

# Expanding nature of China

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On April 4, TV cameras recorded a Chinese Riot Control Police outfit, wearing the "Blue Berets of the U.N.," marching across the airport tarmac in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti.

It is one of many examples of China projecting itself to the far corners of the world.

Recent events have focused global opinion short-term on the Chinese military budget, oil demand and standoff with Taiwan and the United States, ignoring long-term implications. With its centrally controlled government, China can closely monitor and influence its military, economic and sociopolitical development and plan 20 to 100 years into the future.

America's political leaders too often look only at four- to eight-year terms, ignoring China's enormity. For example, people dismiss the simple idea 1 in 3 of the world's people could be Chinese by 2050, all over the globe. Further, Americans especially do not see how a large portion of our conventional military is retooling to deal with low-intensity asymmetrical threats. This, while China's conventional military power expands every year and concentrates on macrostrategic warfare, including even outer space.

Immediate concerns over rising world oil prices have obscured the indirect role of China moving into economic high gear with booming oil demand and industrialization. Meanwhile our foreign policy focuses on combating terrorism and spreading real and ersatz democracies.

Examining these situations and trends stimulates serious concern. Last year, China's military budget visibly increased 12 percent, with similar upsurges each year over the last decade. Each annual expansion is only a small concern, but this development is ominous and doesn't include China's commercial military-industrial performance.

The current Chinese defense budget is only a fifth that of the United States, but its continued increase at recent rates will render the gap negligible in 20 years. Especially given the same relative quality gains from lower cost and applied effort.

China's money has poured into improving strategic capabilities, including its blue-water navy, air capabilities and modern space communications, reconnaissance and attack systems. These increased capabilities have moved China's army to shed its militia roots and adopt Western doctrines that integrate technology, joint operations and information warfare. So, as China's military capabilities become comparable to those of America, conflict could erupt on sea, in the air and in space.

At the current level of growth, China will surpass the United States as the world's largest economy in 30 years or less. Huge cash reserves and lucrative markets allow China to forge worldwide commercial ties by enticement and pressure.

These same economic moves dictate political and diplomatic relationships. In any sort of conflict, it would be very easy for China to leverage its power and coerce nations to its side, as in the classic Sun Tzu adage: "The next best plan is to attack the enemy through alliances, forcing the enemy to capitulate."

Recent developments show China follows that advice and is slowly moving toward a goal of sole superpowerdom. It recently signed an economic partnership with the Philippines and Vietnam to develop the natural resources of the Spratly Islands, sidestepping turmoil there. These islands are an important center of a long-sought Chinese domination of the South China Sea's trade routes and resources, a goal that directly challenges U.S. interests in the area. This, coupled with new negotiations with India, show a new direction in thought. Chinese officials say they do not wish to challenge U.S. superpower status, but the scenario above illustrates a strategy of dominance through slow, subtle influence.

This also means there will be no immediate armed conflict between China and Taiwan. An attack on Taiwan would sour relations with the whole world, devastate the bilateral economies and ruin years of perceived progress.

Rather, China will gain control of Taiwan through deliberate, long-term development of close economic, social and cultural ties, transitioning to political influence over time. Eventually, Taiwan could yield like Hong Kong, a province whose semi-autonomous political elements are eroding under the Mainland Chinese government.

The United States needs long-term multidimensional strategies to limit or even dovetail with China's growing influence. Meanwhile, the U.S. must economically, militarily and politically support Taiwanese self-determination, which may ultimately include assimilation. American military strategists must address future global and space developments by the Chinese military to counter any potential intimidation. We should curtail trade with the Chinese until they make a commitment to lasting sociopolitical liberalization, while we control our own hemorrhaging trade deficit with them. Trade agreements between China and other nations must be monitored to prevent economic blackmail there, as well.

If the United States does not proactively and respectfully address the growing influence of China, we will find ourselves in dire straits. This would lead to our becoming an anxious, second-tier power or, worse, spark a unnecessary conflict.

*F. Andrew Messing Jr., a retired major in the U.S. Army Special Forces, is executive director of the National Defense Council Foundation (NDCF) in Alexandria. Daniel A. Perez is an NDCF research assistant.*