



RESHAPING THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY SINCE THE 18TH PARTY CONGRESS

Event Report
1-2 October 2015

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RESHAPING THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY SINCE THE 18TH PARTY CONGRESS

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The China Programme and the Military Transformations Programme,
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Opening Remarks	5
Day 1	
Session I: The Emerging Strategic Thinking, Roles and Missions of the PLA	6
Session II: Civil-Military Relations and International Security Challenges	9
Session III: China’s New Normal: The PLA’s Influence in Chinese Foreign Policy	12
Session IV: China’s Defence Economics: Balancing National Interests and Military Combat Readiness	15
Day 2	
Session V: Modernisation of the PLA: How Successful a Revolution Hitherto?	18
Session VI: Post-Modern Warfare: Bringing the Fight into Cyber and Outer Space	20
Closing Remarks	22
Conference Programme	23
List of Chairpersons, Speakers and Discussants	25
List of Participants	26
About the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies	27
About the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies	28

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 1-2 October 2015, the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) organised a conference on “Reshaping the People’s Liberation Army Since the 18th Party Congress”. In keeping with the noticeable shift in Beijing’s security posture towards a more muscular approach, China’s commander-in-chief, President Xi Jinping, and the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) took the opportunity at the recent military parade marking the 70th anniversary of Chinese victory in World War II, to flaunt the achievements of more than two decades of military transformations. While the event was portrayed by China’s state media as further testament to Beijing’s commitment to peace, the prevailing analyses have suggested that the reforms proposed at the parade have the opposite effect of honing China’s offensive capabilities.

It is with the above in mind that the conference dedicated itself to the motif of the subtle recalibration of the PLA’s status in Beijing’s domestic and international calculus since the rise of Xi Jinping to the top of the nexus of China’s ruling party, the state and military. The first panel addressed the emergent thinking of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) since the 2012 leadership transition on the roles and missions of its coercive forces. Alongside changes to the PLA’s duties in crisis management mechanisms following the 18th Party Congress, there has been a considerable reorientation of its elite decision-making with Xi’s swift manoeuvres to reform the PLA’s organisational structure. This has been achieved by a combination of personnel reshuffles in its top brass and his signature anti-graft campaign. In so doing, the reforms that are taking shape have already begun to shift the delicate balance of power between China’s civilian and military elites.

Contributors to the two panels that followed focused on what appears to be the increasing prominence of the PLA in China’s international calculus, and the prospects for it to play an even greater role in Beijing’s relations with other regional strategic actors. Specifically, these include an assessment of the PLA’s worldview of the current international system, its likely role in the Central National Security Commission, and its growing involvement in Chinese diplomacy. Additionally, the presenters sought to situate the position of the PLA in Beijing’s “major country” diplomacy with Washington, as well as identified Chinese military leaders’ roles in formulating policy on core national interests. Overall, they concurred that even as PLA attitudes towards its American counterpart seemed to have improved, such overtures are largely driven by the CCP’s desire to maintain stable relations with Washington. Consensus between civilian elites, similarly, leads to PLA leaders concurring with the former’s assessment of China’s security environment.

The fourth panel then analysed the economics behind Beijing’s efforts at balancing its national interests and military combat readiness by taking stock of the progress made by the PLA following the initial reforms instituted in the 1990s. While the presenters noted that a significantly expanding budget has undeniably led to progress in the PLA’s defence-technology base where the production of sophisticated weapons systems is concerned, defence manufacturing in China remains suboptimal with innovation in this sector still largely lagging behind that of the U.S. and other advanced Western countries. Nevertheless, Beijing’s defence technology base is likely to see the continued supply of foreign technology, the prevailing analysis on the evidence hitherto

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

nevertheless suggests that the PLA leadership has emphasised the development of Chinese defence-industrial autarky and has been working towards developing its own indigenous innovation capabilities.

Panel Five next evaluated the progress made by the PLA in its military modernisation. With jointness considered a key aspect of modern combat operations, the presenters assessed the security reconfiguration in the Asia-Pacific region with regard to how the Chinese military has integrated its services and military command areas following the CCP's declaration to develop China into a major maritime power. In light of the regime's increasingly muscular approach with its island building activities in the South China Sea, the presentations also built on the current assessment of Beijing's emerging naval capabilities and its implications on the PLA's interactions with other key strategic actors in the region. While acknowledging that there have indeed been marked improvements in the PLA's capabilities, the panelists nevertheless agreed that its transformation ought to be understood

as an ongoing multi-generational process that remains a work in progress.

The final panel looked into the future by examining the PLA's adaptations to new domains of war by scrutinising the lesser-known aspects of its overall force development. Regarding the likelihood of greater potential Sino-U.S. rivalry in cyber and outer space, the presenters made their cases as to where the military's priorities in these new theatres of war lie, and examined the progress it has made in meeting its strategic objectives in these new zones of war. Especially in view of Beijing's growing sophistication in these state-of-the-art military operations, the session also shed light on the increasing significance of advancements in information and communications technology on China's domestic stability and foreign relations. They then discussed how the PLA's assessment of the changing international environment would likewise have an impact on the future trends of Beijing's evolving military capabilities.

OPENING REMARKS



Professor Tan See Seng

Professor Tan See Seng, together with the conference co-organisers, **Mr Richard A. Bitzinger** and **Mr James Char**, welcomed the presenters and other participants to the conference. Prof Tan observed that Beijing's security policy has taken a noticeable shift towards "striving for achievement". This has evidently been accompanied by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) increasingly prominent role in China's domestic and international calculus. He concluded that it was thus a timely endeavour to study the Chinese military's efforts in further enhancing the country's defence capabilities.

Prof Tan further noted that what had originally begun with Deng Xiaoping's decision to reform the Chinese economy has since provided the PLA with the means to upgrade its hardware and enabled its military leadership to follow through with the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) declarations to build a force capable of fighting wars – and winning them. Especially in light of China's new commander-in-chief, Xi

Jinping, taking a greater interest in harnessing the CCP's coercive forces as his personal domestic powerbase and as a foreign policy instrument which complements Beijing's hard economic diplomacy. Prof Tan pointed out that following the new leader's assertion of authority over the Central Military Commission (CMC), he has moved quickly to widen and deepen the reforms of the PLA's various organisational structures. Of these, the reshuffling of the military top brass as well as Beijing's strong show of force at its recent parade commemorating the 70th anniversary of Chinese victory in World War II are but two examples of the higher status the CCP's civilian leadership has accorded the PLA. The stature of the Chinese military in ensuring the survival of the regime in both the domestic and international contexts has become more significant.

Prof Tan noted that in view of the competing needs for the PLA to be both red and expert, how Xi Jinping would be able to reconcile the needs for the Chinese military to be loyal to the CCP leadership even as the military rank-and-file continue to develop into more modernised warriors, will likely determine the result of China's stated resolve to reclaim its historic status as a leading global power. With the Chinese regime's increasingly assertive approach in the region – as its actions in the South China Sea disputes suggest – a better understanding of the overall direction of the PLA's development also serves to take stock of the progress made by the Chinese military following the initial reforms instituted in the 1990s. This will entail both the PLA's hard power projection, as well as its 'heartware', which pertains to the softer aspects of its transformation into a corps on par with the world's leading defence forces.

SESSION I: THE EMERGING STRATEGIC THINKING, ROLES AND MISSIONS OF THE PLA



Dr Kou Chien-wen

1.1 Xi Jinping in Command: Strengthening Subjective Civilian Control over the PLA

Dr Kou Chien-wen observed that the centralisation of power in a single civilian has been the most notable feature of change in the PLA's transition since the 18th Party Congress of November 2012. Pointing out the various changes to the command and control structure of the Chinese military since Xi Jinping became its commander-in-chief, Dr Kou noted that there has been a clear reemphasis on the CMC "chairmanship responsibility system". Following his ascension to the top posts in the Party-state-military nexus. Under this arrangement, Xi aims to subject the PLA to civilian control of the CCP to ensure the military's execution of the civilian leadership's policies in addition to his own personal preferences and directives.

In his overall assessment of the new Chinese leader's consolidation of power, Dr Kou also highlighted new institutional building measures. These include the establishment of the Central National Security Commission (CNSC) and the setting up of the Leading Group for Deepening National Defence and Military Reform of the CMC. These measures can be seen as a move to coordinate the Chinese nation's disparate security apparatus as well as to incorporate the Party's coercive forces under the command of one single leader. In Dr Kou's view, these were especially necessary owing to the fact that civilian leaders in China's post-Reform era can no longer lay claim to any extensive career within the PLA. Further, this development also has the added benefit of providing the legal foundations of President

Xi's command of the gun. On his part, Xi has also actively shaped his image as the PLA's leader with his numerous inspection tours to key installations.

Dr Kou also pointed out the large-scale reshuffling of the top brass which has been driven by concerns over the former's level of political trustworthiness and loyalty towards the CMC chairman; the pervasiveness of corrupt practices and factionalism among notable PLA leaders; as well as the overall level of professionalism of China's military corps. Of these, Dr Kou revealed that a notable number of officers from the Nanjing Military Region (MR) – with whom Xi had shared close working relationships during his stints in Fujian and Zhejiang – have been appointed to key positions in the PLA high command. Still, these do not in any way suggest that the PLA's role in China's domestic politics was growing, although one can reasonably expect it to play an increasingly important role.

1.2 Corruption and Anti-Corruption in Chinese Civil-Military Relations

In his assessment of the campaign against corruption in the Chinese military, **Mr James Char** posited that the attempts of the new CMC chairman – in similar fashion to his fight against malfeasance in the civilian realm – has largely enabled Xi Jinping to assert his control over the PLA. By virtue of other preeminent Party leaders in the CCP's history having firmed up their political powerbase by consolidating their status within the top military decision-making body, Xi has unsurprisingly also turned to the PLA to strengthen his domestic powerbase as head of the Chinese Party-state. Still, Char noted that, while the Party's military has traditionally been subordinate to the authority, influence and ideology of the CCP's civilian leadership, the remnant influence of previous Party leaders has nonetheless moved the current one to manoeuvre against some PLA leaders.

Overall, Char proffered the view that the anti-corruption campaign has largely been successfully utilised by Xi to dominate other

SESSION I: THE EMERGING STRATEGIC THINKING, ROLES AND MISSIONS OF THE PLA



Mr James Char

members and factions of the CCP, but also serves as an effective tool to subordinate the military to the Party's interests while appealing to the PLA's corporate identity. Given the pervasive nature of graft amongst senior Chinese officers, Char noted that an additional motivation for the CMC chairman would be to restore the reputation of the PLA as a force of good from the perspective of Chinese society. Given the lacklustre political reign of the previous commander-in-chief due to his lack of control over the military, the importance of the PLA to Xi's political survival calculus was clear. At the same time, purging corrupt officers would also go some way in placating those who had been overlooked by the previous CMC deputies – the retired Guo Boxiong and Xu Caihou.

Despite the arrests of military leaders from the PLA's political and logistics departments, as well as wholesale changes to its internal system of checks and balances, Char stated that these were still at a formative stage. It remains unclear whether President Xi's growing political clout would translate into meaningful and long-lasting changes to the organisational and operational structure of the PLA. Also, with China's 'rule of law' essentially an instrumental tool of the Party, the extra-legal nature of the arrests thus far is also indicative of the lack of genuine institutionalisation since it remains the regime's prerogative to orchestrate the purges. Still, Xi's consolidation of power has placed him in a strong position to shape the development of China's domestic political landscape and dictate the trajectory of its foreign policies.

1.3 Sino-U.S. Seesaw Battle in the Littoral Domains: The PLA Approach Towards Aero-Maritime Intercepts

Dr You Ji's presentation on the growing importance of sea warfare in China's security calculus envisaged the possibility that the PLA under Xi Jinping has placed greater priority on China's maritime boundaries. With the large number of warships inducted into the PLA Navy (PLAN) since the 18th Party Congress, Dr You took it as a sign that the CMC chief was thus preparing the Chinese military for possible confrontations at sea, rather than on land. You highlighted the on-going 'cat-and-mouse' game in which the U.S. engages in close-in spy activities on China's coastal waters while the latter intercepts such activities. Dr You pointed out that it was nevertheless crucial for a solution to be worked out between the rivals in light of the strategic nature of the bilateral state-to-state and military-to-military relations that threaten impinging on global security.

In Dr You's opinion, the Chinese PLA and its American counterpart have managed their interactions rather well in view of the limited number of standoffs between them in the last two decades, despite the increasing number of intrusions and intercepts. In particular, both countries have exercised restraint with Beijing emphasising its "strategic patience" whereas Washington similarly been mindful of the importance of conducting non-armed missions in China's exclusive economic zones (EEZs) in



Dr You Ji

SESSION I: THE EMERGING STRATEGIC THINKING, ROLES AND MISSIONS OF THE PLA

its surveillance operations. On the other hand, the close-in surveillance activities of American spy planes obliges the PLA Air Force (PLAAF) pilots to respond firmly to disrupt the collection of intelligence signals as well as have an appropriate deterrent effect – while ensuring that these do not lead to conflicts.

Following a recent episode in which U.S. surveillance flights over the South China Sea was covered by a key American media outlet, as well as the U.S.' freedom of navigation (FON) operations in the foreseeable future, Dr You expected Beijing would do everything within its ability to impose itself in the contested waters. In view of the East China Sea Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) being fast-tracked by Xi Jinping following his political ascension, in addition to the PLA putting in place its new "Western Pacific" strategy, it remains likely that China would conduct its own FON activities for its own strategic interests. Nevertheless, with both Beijing and Washington knowing clearly where the 'red lines' lie, the self-healing nature of Sino-U.S. relations would also mean that any future confrontations between them would remain no more than isolated incidents.

Open Discussion

While it was generally agreed amongst the discussants that the key personnel changes in the PLA have been premised on the assumption that Xi Jinping has been trying to hone his personal control over the military, questions were also asked about other plausible hypotheses. In particular, Dr Tai Ming Cheung noted how 'fear' and 'terror' have been used by the CMC chairman to cultivate loyalty. Therefore, his control may not be as deep-seated as actual political support, contrary to what many analysts have perceived. Nonetheless, Dr Kou and Dr You expressed their belief that the CNSC would provide the CMC chairman with unprecedented political clout. Still, with regards to the current measures to improve civilian oversight of the PLA, Dr Philip C. Saunders expressed his doubts over the

effectiveness of the institutional building efforts in the longer- term.

Responding to Prof Pascal Vennesson's entreaty for a comparison of the anti-graft efforts within the PLA and other CCP bureaucracies, Mr Char pointed out that evidence suggests that President Xi's modus operandi has been similar. In light of the fact that the purging of officers has mostly affected political and logistics officers at the deputy-MR leader grade and below, Dr Saunders suggested that sparing MR-grade leaders may be a way for China's commander-in-chief to preserve the PLA's combat capabilities. Agreeing with Mr Char's observation that the anti-corruption campaign serves to prevent the perpetuation of Party elders' influence, he further explained that Xi's actions serve to discredit the former since the deposed officers had essentially gained political clout under the reigns of the two previous CMC heads. With the emerging bifurcation of strategic objectives between the CCP's civilian and military elites, however, it was put forward to the presenters that civil-military relations in China appear to be shifting from 'subjective' control towards 'objective' control instead.

With regard to the issue of Sino-U.S. competition in the littoral domains, Dr Saunders concurred with Dr You's assertion that the present situation in the South China Sea had less to do with sovereignty, but was more about electronic warfare and counter-intelligence. Acknowledging that more flyovers by the U.S. Armed Forces is would be necessary and can be expected, Dr Saunders added that Washington has hitherto responded in a legalistic manner. In his reply to Dr Hoo Tiang Boon's query on whether the deployment of PLAN assets near the Aleutian Islands was a sign that China was readying its fleets to sail further from Chinese shores, Dr You shared his belief that such FON activities were in the interest of the international community. Despite this, there remain concerns as to whether the PLA would keep away from the EEZs of other maritime nations as well as abide by the established rules of engagement.

SESSION II: CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES



Dr Philip C. Saunders (centre)

2.1 A New Type of Major Country Military-to-Military Diplomacy: A Turning Point in China-U.S. Relations?

Dr Philip C. Saunders began his presentation by stating that the assessment of Sino-U.S. relations, in general, remains mixed, despite the fact that many avenues have been facilitated by their militaries to engage with each other, including exchanges between their leading defence officials; formal military exchanges as well as policy dialogues. Similarly, agreements at the highest level of China's defence forces and its American counterpart have been conducted while their respective defence forces have engaged in confidence building measures (CBMs). In recent years, for instance, the two have been able to establish a number of important mechanisms such as two Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs): one on Notification of Major Military Activities and another on Rules for Safety of Air and Maritime Encounters. As Dr Saunders noted, these are notable for their modular design which allows for any new notification mechanism to be incorporated at a later date.

According to Dr Saunders, President Xi Jinping would appear to have bypassed the PLA initially to initiate military-to-military relationships with Washington in order to get the military top brass to support his personal wishes for stable bilateral relations with the U.S. Nevertheless, increasing strategic competition between Beijing

and Washington has invariably generated U.S. interest in the PLA's developments across the different war domains such as outer space and cyberspace. With PLA strategists viewing American superiority in these new zones of warfare as a critical foundation to fight and win wars, Dr Saunders noted that they have thus set about emulating and exploiting these areas. Still, existing American superiority in other technology-enabled war-fighting capabilities in nuclear warfare, for example, inherently signify that U.S. defence planners might be less concerned in those areas in which America continues to possess a strategic advantage.

In spite of the above, deep animosity between the two peer competitors have continued to persist, as demonstrated by the use of the term "coloured revolutions" in China's recent defence white paper. Dr Saunders pointed out that even if CBMs between the U.S. and China may help to stabilise bilateral ties, spasmodic reluctance on the part of the PLA, such as that following U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, has hampered friendly American overtures. Likewise, unwillingness on the part of the U.S. military to share its knowledge on those areas in which the PLA high command is keen for their soldiers to learn from – such as operational issues including the planning and execution of joint operations as well as aircraft carrier processes – continue to prevent Sino-U.S. military-to-military relations from flourishing. While the U.S. has been relatively guarded with sharing its strategic knowledge – and understandably so – China has since been more successful in learning from Russia on the other hand.

2.2 The People's Liberation Army: A Joint Actor Towards Cross-Strait Relations

In his discussion of the PLA's historical role in Beijing's Taiwan policy, **Dr Arthur Ding** pointed out how the Chinese military's reference of Taiwan has evolved from the relevant unit being called the "Enemy Work Department" to "Liaison

SESSION II: CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES



Dr Arthur Ding

Department” (LD) under the PLA’s General Political Department (GPD). While the name may have changed, the mission of the CCP-led military has remained fixated on penetrating Taiwan’s ruling Kuomintang (KMT) forces to disintegrate the latter. Of its previous efforts, Dr Ding noted that the CCP’s civilian leaders have been the ones to lead military planning, although the PLA’s previous successes in infiltrating Taiwan and the trust placed in its operations by the civilian leadership has meant that PLA leaders have held leverage over policymaking in certain aspects.

Concurring with the presenters on the closer ties between the two governments of China and Taiwan, Dr Ding noted that, the 2008 election victory of Taiwanese president Ma Ying-jeou has subsequently led to Beijing’s willingness to establish contact between the PLA and groups staffed by Taiwan’s retired military officers. These include the Association for Sun Tzu Studies and the Society for Strategic Studies – with the objective of developing potential CBMs, and to

strive for even greater breakthroughs in Cross-Strait ties. While these have succeeded in initiating mutual exchanges between Beijing and Taipei, contact has been limited to that between those Taiwanese organisations and China’s Association for the Promotion of Chinese Culture (APCC) under the PLA’s LD. Furthermore, the quality of those previous exchanges are also limited by the fact that APCC delegates were mostly retired PLA academicians or were officers from the GPD – as opposed to from the General Staff Department (GSD), the organisation responsible for formulating policy on Taiwan affairs.

In the absence of any breakthrough between the LD and Taiwan’s military leaders with regard to CBMs prior to the CCP leadership transition in the Chinese mainland in 2012, Dr Ding described President Xi Jinping – who also heads the Party’s small leading group (SLGs) for Taiwan affairs – on the contrary, as having a better chance of spearheading efforts by the PLA to enact his personal directives on Taiwan. While minor differences between Xi’s Taiwan policy and those of former President Hu Jintao have been noted, Dr Ding argued that the maritime issues involving the East and South China Seas are likely to be factored in by Beijing and Taipei in their military-to-military exchanges since these serve as common areas of interest to tackle on a joint basis.. Furthermore, consensus on Taiwan policy among PLA planners can also be assured due to the strong social indoctrination processes in the country and the internal discipline of China’s military.

SESSION II: CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES

Open Discussion

In his assessment of Beijing's use of military diplomacy, Mr Kevin Pollpeter indicated that the PLA has always prioritised its status as the guardian of the Party over being the defender of the country's interests. As such, he opined that the basic rationale for Sino-U.S. military-to-military relations would therefore be unachievable. With China's military top brass and rank-and-file seeing Washington as their enemy, Mr Pollpeter questioned if it was possible for the U.S. to recalibrate its military-to-military relations with China and if need be, whether Washington should behave more aggressively towards Beijing in order to identify the best way forward to manage the extant security dilemma? Having said that, however, Mr Pollpeter pointed out that PLA officers appear to have realised the benefits of their exchanges with their U.S. counterparts as a result of more interactions.

Dr Richard Hu then noted that the PLA has framed its military-to-military relationship with its foreign counterparts as "military diplomacy" in China's recent defence white paper, with Beijing also viewing its relationship with Washington as a key component of its so-called major-power diplomacy. However, with the Obama administration having since snubbed President Xi Jinping's proposal for "a new model of great power diplomacy", Dr Hu questioned whether the Pentagon was really interested in taking

up the PLA's offer of its version of military diplomacy. Nonetheless, Dr Philip C. Saunders acknowledged that the PLA's attempt to depict itself as a soft power entity has generally been well received by U.S. officials. On the theme of trust deficit in Sino-U.S. relations, Dr Tai Ming Cheung suggested that a comparison of Sino-U.S. military-to-military ties with that between Beijing and Moscow might be informative.

On the subject of Cross-Strait relations, Mr Pollpeter questioned if there had been new developments in CBMs between the defence forces of China and Taiwan, and whether these have had any impact on China-Taiwan ties. With the growing professionalisation of the Chinese military, he asked the participants whether new developments in the PLA's policy on Taiwan have emerged. Dr Arthur Ding's response was that there have indeed been changes to the PLA's intelligence collection processes and military operations regarding Taiwan. Citing the operational aspect of the role of the GSD becoming more evident, Dr Ding further noted that Xi Jinping's stance on Cross-Strait ties was more uncompromising compared to Hu Jintao. Finally, Dr You Ji inquired about tangible benefits for the Pentagon to engage in positive military-to-military interactions with the PLA, and, in particular, whether Beijing and Taipei share any consensus on the issue of future U.S. arms sales to Taiwan.

SESSION III: CHINA'S NEW NORMAL: THE PLA'S INFLUENCE IN CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY



Dr Srikanth Kondapalli

3.1 The PLA's Expanding Footprint: Military Diplomacy as an Instrument

Pointing to the PLA's recent showcase of its civilian evacuation operations in Africa and the Middle East, **Dr Srikanth Kondapalli** reminded the audience about the growing importance of Beijing's defence capabilities in protecting the sizeable pool of Chinese citizens based abroad, alongside the increasing number of global Chinese economic interests. With President Xi Jinping's recently launched "One Belt and One Road" initiatives becoming operationalised in the years ahead, Dr Kondapalli pointed out that the influence of the PLA in Chinese foreign policy could grow significantly. With respect to the proposed "Silk Road" plans, the likelihood for China to have its own replenishment facilities along those routes also becomes more plausible as Beijing's global footprint continues to expand.

According to Dr Kondapalli, the recent activities of the PLA such as its participation in Russia's military parade and the deployment of its naval assets in the Aleutian Islands off Alaska, all contribute to China's overall national diplomacy. While demonstrative of Beijing's foreign policy shift from "keeping a low profile" towards "striving for achievement", Dr Kondapalli believed that these actions are nevertheless in line with the other activities of China's defence forces such as high-level mutual visits with countries in China's regional periphery and beyond. In addition to bilateral and multilateral joint exercises between the PLA and its counterparts, such military diplomacy also includes the stationing of defence attachés around the world as well as the PLA's activities under the auspices of the United Nations peacekeeping missions.

In spite of the recent growth of the PLA's diplomatic overtures, Dr Kondapalli noted that Chinese military thinkers continue to view military diplomacy as a foreign concept, and as such, have yet to be fully operationalise the new development as part of its holistic modus operandi. In short, this meant that this diplomatic aspect of China's military development could be put to the test during a future crisis scenario. Moreover, inherent complexities in the global security landscape such as that in South Asia and the African continent would also make it more difficult for the PLA to restrict itself to a strictly diplomatic function in areas such as Pakistan's port of Gwadar, and in the purported PLA logistical base in Djibouti. As such, these may yet prove to be a challenge for Chinese military diplomacy to serve as an effective complement to Beijing's overall foreign policy.

3.2 China's Central National Security Commission: Rationale, Prospects and Implications

Dr Joel Wuthnow elucidated on China's new national security apparatus following the 18th Party Congress and speculated on the its prospects of redefining China's security decision-making. In light of the lack of authoritative information to date on the Central National Security Commission (CNSC), Dr Wuthnow indicated that he had thus turned to key party documents, authoritative media and subject-matter commentary to analyse the rationale behind the institution. Established at the 3rd Plenum of the 18th Central Committee in November 2013, the CNSC has been conceptualised as part of Beijing's "overall national security concept" under the new Party leadership, and is helmed by the CCP's top-ranked leaders – President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Keqiang, and chief of China's legislature, Mr Zhang Dejiang.

According to Dr Wuthnow, the intention behind the establishment of the CNSC is not new, and has been driven by previous incidents such as the 2001 EP-3 collision. Nevertheless, he pointed out that whereas previous CCP leaders had the desire to form such an organisation, they were

SESSION III: CHINA'S NEW NORMAL: THE PLA'S INFLUENCE IN CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY



Dr Joel Wuthnow

been able to do so, either due to their personal inefficiency or a hyper-consensus-oriented leadership milieu which marked the tenures of previous Party-state administrations. Under Xi Jinping, however, the CNSC has been formed with the purpose of providing a centralised and unified national security system to enhance the CCP's "leadership over national security work". Where Beijing's domestic security and challenges in China's external environment are concerned, the CNSC has been tasked with thinking holistically about those linkages between China's internal and external security realms.

Dr Wuthnow pointed out that – in view of the CCP's response to the recent Tianjin explosion – it would appear that the CNSC has very much remained a peripheral advisory body, and further speculated that it could have met with elite or bureaucratic resistance. Nonetheless, while the organisation remains a work in progress, Dr Wuthnow noted that it does hold the potential of enhancing the management of information in the event of domestic or foreign crises, and would also facilitate a more effective inter-agency response by the Party-state. However, the body still suffers from a vague mandate vis-à-vis other organs such as the CMC – with the level of PLA representation in the CNSC still unclear. He concluded that the CNSC needs to find ways to be able to improve information flow between the PLA and the Party-state's civilian agencies, and added that this is likely to be a key challenge for the CCP in enhancing military-civilian coordination.

3.3 The PLA's Professional Worldview and Its Impact on Chinese Foreign Policy

On behalf of **Dr Yuan Jingdong**, Mr James Char pointed out that the PLA's assessment of the global security environment is, first and foremost, shaped by how the CCP leadership views the world. Following the 18th party Congress, this vision of the international order entails a grand strategy that seeks to mobilise China's internal and external resources to meet the country's medium-term geopolitical and economic objectives as spelt out in President Xi Jinping's "China Dream". Towards that end, Dr Yuan's analysis regards the PLA as having paid greater attention to the global security environment as well as major international and regional military trends. Dr Yuan further observed that the PLA has engaged in and promoted military diplomacy with its foreign counterparts to enhance its image, as well as strengthened CBMs to avert potential crises in the Asia-Pacific region.

According to Dr Yuan, the international and regional environments inherited by President Xi and China's 5th generation of leaders on assuming authority in late 2012 were not as favourable compared to those of earlier administrations. In addition to daunting domestic changes brought forth by a slowing economy, the current leaders are also beset with increasingly complex security challenges that has required Beijing to balance its delicate relationships with Washington and its near neighbours over sovereignty and territorial disputes in both the East and South China Seas. In this regard, Dr Yuan stated that China has had to contend with the intricacies of managing nationalist sentiments without being perceived as weak by its domestic polities. Further, Beijing – and the PLA, in particular – also views the disputes as providing an avenue for U.S. military intervention, with the latter's recent manoeuvres in the region seen as a sign of its desire to consolidate its status as the region's hegemon.

In Dr Yuan's opinion, China's greater involvement in the global order means that multiple foreign

SESSION III: CHINA'S NEW NORMAL: THE PLA'S INFLUENCE IN CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY

policy actors will be called upon to formulate and implement its strategic visions. Where the PLA is concerned, this would entail the development of a centralised policy coordination in which the military leadership can be expected to be subordinate to the CCP's foreign policymaking. However, this also raises the question as to whether the military leadership would subject itself to other constituents of the Party-state-military nexus apart from the CMC. In conclusion, Dr Yuan posited that the PLA could well expect to be given a prominent role by the CCP on issues critical to its mission as well as in those areas where its professional views and expertise are considered critical to national security. Still, one can expect the strategic goals set by the civilian leadership to take precedence over the PLA's preferences.

Open Discussion

In reviewing the influence of China's military leaders in the country's foreign policy, **Dr Richard Hu** reminded the audience about the PLA's traditional status as a foreign policy actor. Indeed, while China's national security and foreign policies have evolved, the PLA's mentality has also changed with the times. In making a distinction between military diplomacy and the PLA's overseas activities, Dr Hu disputed the impact of China's military diplomacy and also posed questions as to whether the PLA has been able to coordinate its policies with China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In response, Dr Kondapalli noted that the PLA's Foreign Liaison Office has served as its foreign affairs bureau, and pointed out that China's military diplomacy carries a deterrent effect in addition to serving as a diplomatic bridge. Dr Kondapalli further shared that if Beijing were given more leeway by Delhi to become more active in the Indian Ocean, China would be expected to reciprocate by giving India more strategic space to become active in its own backyard – including the South China Sea.

On the subject of the CNSC, Dr Li Mingjiang raised concerns about the relationship between the former and the CMC, and how the new national security institution would relate to the Central Small Leading Group on Foreign Affairs and National Security as well as the Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC). Likewise, Dr



Dr Richard Hu

Hu questioned the PLA's role in the CNSC, and whether it could be expected to grow in importance in light of China's changing civil-military relations. With regards to the CMC, Dr Hu also challenged the presenters to reflect on the extent to which China's military leadership would be affected by the CNSC. Dr You Ji postulated that it was more likely for Xi Jinping to exercise his leadership of the CNSC as the Party leader, rather than commander-in-chief of the Chinese armed forces. At the same time, while the CNSC would likely focus on foreign affairs, it could also be expected to deal with domestic challenges during an internal crisis. Still, with the PLA's previous record of withholding information from the country's diplomatic services, Dr Philip C. Saunders questioned if China's military commanders would act likewise with regard to the CNSC to maintain their political leverage.

On the subject of the PLA's professional view, Dr Hu pointed out that, while the military may indeed be a genuine stakeholder in China's foreign policymaking, it is still the civilian leadership that sets the targets, with the PLA a mere follower. With that in mind, it is therefore more likely that the PLA focuses on parochial issues. Dr Hu thus suggested that, by unpacking the specific positions of the PLA – in the same manner as differentiating the views between the Pentagon and the different U.S. military service – greater clarity could be yielded in studying the extent to which the PLA's views has influenced Chinese foreign policy. Concomitant with the changes to China's policy setting framework under Xi, it will be crucial to determine whether the degree of influence by the Chinese military has increased (or instead decreased) as well as clarify the nature, and level, of autonomy the PLA wields in the nation's foreign policy.

SESSION IV: CHINA'S DEFENCE ECONOMICS: BALANCING NATIONAL INTERESTS AND MILITARY COMBAT READINESS



Dr Tai Ming Cheung

4.1 Innovation in China's Defence Technology Base: Foreign Technology and Military Capabilities

Dr Tai Ming Cheung began his presentation by highlighting the remarkable progress made by China's defence science and technology systems in the past two decades. To a large degree, this has been made possible by technological transfers as well as its defence industry's increasing sophistication in absorbing external input before converting them into localised output. Using the established framework detailing the relationship between foreign technological transfers and indigenous Chinese attempts at imitating and innovating the West's production methods, Dr Cheung pointed that Beijing's decision to combine foreign production techniques with its own domestic production capabilities to generate technological improvements is not unlike that of the former Soviet Union during the previous century, which enabled the latter to shorten its research and development by as much as five years.

Having established its roadmap for catching up with other advanced Western nations, "innovation as recombination" has been placed at the heart of Beijing's approach to the pursuit of scientific and technological and innovation in the current century. As spelt out in its 2006-2020 Medium & Long Term Science and Technology Development Plan, Dr Cheung pointed out that it can thus be expected of the PLA and China's defence science planners to promote their own breakthroughs by reassembling extant technologies in different ways in addition to absorbing and upgrading

imported technologies. For the enhancement of China's industry-military complex, this would entail the implementation of policies that support the introduction, digestion, assimilation, and re-innovation (IDAR) of foreign technology. Whereas Beijing had previously struggled with assimilating new technologies, it has since addressed this problem and increased the level of homegrown innovation.

Dr Cheung further noted that absorption and re-innovation have served as a force multiplier for the PLA in modernising its armaments. Apart from legal contracts as a primary means of effecting technological transfers, Beijing has also been engaged in clandestine methods such as industrial espionage and other avenues, of which unauthorised Chinese activity against Russia with its reverse engineering of the Su-27 fighter jet serves as one notable example. To be sure, such machinations have allowed the PLA to close the technological gap with between itself and other advanced militaries, with the biggest beneficiaries being its aviation, shipbuilding and precision strike sectors. While these have bolstered the Chinese military's shift towards a more assertive maritime posture in the region, Dr Cheung noted that the country's recent economic slowdown and other weaknesses in the PLA's institutions may still hamper its catching up process.

4.2 Reforming China's Defence Industry

In his discussion of the more recent developments in China's defence industry, **Mr Richard A. Bitzinger** continued with the theme of the PLA's desire to gear towards autarky, with Chinese defence planners seeing indigenisation of technology as an indispensable component of the country's national strategic autonomy. Despite the increasing costs of development and production associated with indigenous research and development of advanced weapons systems, Mr Bitzinger noted that China has nonetheless made research, development and acquisition processes a key objective, and has steadily shifted from imitation towards innovation. He further pointed out that, since the 1990s following Western arms embargo after the Tiananmen incident, China's

SESSION IV: CHINA'S DEFENCE ECONOMICS: BALANCING NATIONAL INTERESTS AND MILITARY COMBAT READINESS



Mr Richard A. Bitzinger

defence industry has made significant progress, and is no longer be perceived as the backwater in the global arms manufacturing industry.

Under the former procurement process run by the Commission for Science, Technology and Industry for National Defence (COSTIND), in which the PLA's procurement and state-owned enterprises (SOEs) were centralised, the Chinese military often had to accept defence industry output despite these being of an inferior quality. Moving into the new century, however, Mr Bitzinger observed that a concerted, united, top-down commitment to reform then witnessed the formation of the new State Administration for Science, Technology and Industry for National Defence as well as the formation of the PLA's General Armaments Department (GAD) in charge of military research and development as well as weapons procurement. According to Mr Bitzinger, these developments have undoubtedly aided in making the relationship between the PLA and the country's defence industries a more integrated one.

With the GAD having assumed the duties for military procurement oversight, the PLA has thus been able to consolidate, centralise and standardise procurement and acquisition, as well as ensure that the quality and cost of locally produced equipment meet its combat requirements. Further, as Mr Bitzinger pointed out, the GAD has also been able to inject more competition into the national procurement process such as the approval of arms imports. Still, he highlighted that the PLA's armaments unit has yet to fully absorb all military procurement

decision-making, and that China's defence industry reforms are also beset with considerable challenges such as duplication and excess capacity due to the incomplete restructuring of the country's SOEs. While China's defence industries may have made progress, these have more to do with its significantly expanding defence budget – and less due to reforms. As such, the country's production systems remain suboptimal.

4.3 The PLA and the Political Economy of Defence Industrialisation in China: Security and Market

Dr Ken Boutin discussed Chinese defence industrialisation in the context of broader processes in the country's economic development. As a key industrial actor with distinct interests in China's defence research and development production, the PLA's defence-industrial strategy has been driven by the materiel requirements stemming from the transformation of China's industrial landscape through marketisation and deepening civil-military as well as transnational integration. According to Dr Boutin, this may be considered a mixed blessing for the PLA since it threatens China's defence-industrial autarky even as it offers the prospect of an enhanced basis for the supply of advanced weapons for the PLA's continued military transformation. But while the PLA continues to draw on foreign suppliers, it has become more wary of the import of advanced technology from certain Western nations.

In Dr Boutin's view, how the CCP and the PLA would be able to balance the conflicting security requirements of China's national and comprehensive economic security will likely determine whether the PLA and the country's defence-industrial base realise their potential in the long-term. Sharing responsibility over governance of China's defence-industrial sector with the State Administration for Science, Technology and Industry for National Defence (SASTIND), the PLA conducts defence research and development in addition to operating production facilities. As the principal customer for the arms produced by China's defence industry, the PLA thus exercises considerable influence

SESSION IV: CHINA'S DEFENCE ECONOMICS: BALANCING NATIONAL INTERESTS AND MILITARY COMBAT READINESS



Dr Ken Boutin

over defence-industrial policy. Nevertheless, it remains unlikely that the PLA would aim for a bigger role in production given that the civilian leadership has curbed its economic activities in the past.

Overall, the imperatives driving the PLA's defence-industrial approach are not much different from that of other states. In Beijing's case, however, it does involve considerably greater tension between the conflicting requirements of obtaining arms of acceptable quality and cost on the one hand, and promoting defence-industrial autarky on the other. Concomitant with the progress made by China's defence-industrial base, Dr Boutin concluded that the PLA currently maintains a preference for locally produced weaponry. With continuing strong interest to limit the exposure of its defence-industrial base to market forces whilst maintaining close control of what it regards as a crucial element of its national interest, he postulated that the PLA can be expected to increase civil-military integration until China's defence-industrial base becomes less independent on foreign science and technology.

Open Discussion

In his discussion of China's defence technology base, Dr Michael Raska acknowledged that while the IDAR model has indeed serve as a feasible learning curve for the PLA in its military reforms, whether the Chinese version shows convergence or divergence deserves greater scrutiny since Beijing is still in search of independence in its weapons production. Dr Hu and Dr Ding

also noted that the timespan required for new science and technology to be rolled out owing to product life cycles would mean that any defence technological improvement could only materialise much later since some pre-research is inherently necessary. As scientific and technological improvements tend to be relative, Dr Raska also indicated that the PLA – in its pursuit of modern war fighting methods – would be more concerned with how its own strength compares with that of its more advanced overseas counterparts.

With regard to the ongoing reforms to the Chinese industrial-military complex and how the Chinese government has sought to strike a balance between the country's security and defence development, Dr You inquired about the extent to which proposed civil-military integration between the PLA and private Chinese enterprises have been effected. Dr Cheung opined that while Xi Jinping has voiced his support for civil-military integration, the process remains a vague concept and that civil-military integration has yet to be fully operationalised between state and society. Likewise, Dr Raska questioned about the role of strategic culture in the PLA's drive to reform its technology base, and highlighted that militaries are by nature resistant to outside efforts to integrate their operations with that of entities in the private sector.

In general, the speakers concurred with Dr Boutin's assertion that the PLA has been striking a fine balance between achieving autarky in its armaments research and development, and meeting the necessity of procuring more advanced weaponry from foreign suppliers. On the question of whether it would be a more strategic choice for the GAD and GLD to be merged, as is the case with the present Russian military, Dr Saunders shared his opinion that there might be implications on the PLA's air operations since the GAD has already consigned all its rights of weapons procurement to the PLAAF. The session was then concluded when Dr Raska pointed out that that the current economic slowdown in China may yet lead to the PLA's reforms facing an uncertain future in the event of less funds being made available by the CCP for China's defence modernisation programmes.

SESSION V: MODERNISATION OF THE PLA: HOW SUCCESSFUL A REVOLUTION HITHERTO?

5.1 Integrating the Services and Harnessing the Military Area Commands

Representing **Mr Dennis J. Blasko**, Mr James Char observed that the proposed troop reduction announced at China's recent military parade serves as a prelude to more military reforms in line with Xi Jinping's desire to enhance the structure of the PLA. In accordance with the need to adjust the ratio between combat and non-combatants in the Chinese military forces, the announcement follows that made previously by the CCP regarding the enhancement of the joint operation command authority under the CMC and theatre joint operation command system. In view of Beijing's growing maritime assertiveness, Mr Blasko noted that the move was a clear shift by the PLA towards developing a modern force structure commensurate with the country's national security and development interests which further optimises battlefield disposition and strengthens strategic prepositioning.

In Mr Blasko's opinion, this latest development in China's defence forces may lead to challenges to the traditional balance between the PLA Army, the PLAN, the PLAAF and the Second Artillery Corps (SAC), in addition to placing a strain on the CMC command structure in which membership of the country's highest military decision-making body has hitherto been dominated by personnel from the ground forces. Regarding the former, an estimated 68% of China's military is made up of soldiers from the Army. With the PLA's Outline for Military Training and Evaluation expected to be launched soon, Mr Blasko shared his expectation that the number of joint exercises commanded by military leaders of the PLAN, PLAAF and SAC is likely to increase further. Similarly, the PLA has also rolled out curriculum changes emphasising joint operations in conjunction with offering joint officer training programmes.

Finally, Mr Blasko alluded to the additional anticipated changes as stipulated in China's recent defence white paper as indicative of a change in emphasis from "winning local wars under conditions of informationisation", to "winning informationised local wars" as the PLA continues to modernise its military operations. Still, greater innovation in its strategy will be required in view

of the lack of combat experience of its troops, as well as the fact that Chinese defence personnel have had to adapt to a growing number of new tasks. To compound matters further, the PLA's doctrine of operating under the guidance that "technology determines tactics" may also pose a further challenge to its modernisation efforts since the mastery of the employment of advanced technologies have the inadvertent effect of making greater demands on PLA defence personnel with regard to information overload.

5.2 The U.S.-China Naval Balance in the Asia-Pacific: An Overview

Dr Lyle J. Goldstein, via teleconferencing, began by noting that despite limited research on the PLA due to the dearth of available data, China military watchers generally concur that the two decades of rapid catching up by the PLA has shifted the balance of military power in the Asia-Pacific region. While far from proclaiming that this shift has since begun to favour Beijing in the current period – or in the foreseeable future – Dr Goldstein contended that many Western analyses have been unduly optimistic by focusing on Washington's experience with counter-insurgency efforts and have thus inadvertently underestimated Beijing, its near-peer competitor. Dr Goldstein reckoned the PLA has not had to exert itself in its continuing efforts modernise its forces with a budget approximating two per cent of gross domestic product, and also holds the advantage of operating closer to its shores.

Despite the U.S. military continuing to hold the advantage of having a robust intelligence network and a sizeable fleet of surveillance aircraft and vessels in the western Pacific, as well as advantages in conducting amphibious, undersea and nuclear warfare, Dr Goldstein noted that Washington lacks the decisive advantage over Beijing. This is especially in the light of the PLA's ability to launch missile strikes on U.S. bases and those of American allies by virtue of the Chinese defence forces having in its possession one of the world's largest and most sophisticated conventional missile forces. Coupled with the Chinese military's advantage in the use of offensive mine warfare, the likelihood of the PLA

SESSION V: MODERNISATION OF THE PLA: HOW SUCCESSFUL A REVOLUTION HITHERTO?

countering any potential aerial manoeuvre of the U.S. or that of its allies will likely put a damper on American submarine superiority.

Reminding the participants that that U.S. supply lines to the Western Pacific are longer, Dr Goldstein further asserted that the optimism expressed by Chinese military analysts such as the retired PLAN admiral Yin Zhuo that any future Sino-U.S. confrontation on China's doorstep are not without reason. With the PLA adding new weapons such as the Dong-Feng 21 (DF-21) missiles to its arsenal, there may be some element of truth that PLA strategists are justifiably confident, even as the tensions and rivalry between the U.S. and China continue to grow. Conversely, despite the PLAN having sent expeditionary forces and projected its power further afield, Dr Goldstein suggested that China's current prowess would still diminish when its military assets are deployed further away from the Chinese mainland. With regard to the recent slowdown in China's economic growth, Dr Goldstein opined that the PLA's reforms can still be expected to persist at the current pace of change.

Open Discussion

Commenting on the PLA's efforts to integrate its services and tighten its command structure, **Dr Hoo Tiang Boon** cited the example of the Chinese military's proposed troop reduction as further evidence of the PLA becoming more streamlined to enhance its jointness, effectiveness, and lethal capabilities. While the development was certainly no gesture of peace, Dr Hoo expressed his reservations regarding the enhancement of the PLA's fighting capabilities on account of the 'little emperor' syndrome caused by China's family planning policy. Furthermore, the outcome of the endeavor will also be determined by the PLA's internal bureaucratic politics, since its top soldier in the CMC has traditionally been an Army officer. With the PLA increasingly focused on joint operations, Dr Hoo also questioned if its ground forces would lose its prominence and predominant access to materiel.

On the subject of China's heightened maritime assertiveness and its implications on Sino-U.S.



Dr Hoo Tiang Boon

military balance, Dr Hoo acknowledged that even if Beijing has been active in enhancing its war fighting capabilities, Washington has not been staying still and has constantly upgraded itself. He further opined that Chinese capabilities in the various war domains vary, and at such, these needed to be clarified in discussing the different scenarios of war, with a distinction to be made between that of the U.S. and China; and one between American allies in the region versus China. With regard to a potential Sino-U.S. confrontation further away from Chinese coasts and how the PLA's air and naval assets would likely perform, Dr Goldstein responded that Japan's Self-Defense (JSD) naval forces play an important role for the U.S. in the region and added that Vietnam has been emulating China's use of coast guard units to project its regional maritime prowess.

Adding to the debate on the military balance of power between China and the U.S., Dr Hoo highlighted that, in light of Xi Jinping's intention to turn the PLA into a military force capable of fighting wars – and winning them – it would therefore be of interest to identify the implications on the regional security landscape and further afield. Overall, he believed that scenario planning depends on politics and economics. Dr Saunders also reminded the audience that despite the current military developments, the present U.S.-China model ought to be contrasted with that between the former Soviet Union and the U.S. To be sure, the mentality of PLAN personnel has evolved, with its rank-and-file now more accepting of permissive rules. On the subject of the AirSea Battle strategy, Dr Goldstein posited that even if the concept remains hazy, it still has a significant effect on U.S. war preparations.

SESSION VI: POST-MODERN WARFARE: BRINGING THE FIGHT INTO CYBER AND OUTER SPACE



Dr Michael Raska

6.1 China's High-Tech Weaponry: PLA Capabilities in the Cyber and Information War Zones

Dr Michael Raska elucidated on the PLA's assessment of cybersecurity challenges and threats posed by the U.S. and others, and described how it has mitigated those dangers through its computer network operations (CNO). Similar to other countries, Beijing has indicated the importance of defending itself against harmful cyber activities that carry the potential to undermine its ability to carry out its military defence. The Chinese government has since indicated the need to identify the boundaries of China's virtual territory, and put in place key entities in its GSD units and technical reconnaissance bureaus across its various military regions for the purposes of signals intelligence collection. Dr Raska further pointed out that since the early 2000s, militia units have also been drawn from the commercial IT sector and academia.

In a bid to counter foreign claims that the PLA has been conducting numerous cyber attacks, the Chinese military has often cited statistics on hacking activities on its own servers. While such actions have avoided identifying the American government in particular – and Western states in general – as the verifiable source of the major sources of cybersecurity threats, Chinese defence ministry officials have nonetheless intimated that many attacks do originate in the U.S. They have also alluded to operations such as the clandestine surveillance programme, PRISM, reflecting the U.S. taking the initiative in exercising its superiority in cyberspace and the militarisation

of the new domain. On the CNOs, Dr Raska believed that China's strategic culture focuses more on the enemy's intent than its forces, with the campaign viewed as a means to subjugate rather than to destroy.

Dr Raska concluded that with regard to its assessment of current and future conflicts, the PLA has predicted that campaigns will be simultaneously conducted across all platforms – ground, air, sea and electromagnetic – and has therefore adopted the doctrine of “informatised conditions” to seize control of an adversary's information flow and establish information dominance. Dr Raska added that this would also entail detailed intelligence on the command and control networks of the Chinese military's adversaries. In that respect, an integrated network involving the PLA's CNOs, electronic warfare and kinetic strikes designed to create potential blind spots in the enemy's intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) systems pointed to the possibility that dedicated computer network attack and exploitation units will be called upon in the earliest phases of a conflict.

6.2 Space, The New Domain: Space Operations and Chinese Military Reforms

Mr Kevin Pollpeter described the PLA's development of its space capabilities by pointing out the adjustments in the Chinese military's strategic guidelines as evinced by its recent defence white paper that provided a clear indication of space as “a commanding height in international strategic competition”. Similarly, in its Study of Military Strategy (2013), PLA strategists have also identified outer space as one of five major military threats facing China – alongside nuclear, conventional, cyber and nuclear-conventional threats – with the proviso that achieving space and cyber superiority will be critical. According to Mr Pollpeter, two likely sources influencing the development of PLA's space operations include the identification of threats to China's national security as well as whether the Chinese military has already determined that the form of warfare has undergone crucial structural change.

SESSION VI: POST-MODERN WARFARE: BRINGING THE FIGHT INTO CYBER AND OUTER SPACE



Mr Kevin Pollpeter

Mr Pollpeter further opined that the PLA has designated space as a platform for a new type of operational forces, as well as identified the domain's importance in ensuring China's military ability to fully make use of space, in addition to limiting, weakening and destroying its adversaries' space forces. Where the concept of command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4SIR) is concerned, China's military planners have also determined that the PLA has to make advances in the aforementioned areas in order to achieve greater sharing of information, situational awareness and a flatter command structure.

Mr Pollpeter confirmed that it has become clear that China has prioritised the advancement of its space capabilities, with the CCP having set the PLA the target of achieving a global, 24-hour, all-weather earth remote sensing system by 2020.

On the issue of organisational reforms, Mr Pollpeter noted that there are currently too many organisations overseeing China's space enterprise with no clear executive agent in sight. Noting that whereas the PLAAF has been rather vocal in expressing its desire to take the lead in space, he added that it was not unlikely that the SAC would also have a role to play. Still, three alternatives are possible: (i) an independent service branch that expropriates units and capabilities from the GAD; (ii) a joint command similar to the U.S. Strategic Command or U.S. Space Command that leads the PLA's space enterprise by platforms and capabilities; (iii) a theatre command option responsible for space capabilities resident in theatre. Mr Pollpeter concluded that the emphasis on space control by the U.S. and China in recent years has appeared to add dangerous escalatory elements to a potential future conflict between the two.

Open Discussion

With reference to the current state of warfare and beyond, Mr Bitzinger challenged the speakers to reflect on the relationship between air, sea, land, space and cyber, as well as think about whether these links were holistic, synergistic or competitive. While the cyber capabilities of most militaries remain defensive in nature, he added that, with C4SIR in mind, the global security calculus could therefore be expected to shift towards network-centric warfare in which one's access to information would determine victory or defeat. Likewise, Dr Raska noted that, while the cyber capability of militaries around the world is no absolute weapon, it nonetheless holds the potential as a complementary force multiplier. Commenting on the 'red lines' in fighting in cyberspace, Dr You questioned if the current state of affairs in Sino-U.S. ties would be disrupted due to the militarisation of the cyber domain, and deliberated on the potential threat of mutually assured destruction between Beijing and Washington as competition between their respective militaries intensifies further.

On the topic of Beijing's revolution in military affairs and the PLA's developments in the new domains, Mr Bitzinger noted that even if space and cyber are inherently intertwined, the latter was a more recent phenomenon. Still, he felt that any further inroads into space by the Chinese military would be a more challenging prospect than building up its cyber capabilities due to the former being more capital-intensive. Nevertheless, the fact that space programmes of the world's most advanced nations have gained greater momentum and accelerated in the past 20 years – the PLA, for instance, is now in possession of electronic satellites – also means that it is not unreasonable to expect the Chinese military to scale even greater heights as it attempts to gain mastery over the new domain. On a more positive note, Dr Cheung expressed his hope that despite the ongoing Sino-U.S. rivalry, the potential for U.S.-China cooperation in the cyber and space domains cannot be ruled out.

CLOSING REMARKS

Mr Bitzinger and Mr Char expressed their gratitude to the conference chairpersons, speakers and discussants for sharing their knowledge and insights regarding the PLA's role in China's national security and for assessing the on-going developments in its military transformations. Mr Bitzinger and Mr Char shared the observation that while China's Reform and Opening-up has enabled the PLA to make great strides in its military hardware, outstanding inadequacies in its "heart-

ware" in terms of doctrine and training ultimately means that there is still much room for improvement before it can hope to catch up with the U.S. military. Nevertheless, despite the recent slowdown in the country's economic growth raising further uncertainty over the PLA's future development, its long-term trajectory can be expected to have a growing influence on the regional security architecture.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Day 1 : Thursday, 1 October 2015

0900hrs	Registration	1345hrs	Session III: <i>China's New Normal: The PLA's Influence in Chinese Foreign Policy</i>
0930hrs	Welcome Remarks Professor Tan See Seng <i>Deputy Director and Head of Research of IDSS, RSIS</i>		Chair: Dr Arthur Ding <i>National Chengchi University</i>
0940hrs	Session I: <i>The Emerging Strategic Thinking, Roles and Missions of the PLA</i>		<i>The PLA's Expanding Footprint: Military Diplomacy as an Instrument</i> Dr Srikanth Kondapalli <i>Jawaharlal Nehru University</i>
	Chair: Dr Li Mingjiang <i>S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies</i>		<i>China's Central National Security Commission: Rationale, Prospects and Implications</i> Dr Joel Wuthnow <i>Center for Naval Analyses</i>
	<i>Xi Jinping in Command: Strengthening Subjective Civilian Control over the PLA</i> Dr Kou Chien-wen <i>National Chengchi University</i>		<i>The PLA's Professional Worldview and Its Impact on Chinese Foreign Policy</i> Dr Yuan Jingdong <i>University of Sydney</i>
	<i>Corruption and Anti-Corruption in Chinese Civil-Military Relations</i> Mr James Char <i>S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies</i>		
	<i>Sino-U.S. Seesaw Battle in the Littoral Domains: The PLA Approach Towards Aero-Maritime Intercepts</i> Dr You Ji <i>University of Macau</i>	1430hrs	Discussant(s): Dr Richard Hu <i>East Asian Institute</i>
1025hrs	Discussant(s): Dr Philip C. Saunders <i>U.S. National Defense University</i>	1225hrs	Q&A
	Dr Tai Ming Cheung <i>University of California, San Diego</i>	1225hrs	Tea Break
1040hrs	Q&A	1345hrs	Session IV: <i>China's Defence Economics: Balancing National Interests and Military Combat Readiness</i>
1110hrs	Tea Break		Chair: Dr Joel Wuthnow <i>Center for Naval Analyses</i>
1125hrs	Session II: <i>Civil-Military Relations and International Security Challenges</i>		<i>Innovations in China's Defence Technology Base: Foreign Technology and Military Capabilities</i> Dr Tai Ming Cheung <i>University of California, San Diego</i>
	Chair: Dr Kou Chien-wen <i>National Chengchi University</i>		<i>Reforming China's Defence Industry</i> Mr Richard A. Bitzinger <i>S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies</i>
	<i>A New Type of Major Country Military-to-Military Diplomacy: A Turning Point in China-U.S. Relations?</i> Dr Philip C. Saunders <i>U.S. National Defense University</i>		<i>The PLA and the Political Economy of Defence Industrialisation in China: State and Market</i> Dr Ken Boutin <i>Deakin University</i>
	<i>The People's Liberation Army: A Joint Actor Toward Cross-Strait Relations</i> Dr Arthur Ding <i>National Chengchi University</i>	1615hrs	Discussant(s): Dr Michael Raska <i>S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies</i>
1155hrs	Discussant(s): Mr Kevin Pollpeter <i>Defense Group Inc.</i>	1630hrs	Q&A
1225hrs	Q&A	1700hrs	End of Day 1
1225hrs	Lunch		

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Day 2 : Friday, 2 October 2015

0900hrs	Registration	1100hrs	Session VI: <i>Post-Modern Warfare: Bringing the Fight into Cyber and Outer Space</i>
0930hrs	Session V: <i>Modernisation of the PLA: How Successful a Revolution Hitherto?</i> Chair: Dr Srikanth Kondapalli <i>Jawaharlal Nehru University</i> <i>Integrating the Services and Harnessing the Military Area Commands</i> Mr Dennis J. Blasko <i>Center for Naval Analyses</i> <i>The U.S.-China Naval Balance in the Asia-Pacific: An Overview</i> Dr Lyle J. Goldstein <i>U.S. Naval War College</i>		Chair: Dr Ken Boutin <i>Deakin University</i> <i>China's High-Tech Weaponry: PLA Capabilities in the Cyber and Information War Zones</i> Dr Michael Raska <i>S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies</i> <i>Space, The New Domain: Space Operations and Chinese Military Reforms</i> Mr Kevin Pollpeter <i>Defense Group Inc.</i>
1000hrs	Discussant(s): Dr Hoo Tiang Boon <i>S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies</i>	1130hrs	Discussant(s): Mr Richard A. Bitzinger <i>Defense Group Inc.</i>
1015hrs	Q&A	1145hrs	Q&A
1045hrs	Tea Break	1225hrs	Closing remarks
		1225hrs	End of Day 2

CHAIRPERSONS, SPEAKERS AND DISCUSSANTS

1. **Richard A. BITZINGER**
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