



Written by [Christian Gomez](#) on August 23, 2010

China Set to Exert Its Military Influence Abroad

Communist China remains passive in pointing the finger at North Korea over the sinking of the South Korean Navy corvette Cheonan, seemingly giving the benefit of the doubt to the North. If a shooting war flares up on the Korean Peninsula, would China intervene militarily on behalf of the North, as it did in the Korean War?



Though the answer to that question is unknown, it is clear that China possesses significant military clout and views the United States as a hostile power. It is also clear that a new shooting war in Korea would necessarily involve U.S. soldiers as combatants, regardless of whether the U.S. Congress or the American people would want to enter or avoid such a conflict, since the United States still maintains tens of thousands of soldiers in South Korea, more than half a century after the Korean War.

The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) on August 16 released its [annual report](#) to Congress on the current military status of the People's Republic of China. According to the report, the DoD "estimates China's total military-related spending for 2009 to be over \$150 billion, using 2009 prices and exchange rates." By comparison, the DoD 2009 annual report estimated "China's total military-related spending for 2008 to be between \$105 billion and \$150 billion, using 2007 prices and exchange rates."

The new DoD report outlined China's recent military buildup, offering an assessment of China's current military readiness and long-term plans.

The Executive Summary of the DoD's report states that "China's ability to sustain military power at a distance, today, remains limited." But how about the future? The *China Daily* (the Communist state-run Chinese newspaper) reported that "more than 1,000 army and air force officers and soldiers from China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) will take part in an anti-terror exercise in Kazakhstan this autumn," according to Chinese Defense Ministry spokesmen.

The Chinese military exercise will take place at the Matybulak base, near Gvardeisky in Kazakhstan, as part of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's (SCO) "Peace Mission 2010" annual military exercises, which will be held this year from September 9 to 25.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a Euroasian collective security pact composed of China, Russia, and several former Soviet central Asian republics such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Other SCO observer member-states include Belarus, Mongolia, Pakistan, India, and Iran. Working together as one, the SCO's main goal, according to its [official website](#), is to combat "terrorism, separatism and extremism." The SCO is described by many in the West as constituting a



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challenge to U.S. or Western influence in central Asia, viewing the SCO as the anti-NATO of the East or new Warsaw Pact.

China's ability to project its military might beyond its borders may well be limited for now, but its spearheading of the SCO in 2010 has given it new opportunities to conduct mock-war games and military drills outside its country. The news of China's deployment to Kazakhstan, even if only for a couple of weeks, demonstrates that China is determined to expand its foreign and/or overseas capabilities.

Page 2 of the DoD's report also stated that the Chinese Navy is "improving its over-the horizon (OTH) targeting capability with Sky Wave and Surface Wave OTH radars. OTH radars could be used in conjunction with imagery satellites to assist in locating *targets at great distances from PRC shores* to support *long range precision strikes*, including by anti-ship ballistic missiles." (Emphasis added.)

In regards to anti-ship ballistic missiles, the Chinese PLA recently officially unveiled its new deadly "game changing" sea-killer — the Dong Feng 21A. The Dong Feng 21A, as reported by [FOX News](#), is capable of penetrating the "defenses of even the most advanced moving aircraft carrier from a distance of more than 900 miles" and would be able to cause severe or critical damage to such an aircraft carrier well before it could retaliate by launching its fighter jets to Chinese shores.

Page 24 of the DoD report also quoted from China's 2008 Defense White Paper in describing how China is shifting from "regional defense to trans-regional mobility." The report went on to describe that reforms within China's ground forces as geared toward "increasing capabilities for 'air-ground integrated operations, *long-distance maneuvers*, rapid assault, and special operations,' ... *modeled on Russian doctrine and U.S. military tactics*." (Emphasis added.)

Knowing that China is trying to model its ground forces on "U.S. military tactics," the [DoD announced](#), the following the day, that it wishes to renew its military contacts with China in the form of joint-military exercises, as can be seen in this [video](#) of U.S. Marines and Chinese PLA Marines training together, back in 2007.

Regardless of the partnership the United States DoD may like to form with Communist China, the United States is still viewed with hostility and suspicion by China. A Chinese military leader referred to the *USS George Washington* (CV-73), a Nimitz-class nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, as "a moving target" if it makes its way into the Yellow Sea, as part of an joint scheduled U.S.-South Korean naval exercise drill.

This is not the first time a Chinese General has issued threatening rhetoric against the United States; in the summer of 2005, Maj. Gen. Zhu Chenghu said, "We Chinese will prepare ourselves for the destruction of all of the cities east of Xian [in central China]. Of course the Americans will have to be prepared that hundreds ... of cities will be destroyed by the Chinese."

While China seems not to fancy the idea of having the *USS George Washington* navigate near its shores, China makes no quarrels over its own recent naval exercise drills this past July in the highly disputed South China Sea, when a large fleet of diesel attack submarines and surface warships, from the Chinese PLA Navy, "fired guided missiles and tested anti-missile air defence systems," according to the official Xinhua news agency, as reported by the Agence France-Presse news service.

This exercise coupled with China's recent naval buildup, as reported in the DoD's report, has raised the red flag in Japan, where the government has recently announced that the Japan Self-Defense Forces plan to conduct their own military naval and aviation exercises in December, with U.S. support.



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China's military rise may be a gradual one, having a long way to go before their force strength is comparable to that of the United States, but there is no question as to China's economic surge, which may just be the catalyst for the Chinese PLA in the future.

In 2008, John Hawksworth, head of macroeconomics at PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (an Industry-focused assurance, tax and advisory service agency), stated, "Our latest projections suggest that China could overtake the US in around 2025 to become the world's largest economy and will continue to grow to around 130% of the size of the US by 2050."

With an economy as great, or stronger, than that of the United States, China's ability to outperform the United States in a future "Cold War" scenario, or arms race, greatly increases, posing a severe security threat in the future.

Congressman Ike Skelton (D-Mo.), who sits on the U.S. House Armed Services Committee, issued the following statement, with regards to the DoD's report:

I continue to believe that China is not necessarily destined to be a threat to the United States and that China doesn't need to view the United States as a threat to its interests. Yet, conflict between our nations remains a possibility, and we must remain prepared for whatever the future holds in the US-China security relationship. At the same time, we must each be mindful that our actions can produce unintended consequences, and although cooperation is a difficult path, it is ultimately the path that is in both nations' best interest.

Rep. Skelton's claim that "conflict between our nations remains a possibility" certainly seems to be vindicated by China's recent military actions — from the SCO drills in Kazakhstan, to the naval drills in the continuous South China Sea — as well as by developments in Korea.

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