercive military force. Outcry will undoubtedly ensue from littoral states, however they will be unable to stop China's actions, as China is the strongest military power in Asia. This in turn will possibly result in the realignment of alliances in South East Asia where states in the region might look to strengthen military and diplomatic relationships with the United States to deter further Chinese expansion. Realignment of alliances in Southeast Asia have already begun as Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines have strengthened their military ties with the U.S. This process began in 1995 when states joined the U.S. in bilateral military exercises. Indonesia, which has discouraged alignment with the U.S. now participates in these military exercises.<sup>50</sup> Some of these states, such as Singapore have even gone as far to invite the U.S. Navy into their territorial waters and have built deep-water ports designed to facilitate the presence of aircraft carriers. Singapore's defense minister stated that Singapore believes that the U.S. military "contributes to the peace and stability of the region" and "we have facilitated the presence of U.S. military forces."<sup>51</sup> The continued encouragement of U.S. involvement in the region to counter balance China's power will draw the U.S. into the conflict and endanger the security of the U.S.

## U.S. National Security

In terms of U.S. national security, China's offshore active defense provides a multitude of challenges. As mentioned previously, as China begins to take over various archipelagos in the region, other littoral states will try to involve the U.S. as a counter balance to China. China is preparing for this through the expansion of its area-denial capabilities to deter U.S. intervention. Weapon systems such as anti-ship ballistic missiles and submarines will force the U.S. Navy to keep its distance lest it risk entering into an armed conflict. Under the blanket of area-denial capabilities China will continue to expand its maritime defense network until they have the majority of the first island chain under its control. This will only push the U.S. farther away from the Chinese mainland, thus reducing the U.S.'s power in the region. So far, China possess few islands in the first island chain off its coast, however as it increases its naval patrols and its military capabilities, which are legitimate endeavors, it brings the PLAN and the USN into closer proximity. It is inherently dangerous for two major powers with tensions existing between them to be in close proximity to one another, as accidents could happen. As incidents such as those concerning the U.S.S. Impeccable, the U.S.S. Kitty Hawk, and the collision of the U.S. reconnaissance aircraft with the PLAN fighter, it is possible for antagonistic behavior to result in a military miscalculation. In today's world of rapid response, a military miscalculation could



lead to rapid escalation and the use of hard power. Presently, a military miscalculation between the PLAN and the USN may be the greatest threat to U.S. national security emanating from East Asia.

### **Policy Recommendations in Response to the PLAN**

In order to mitigate the threat of China's offshore active defense, the U.S. needs to devise policy to address the situation as it progresses. U.S. policies must address diplomacy and alliances with littoral states in the region, the use of military power, and diplomacy with China.

In light of the U.S. being involved in a two front war in Iraq and Afghanistan and in the wake of the global economic crisis, it is unlikely that the U.S. will be able to counter an emerging threat emanating from China unilaterally. Instead, it will have to lean heavily on a multilateral approach. The U.S. needs to develop closer diplomatic and military ties with the states of Asia in order to form a coalition to deter China's active defense. The U.S. already has strong diplomatic and military ties with Japan and South Korea, but it must further strengthen these ties and have their militaries work in unison with the U.S. to put pressure on China's northeastern maritime flank in order to contain the threat. The U.S. cannot rely on Japan and South Korea alone, but it must also strengthen diplomatic and military ties with littoral states of the South China Sea in order to discourage the expansion of China's defensive network. The diplomatic interactions with littoral states of the region must strive to facilitate an environment welcoming to U.S. military presence, just as relations with Singapore has lead to the construction of deep-water ports for U.S. warships. This could be accomplished through supplying these states with highly sophisticated military technology, engaging in larger multilateral military exercises, and offering favorable economic policies. States that should be included are Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, all of whom are threatened by the expansion of China's offshore active defense and have begun to move closer to the U.S. These states with the support of the U.S. will be able to put pressure on China's southern and eastern maritime flank. The U.S. must also attempt to include India in its efforts to deter China as it possesses the third largest navy in Asia and is situated close to China's sea-lines of communication. This is not an effort undermine any peace agreements between India and China, but utilize them as a last resort to put pressure on China's energy bearing sea-lines of communication coming from the Middle East and Africa in the event that China and the U.S. enter into armed conflict. The U.S. must also extend favorable trade and economic policies to India to encourage U.S. based corporations to invest in India rather than China. This will be to lessen Sino-U.S. economic interdependence.

When faced with antagonistic or coercive military behavior from China, the U.S. must not waver or falter. Instead, it must continue to patrol the international waters in the waters of the East and South China Seas to maintain the "freedom of the seas." In fact it should maintain a dominant naval presence in the western Pacific. To compromise the U.S.'s dominance in the western Pacific may place the peace and stability in East and Southeast Asia at risk. However, due to the range of China's anti-ship ballistic missiles and other weapons systems U.S. forces in Japan and South Korea are at risk of possible attack in the event of war with China. For this reason, the U.S. must decrease the number of capital ships based in these locations and shift more of their Pacific operations to Guam where they will be out of range. At the same time, the U.S. needs to develop an anti-access strategy to restrict the PLAN's access to the sea in the event of a conflict. In order to accomplish this goal, the U.S. needs to develop new, unmanned

weapons systems in order to strike at Chinese forces without risking the loss of capital ships or a large number of aircraft. Such weapons systems need to be new, long-range anti-ship missiles similar to China's anti-ship ballistic missiles; newer, larger unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) that have the capability of carrying heavy precision ordinance to destroy enemy vessels and defenses; and newer, quieter attack submarines. In the event of a conflict, the U.S. must not engage in direct combat with the Chinese military. To do so would result in the U.S. falling into China's defense in depth and suffer heavy losses. Instead, the U.S. must take advantage of the limited range of China's weapons systems and strike from a distance.

The U.S. must also enter into diplomatic talks with China to discourage the expansion of their defensive network and encourage transparency between the policies of the U.S. Navy and the PLAN. The two governments must also come to an agreement that will discourage antagonistic behavior towards each other in international waters to prevent a military miscalculation. Agreements and compromises can be met through favorable economic agreements and settlements. If China is unreceptive to U.S. dealings then the U.S. must work towards diminishing Sino-U.S. economic interdependence by devising trade and economic policies that will discourage U.S. investment in China and encourage it elsewhere. If necessary, this will allow the U.S. to impose trade sanctions and even embargoes on China without hurting its own economy.

The presence of the U.S. military in Southeast Asia provides a regional balance of powers, which keeps states such as China and North Korea in check while maintaining security and stability in that part of the world. The development of China's offshore active defense threatens this balance of powers by deterring the presence of maritime powers, especially the U.S. For this reason, China's military expansion must not be ignored or taken lightly. It is difficult to discern what China's future actions will be, however the U.S. must be vigilant and ready to counter any aggressive action taken by China.

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