



Executive Summary

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ASSESSING THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY IN THE HU JINTAO ERA

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The 2012 People's Liberation Army (PLA) conference took place at a time when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was making its leadership transition from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping. The agenda of the conference took advantage of this occasion and focused the conference discussion on the developments in China's national security and the PLA during the Hu Jintao administration from 2002 to 2012. The participants of the conference also reflected on the future of China's military modernization under Xi Jinping. The conference participants singled out some key areas where the PLA had apparently made significant changes. The discussion papers are presented in this volume.

In Chapter 2, Daniel Harnett analyzes a few key PLA activities under its new historic missions, including the development of the PLA's effort to broaden its geographic and functional area of focus and acquire new skills and capabilities such as its ability to defend China's maritime territorial interests. Harnett sees the following future possibilities: First, over time, the PLA may take a stronger position on perceived violations of China's maritime territorial claims; second, so long as China's leadership feels that the PLA is incapable of fulfilling the new historic mission, additional resources for the China's military modernization efforts will be justified; third, the United States should anticipate that the PLA will continue to increase its global presence as it seeks to defend China's expanding overseas interests; and fourth, the inherent tension in the new historic missions between traditional territo-

rial defense missions and overseas missions provides the United States with an opportunity to influence the PLA's future trajectory.

In Chapter 3, Dennis Blasko discusses the People's War doctrine, the Active Defense, and Offshore Defense strategies in the context of the new historic missions. These Chinese doctrines do not seek to initiate war; rather, warfighting is to be undertaken only if deterrence fails.

In Chapter 4, Christopher Twomey discusses China's internal discussion on what the United States calls anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) capabilities. In the Chinese security and defense discourse, the terms of counterintervention, active strategic counter-attacks on exterior lines, assassin's mace, and trump weapons rarely appear as descriptions of A2/AD capabilities. Nevertheless others, such as system of systems and the "three non's" are frequently used to describe ongoing changes in the nature of warfare in other dimensions. The integration of new A2/AD capabilities with new doctrine will remain a challenging area for the PLA, given traditional bureaucratic rigidities.

In Chapter 5, Wanda Ayuso and Lonnie Henley discuss PLA's aspiration to jointness by examining PLA training, exercises, and doctrine development from 2008 to 2012. The PLA has gained knowledge in joint operations from its interaction with other countries in bilateral and multilateral exercises. PLA cadets have received theoretical training on joint operations

but lack operational experience. Joint operations concepts have been slow to develop since the military and its leadership have had to adapt to a radically different way of thinking about military conflict. Centralized training guidance, standardized equipment, and improvements to academic training may provide the right tools to further the transformation to which military leaders aspire.

In Chapter 6, Joe McReynolds and James Mulvenon discuss trends in informationization of the PLA under Hu Jintao. The PLA fully embraced informatization as a central guiding principle of military theory and doctrine, an underlying firmament uniting PLA concepts such as the revolution in military affairs with Chinese characteristics, integrated joint operations, civil-military integration, and system-of-systems warfare, and tying them to China's broader civilian informatization effort. However, this theoretical sophistication masks significant operational deficits, and the PLA's recent technological advances will not generate world-class combat abilities if they are not matched by modernized personnel and organizational structures. Mulvenon and McReynolds therefore suggest that U.S. military strategists must understand the impact of informatization trends on China not only in terms of specific weapons and support platforms, but also in terms of integration between military and civilian informatization and networks, both in peacetime and in defense mobilization or conflict scenarios. Accurately understanding these linkages will enable better prediction of both the outputs of China's research, development, and acquisition processes and the actions of Chinese political and military actors in war or crisis scenarios. As the PLA develops advanced command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance technologies and integration with civilian networks, they are likely to become increasingly reliant on those systems through training and doctrine, ultimately replicating the supposedly "asymmetric" vulnerabilities in these areas that PLA theoreticians have traditionally noted in their analyses of the U.S. military. Shared vulnerabilities could potentially give rise to shared interests with the United States, opening an additional path by which China may move toward becoming "a status quo power" in the space and cyber domains.

In Chapter 7, Nan Li looks at China's evolving naval strategy and capabilities under Hu Jintao. In naval strategy, Hu has made two contributions: requiring the PLA to safeguard China's newly emerging overseas interests, and endorsing the concept of information systems-based system of systems opera-

tions, which impacts how the PLA Navy (PLAN) conducts operations. PLAN strategists believe that near-seas missions are the priority because they are more critical to China's physical security. As to capabilities, the PLAN's acquisition of an aircraft carrier, destroyers, frigates, and light frigates can be accounted for by the need to construct a "maritime system of systems" as well as PLA's traditional active defense strategy. Other contributing factors include availability of new shipbuilding technologies and funding, and the need to replace obsolete ships.

In Chapter 8, Michael Chase looks at the doctrine and capabilities of the Second Artillery in the Hu Jintao era. During the Hu Jintao era, the Second Artillery made impressive progress in doctrinal development, force modernization, and training, emerging as a cornerstone of China's growing military power. The PLA published important volumes elaborating its doctrine for missile force deterrence operations and campaigns. After decades of vulnerability, the PLA's Second Artillery Force (PLASAF) deployment of road-mobile intercontinental ballistic missiles enhanced the survivability of the nuclear missile force and strengthened the credibility of China's strategic deterrent. The Hu era also featured the expansion of PLASAF's conventional capabilities, giving Beijing new options to employ conventional missiles for deterrence, intimidation, and precision strike operations.

In Chapter 9, Neil Diamant looks at China's veteran affairs as an element of civil-military relations. He finds that, overall, many PLA veterans have had difficulty adjusting to the massive changes in the reform period, with many of them finding themselves in a precarious position in the state and society. Diamant further argues that veterans, including officers, are not a viable threat to the regime mainly because of or due to their old age, physical problems, lack of large scale organization, and dependence on the state. Further modernization of the PLA on the basis of force reduction is unproblematic, given the resources the CCP has invested in domestic security units. Many of the Chinese public oppose military benefits and refuse to consider military service themselves. If there are significant costs to a military exchange—impacting trade, employment, stability, investment and travel opportunities—the Chinese public will not support it.

In Chapter 10, Timothy Heath looks at the emerging party-military relationship. During the era of Hu Jintao, the CCP deepened reforms that bolstered its ability to lead a professionalizing military. The reforms aimed to strengthen the CCP as an organization; render party-military relations more functional

and resilient; and improve the CCP's ability to provide strategic leadership. These changes have enabled a greater degree of dynamism and flexibility in the CCP's leadership of the PLA. However, the reforms have also encouraged a fragmentation of party authority along national and military lines. This fragmentation of authority, exacerbated by the persistence of weak state and military institutions and the CCP's overall political vulnerabilities, introduces new challenges to ensuring the PLA's loyalty.

In Chapter 11, Kenneth Allen examines trends in PLA international initiatives under Hu Jintao. He identifies and assesses international PLA initiatives from the time Hu Jintao became the Chairman of the CCP's Central Committee's Military Commission (CMC) in September 2004, after having served as one of the three Vice Chairmen since 2002, until Xi Jinping, who had served as a Vice Chairman since October 2010, replaced him during the 18th Party Congress in November 2012. Xi also replaced Hu as the Chairman of the State CMC during the 12th National People's Congress (NPC) in March 2013. While it is difficult to determine which specific international initiatives can be directly attributed to Hu, it appears that employing military diplomacy to enhance China's soft power was clearly implemented as a concept under Hu, and that the PLA began to become actively involved in international humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) and military operations other than war (MOOTW) activities as a direct result of Hu's four historic missions. In addition, the PLA clearly improved transparency under Hu. Should there be civil unrest in countries where Chinese are living and working, the PLA will most likely become more actively involved in helping to evacuate them to safety. China's increasing focus on HA/DR will require specific technologi-

cal developments, including equipment, information technology, and logistics and maintenance support. Although the transparency of China's military has improved, there remains deep international uncertainty about key areas of the PLA's force composition and growing capabilities. The PLA will most likely continue to expand its global involvement in HA/DR activities and combined exercises with foreign countries, as well as send more delegations abroad to learn from and about other countries' militaries. At the same time, the PLA continues to provide some training for foreign militaries in China.

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