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In a Fortnight

By Joseph E. Lin

35 YEARS LATER: CHINESE SCHOLARS AND DIPLOMATS OPINE ON SINO-JAPANESE RELATIONS

To mark the 35th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan, *People's Daily*, the official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party, commissioned several academics and former diplomats to write a series of articles reflecting upon the evolution of the bilateral relationship. While the articles consisted almost entirely of platitudes praising the positive direction of the “fruitful China-Japan strategic and mutually beneficial relationship,” two articles were particularly notable due to both their authors and content. In his article, entitled “Making Efforts to Construct the China-Japan Strategic Relationship,” Yang Zhenya, a former Chinese ambassador to Tokyo, cited the need for additional summit level meetings and the establishment of dialogue channels between Chinese and Japanese government departments (*People's Daily*, September 30). Only by increasing the frequency of communications and exchanges between the two countries, Yang argued, can political trust be fostered and the possibility of misperceptions be minimized.

Wang Ping, a Chinese Academy of Social Sciences research fellow, presented a slightly different assessment than his colleagues in his article, “Make Progress While Ensuring Stability,” pointing to the strained Sino-Japanese relationship, particularly during the past five years (*People's Daily*, September 30). Both countries, Wang noted, have had “deviations in their specific strategic goals and orientations and even lacked mutual trust, thus bringing the Sino-Japanese relationship to the most difficult period after the normalization of diplomatic ties.” It was only due to the “ice-breaking” visit of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the “ice-melting” visit by Premier Wen Jiabao

that repairs to the relationship have begun. Wang cautioned that the hard-earned stability in the relationship could only be maintained if Japan applied “Fukudism”—principles on Japan’s policy toward Southeast Asia espoused by former Japanese Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda—as a policy toward China as well as other neighboring countries. Given that Takeo Fukuda’s son, Yasuo, was recently appointed as the new Prime Minister of Japan, Wang’s specific emphasis on the elder Fukuda’s principles reflects the belief among China’s foreign policy circles that the bilateral relationship will only continue to improve under the new Fukuda administration.

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Reorienting the 17th Party Congress: Boosting Unity and Thwarting Taiwan

By Willy Lam

Nearly overnight, the focus of the 17th Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Congress has shifted from the debate regarding Chinese political and economic reform to the promotion of internal party unity and the combating of Taiwan’s proposed referendum. This change has come about due to increasing concerns raised by the party rank-and-file, intellectuals and ordinary citizens over dislocations in the economy, particularly regarding the runaway prices of commodities and services ranging from foodstuffs to housing and health costs. Across the Taiwan Strait, the two primary parties in Taiwan—both the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the unification-leaning Kuomintang—have called for referendums, albeit with separate clauses, on Taiwan’s entrance into the UN. These perceived challenges to the authority of the Chinese leadership have apparently prompted the authorities to mothball discussions about liberalization—including the relatively innocuous agenda of “intra-party democracy”—for the foreseeable future. President Hu Jintao, well known for his cautiousness toward political reform, evidently fears that hoisting the flag of this controversial goal would engender further divisions within the party and country.

From mid-September onwards, the speeches and statements given by Hu, Premier Wen Jiabao and the other members of the Chinese leadership have turned toward enhancing unity within the CCP. In a late September Politburo meeting, Hu surprised many officials when he cited the imperative of “comrades of the Politburo abiding by [the requirements of] the overall situation, closely working with and supporting each other, and upholding and developing the favorable conditions

of unity and pro-activeness” (Xinhua, September 28). Hu further called for efforts toward buttressing “the party’s ideological construction and organizational construction.” His admonition seemed to indicate that there was a lack of unity even at the Politburo level. Moreover, “ideological construction and organizational construction” are standard CCP euphemisms for enforcing a “unity of thought” by means of marginalizing CCP elements deemed unwilling to toe the “central line.”

That the party—and much of China—is divided over economic policy is evident from a “Politburo study session” conducted last week on ways to give a further push to the reform and open-door policy. While addressing the meeting, Hu did not explain why the leadership needed to reaffirm a plank that was first raised by late patriarch Deng Xiaoping nearly 30 years ago. “We must resolutely and unswervingly implement the basic national goal of the open-door policy,” Hu said. “We must expand both the breadth and depth of the policy of opening up to the world,” he added. “We must raise our ability in boosting [China’s] participation in economic globalization as well as maintaining national economic security.”

In a commentary on the eve of the October 1 National Day, Xinhua alluded to “controversies” surrounding Deng’s reform and open-door policy over the past three decades. Xinhua cited “exacerbated contradictions” among disparate regions and social sectors due to wide gaps in levels of economic progress, lack of social justice as well as environmental degradation. The party mouthpiece pointed out, however, that “there is no cause for people outside China to worry that the country will experience retrogressions in the arena of the reform and open-door policy” (Xinhua, September 30). Foremost among scholars and even cadres who harbor doubts about the correct direction of these reforms are those belonging to the “New Left,” who have blasted both Hu and Wen for deviating from socialist ideals and for embracing unbridled capitalism. For example, in a widely cited article decrying the “nine major crimes” of socialism with Chinese characteristics, “neo-conservative” theorist Zhang Deqin slammed the leadership for practicing what he deemed “market Darwinism.” Zhang argued that the marriage of political power and capital has spawned unequal competition in the market, which has in turn resulted in the cruelest form of “the strong preying on the weak” (www.wyxsx.com, April 28).

Hu and Wen have become nervous about such criticisms, particularly in light of the apparent failure of Wen’s vaunted “macro-economic control and adjustment” policies. Despite repeatedly raising interest rates as well as mortgage charges, the overheated property market has shown no signs of losing steam. Even the official media has deplored how the “three big mountains”—unaffordable housing, together with sky-high education and medical costs—are crushing ordinary citizens. Partly as a result of the cyclical shortage of pork and other staple foodstuffs, the consumer price index increased

by 6.5 percent in August. Western economists have estimated that real inflation could even be much higher. Mindful of the fact that it was hyperinflation in the mid-1980s that fuelled student protests—which culminated in the bloody June 4, 1989 Tiananmen crackdown—the authorities have essentially shelved all of the risky new initiatives so as to focus on nurturing internal unity and stability.

Sources in Beijing who are familiar with the Hu Jintao Faction point out that in the interest of fostering “intra-party harmony”—deemed a prerequisite for party unity—Hu has made major compromises regarding top-level personnel arrangements to be endorsed at the Party Congress. The latest reports from Beijing state that apart from Hu’s protégé Li Keqiang, who is party secretary of northeastern Liaoning Province, Shanghai party boss Xi Jinping has emerged as a frontrunner to join the Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC) (Reuters September 25; *Ming Pao*, September 26). Li, 52, is a former first secretary of the Communist Youth League, which Hu had headed in the mid-1980s. Xi, 54, the son of the late liberal party elder Xi Zhongxun, has no factional affiliation with Hu. Nevertheless, the low-key highest-ranking official of China’s largest business center boasts an illustrious track record as a reformist administrator and is deemed more acceptable than Li to most CCP factions. In the case in which both Xi and Li ascend to the PBSC later this month, it is believed that the former will assume Hu’s mantle as party secretary in 2012 and the latter will succeed Wen as the premier soon afterwards.

Apart from spreading the gospel of party unity and assembling a new leadership team that has cross-factional appeal, Hu is likely to use the Party Congress as a platform to issue a tough warning to Taipei. As the cabinet-level Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) pointed out, the 17th Congress will hammer out a new set of “guiding principles, overall requirements and major tasks” toward Taiwan (Xinhua, September 26). This is despite the fact that it is unusual for a CCP congress, which usually handles internal party affairs, to emphasize cross-Straits relations.

While the United Nations last month rejected Taiwan’s application to join the world body using the name “Taiwan”—as opposed to past attempts to join under the name “Republic of China”—President Chen Shui-bian as well as DPP presidential candidate Frank Hsieh and KMT candidate Ma Ying-jeou are committed to holding referendums on Taipei’s UN bid on the same day as the March presidential elections. Beijing’s TAO has reiterated that the DPP’s referendum, which it states is a first step toward changing the official name of the island from the “Republic of China” to “Taiwan,” constitutes a solid effort at claiming *de jure* independence. And from Beijing’s viewpoint, the Chinese leadership is authorized by China’s 2005 Anti-Secession Law to use “non-peaceful means” to torpedo the separatist bid.

It is notable that in his National Day message, Premier Wen underscored the imperative of “countering and thwarting the separatist activities of ‘Taiwan independence’” in conjunction with “Taiwan compatriots” (Xinhua, September 30). More graphic and threatening language has been used by People’s Liberation Army generals while meeting foreign guests. It is significant that in the period leading to the 17th Party Congress, Hu, who also serves as the Chairman of the Central Military Commission, has promoted a host of officers with experience in the “frontlines” of the Nanjing Military Region (NMR), which is in charge of troops deployed in provinces opposite Taiwan such as Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Fujian. For example, the newly promoted Chief of the General Staff, General Chen Bingde, was the commander of the Nanjing MR throughout much of the 1990s. General Chen masterminded the war games and military exercises held opposite Taiwan in 1995 and 1996 in response to then-President Lee Teng-hui’s visit to the United States. Two others who have served in the Nanjing MR, Generals Wu Shengli and Ma Xiaotian, are also seen as rising stars. The two former heads of the Nanjing MR Air Force were recently named vice commander of the General Staff and commandant of the Academy of Military Sciences, respectively. Officers who have served in Fujian, the province closest to Taiwan, have also been elevated. Foremost among them is General Xu Qiliang, a former combat pilot based in Fujian who was last month appointed as the commander of the PLA Air Force. The newly named Political Commissar of the National Defense University, General Tong Shiping, also served in Fujian in the 1990s (*Ming Pao*, September 24).

Analysts in Beijing state that given the imminence of the 2008 Summer Olympics and the Chinese leadership’s desire to project an image of China as a responsible stakeholder on the world stage, Hu is likely to emphasize “closely working together with the great majority of Taiwan compatriots for the goal of peaceful national reunification” during the 17th Party Congress. Yet given the mounting difficulties that Beijing encounters in maintaining domestic stability in the face of drastic socioeconomic changes, the Hu-Wen team may find it convenient to use Taiwan, along with other emotional, “patriotic” issues, to tighten the cohesiveness within the party and country. Since officers from the PLA and the People’s Armed Police will be allotted around 20 percent of the new seats in the Central Committee according to time-honored tradition, Hu’s saber rattling will also help him to consolidate his grip on both the party and the PLA’s leadership. Indeed, in light of his aversion to ideological liberalization, Hu, who is to rule China until at least 2012, does not seem overly disturbed by the fact that the sudden prominence accorded to the twin goals of cementing party unity and combating “separatism” has upstaged the liberal faction’s aspirations for political reform.

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Meeting the Man behind the Missiles: Jing Zhiyuan's Proposed U.S. Visit

By Jason Kelly

On October 21, 2005, the Second Artillery Corps of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) opened its doors for the first time to foreign guests. Donald Rumsfeld, then-secretary of defense, and Peter Rodman, who at the time was serving as U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, traveled to the not-so-secret Second Artillery headquarters in Qinghe, just north of Beijing, to meet with the commander of China's strategic missile forces, General Jing Zhiyuan. The visit consisted of a PowerPoint presentation on the service arm's command structure and missile forces training as well as a post-briefing discussion between Rumsfeld and Jing on nuclear doctrine [1].

During the exchange, General Jing reaffirmed the centrality of the "no first use" principle to China's nuclear doctrine, which helped to offset some of the growing concern in U.S. circles over PLA General Zhu Chenghu's comments in Hong Kong three months earlier. Zhu, a dean at the National Defense University, told reporters that "if the Americans draw their missiles and precision-guided ammunitions onto the target zone on China's territory, I think we will have to respond with nuclear weapons" (*Financial Times*, July 14, 2005). Jing Zhiyuan's constructive approach to talks with his U.S. guests, as well as his assertion that his seat on the Central Military Commission (CMC) put him "in a position to clarify the issue" of Chinese nuclear doctrine, left a favorable enough impression on Rumsfeld and Rodman for them to conclude that General Jing was the type of figure who could serve as a valuable conduit for military-to-military exchanges between China and the United States [2].

President Bush hoped to keep the momentum running in April 2006 by extending a formal invitation to President Hu for General Jing to visit the U.S. Strategic Command at Offutt Air Force Base. The idea was to continue the discussions on nuclear doctrine, strategy, and operations that had begun in Beijing six months earlier. Nearly a year and a half after Hu accepted the U.S. invitation, however, Jing has yet to meet with his counterpart, General James Cartwright, and no date had been set for a visit. As preparations intensify for the upcoming 17th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, General Jing will likely further postpone his visit.

GENERAL JING'S APPEAL

In light of U.S. efforts to foster transparency and avoid the kind of misperceptions that can, and have, exacerbated tensions in the bilateral security relationship, General Jing, a member of the CMC with long experience in the PLA's strategic missile forces, is an important part of the senior military mix in Beijing. Jing also stands out among his general

colleagues because the Second Artillery Corps is at the heart of current PLA modernization efforts. Continued direct contact would provide an important opportunity to build personal relationships between U.S. and Chinese military officers at the most senior level. It may also create a new information channel through which the Pentagon hopes to gain a better understanding of China's strategic missile forces and perhaps even to influence the perceptions of the top Second Artillery Corps leadership.

While information on Jing Zhiyuan is sparse, the available facts regarding his training and professional experience indicate a background steeped in the missile-related issues that most concern the U.S. Department of Defense. Jing began his career in the PLA as an artillery soldier in 1963. Following a series of promotions, he was appointed to command the Second Artillery Base 56 in Xining, Qinghai Province [3]. His stint in Qinghai provided direct exposure to strategic missile systems and their associated operational procedures. Among other missile types, Base 56 is home to China's primary regional missile system, the DF-3A, a medium-range ballistic missile with a range of 3000 to 4000 km [4]. Two of Base 56's affiliated brigades—Delingha and Da Qaidam—are equipped with DF-4 missiles, the first Chinese ballistic missile type to possess limited intercontinental ability [5]. At 4,750 km, the range of the DF-4 allows China to target cities and military facilities throughout the Asia-Pacific and as far away as Alaska.

Jing gained additional experience when he took up the command of Base 52 in 1997 [6]. Headquartered at Huangshan, Anhui Province, Base 52 is thought to be a staging area for DF-15 short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs), which would be transported by road or rail to Fujian for launch in the event of a conflict with Taiwan. These solid-fueled SRBMs are the same missiles that were fired by the PLA into the waters surrounding Taiwan during the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis. Moreover, Anhui Province lies within the Nanjing Military Region, which is the PLA's launching point for a joint air/sea assault on Taiwan. The two years he spent commanding Base 52 placed Jing on the frontline of PLA preparation and contingency planning for conflict with the United States over Taiwan. In addition, the timing of Jing's appointment to Base 52 is noteworthy. Following the 1995-1996 Crisis and the subsequent U.S. deployment of two carrier battle groups to international waters near Taiwan, PLA planners began to focus greater attention on targeting ships and submarines at long ranges as a means to deter U.S. intervention should future conflicts erupt. Jing's arrival at Base 52 in 1997 thus puts him in command of a key Nanjing Military Region missile base during a critical juncture.

The upshot of this background is that Jing Zhiyuan makes for an interesting interlocutor not only because of his current position as the head of the Second Artillery, but also because his mode of thinking and analytical frameworks were forged during the years he spent serving in and commanding key

PLA missile bases.

MISSILES MATTER

Hosting Jing Zhiyuan is an enticing prospect also because the Second Artillery's missile forces will play an integral role in the event of any future conflict with the United States over Taiwan. According to *Zhanyi Xue*, an authoritative PLA text, conventional missile strikes are gaining in prominence and utility in the post-cold war security environment [7]. Joint campaigns, amphibious landings, and blockades—all directly relevant to potential Taiwan scenarios—demand that conventional missile attacks play a key role [8].

Fully aware of this PLA perspective, the U.S. Department of Defense is closely following improvements in the Second Artillery Corps' capabilities, both nuclear and conventional. In its most recent report to the U.S. Congress on the modernization efforts of the PLA, the Pentagon took note of several critical developments. For example, the DF-31 intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), which achieved initial threat availability in 2006 and may have already achieved operational status, represents a significant improvement in the Second Artillery's strategic strike capabilities [9]. The Department of Defense is also keeping an eye out for the attainment of initial operating capability status by the DF-31A, a three-stage, solid-propellant follow-on to the DF-31 that will be capable of striking all targets within the continental United States [10]. The addition of these new missiles to existing stores will provide China with a more survivable and flexible nuclear force, which, some analysts contend, may impact China's long-standing "no first use" nuclear doctrine (*Defense News*, July 10, 2006).

On the side of conventional missiles, the anti-satellite (ASAT) missile test in January 2007 demonstrated the ability of the PLA to strike and destroy a satellite using a medium range ballistic missile, a development that appears to bring China's capabilities more into line with its doctrinal writings on the merits of striking space-based communications systems. At the same time, the approximately 900 DF-15 and DF-11 short-range ballistic missiles deployed in Fujian Province, increasing at a rate of roughly 100 per year by Pentagon estimates, would certainly play a central role in any future Taiwan conflict [11]. As the quality and quantity of the PLA's missile cache grows, Jing Zhiyuan will become an increasingly attractive partner for military-to-military talks between the United States and China.

STILL WAITING AT OFFUTT

Nearly a year and a half after President Hu accepted the invitation for Jing Zhiyuan to visit the U.S. Strategic Command, the general has yet to make the trip. The reason behind the delay is unclear. Jing's tight schedule has been the stated obstacle, according to a January 2007 *People's Daily* report. The paper pointed out that, at that time, the upcoming

Spring Festival season—a time for Chinese to gather with their families—was inappropriate for a foreign excursion, even for a high-ranking PLA general. Following the festivities, Jing would be caught up in the preparations for the upcoming 17th Party Congress [12].

While scheduling issues remain the official excuse for Jing's delayed visit, it is unclear why the general was unable to arrange a trip during the ten months in between the April 2006 Bush-Hu summit and the onset of the Chinese holiday season in February 2007. Stranger still, Jing found time for visits to Chile and Argentina in early December 2006 [13]. Pentagon officials reportedly view the delay as a sign that the PLA fears that discussions on its improving nuclear capabilities will assist the U.S. military in targeting Chinese nuclear weapons in the event of a conflict (*The Washington Times*, June 14).

Whatever the real reasons for the holdup, General Jing Zhiyuan will probably not be making the trip until late this fall at the earliest. For the Pentagon this is a disappointment, but the United States nonetheless has strong incentives to continue asking after him, with the hope of hosting the general sooner rather than later. General Jing's position, experience, and the critical importance of missiles to China's military modernization all make him too important a piece of the PLA puzzle for the Pentagon to ignore.

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NOTES

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African Perspectives on China

By Mauro De Lorenzo

Nearly a year after the China-Africa Summit in Beijing, African perspectives on China are emerging more clearly. At the summit—which was really an extended series of bilateral encounters rather than a meeting with “Africa”—many African delegations felt like props in a theatrical production, to be looked at rather than listened to. They nevertheless welcomed the attention and the promises of cooperation and goodwill, and enjoyed the novelty of being regarded as friends to be courted rather than as problems to be solved. Africa sees clear benefits from all forms of Chinese engagement, but African leaders are also increasingly aware that they will only reap full “win-win” rewards through hard-nosed negotiation with China in defense of their national interests—much as China itself did during its own economic transformation.

The most welcome elements of China's presence to African leaders are undoubtedly infrastructure and investment. Over the past two years, particularly in resource-rich states like Angola, Nigeria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (which last month was offered \$5 billion to rehabilitate its mining sector), China has committed to building more infrastructure than all other donors combined. Not all of this is “aid,” to be sure. It is tied to Chinese construction companies, and in the form of loans rather than grants. But that distinction is of little concern to African governments desperate to build the ports, roads, railways, and electricity grids that they need to jumpstart economic growth. Given the borrowing restrictions placed on the governments that have had their debts forgiven by multilateral institutions through HIPC and similar programs, and the near total lack

of funding for infrastructure through U.S. government aid programs (except through the MCC), China has become one of the main sources of project finance for infrastructure. This alone will guarantee it warm relations on the continent for many years to come.

Similarly, African companies are now present in every country on the continent, as documented by Harry Broadman in a recent study for the World Bank [1]. They engage in almost all business sectors, from manufacturing and food processing to small-scale trading in isolated Lesotho mountain valleys. They pay taxes and hire workers. Many have no connection to the Chinese state. Nevertheless, as Joe Mollo, a former senior Lesotho diplomat, observed, there is usually a “love-hate” relationship between Chinese employers and their African employees. The latter feel exploited and underpaid; the employers counter that they are overpaid considering their level of productivity [2].

African militaries value the training courses they are offered in China and can make tight military budgets stretch farther by purchasing relatively inexpensive Chinese-made arms (Chinese arms sales to Africa are increasing as a proportion of the total share), though they consistently prefer Western training and equipment if it is available.

Earlier this year, Western media noted that China had been invited to participate in the African Union (AU) summit as the only non-African delegation. This was taken as further evidence of the stunning success of China's diplomacy in Africa. The reality was more mundane, as the Deputy Chairman of the AU, Patrick Mazimhaka, explained recently at a meeting in Washington: The AU simply wished to acknowledge China's gift of a new conference center for the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, not signal to the world that China now had some special, privileged relationship with Africa [3].

Even the China-Africa issue that has gotten the most attention in the West—China's unconditional support for the Sudanese government, despite its genocidal counterinsurgency in Darfur—does not particularly alarm African leaders, because they do not blame China for the crisis, and do not believe it has the power to end it. Similarly, on Zimbabwe, since most African leaders share Chinese views on sovereignty and non-interference, they do not begrudge China its reluctance to abandon its ally of more than forty years, Robert Mugabe. African leaders instead are putting stock in their own slowly evolving continental security mechanisms, instantiated through the African Union.

However, the attitudes of African *people* may not be so forgiving, particularly as African civil society increasingly takes stock of China's behavior on the continent and sees its parallels to the neo-colonial past [4]. China's reluctance to take non-governmental perspectives into account will have long-term consequences for how it is perceived in Africa. Indeed, it is the political left in Africa—the same individuals

and organizations most suspicious of Western intentions in Africa—that is most suspicious of China’s activities.

African leaders do, however, have concerns as well. One set of worries has been raised by the new U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), which many in both the U.S. and African media have taken to be mainly a reaction to China’s increased presence in Africa, particularly in oil-producing areas. Considerations of China, in fact, played little role in the Department of Defense’s decision to establish the new combatant command, which is more about rationalizing the Pentagon’s own operations in Africa. But part of the lukewarm reaction to AFRICOM, even among U.S. allies, is the fear that Africa will again be the powerless victim in a strategic competition between two superpowers, as it was between 1960 to 1990. The Ghanaian chief of Army staff, Brig. Gen. Robert Winful, said recently in Washington, “I wish to also remind you that one of the potential pitfalls of AFRICOM is that it could make Africa become a theater for the new scramble for resources between China and the U.S., Japan and Europe. More importantly, it is the relationship between China and America that worry most people in our continent. What happens if the Chinese leadership decides to establish the abolition of AFRICOM in Africa? The only victim, as was the case during the Cold War, would be Africa and its people” [5].

Africa does not want to be forced to choose between China and the West. It sees Europe, the United States, and China as able to offer different kinds of investment and aid (which do not necessarily overlap), and wants to enjoy the benefits of strong relations with all. The United States may have to make greater efforts to reassure African partners on this score.

Another set of worries concerns the impact of Chinese competition on African enterprises and African exports. Chinese textile imports have decimated Nigeria’s domestic production, forcing many factories to close. South Africa’s textile industry was saved only through a bilateral agreement between the governments to voluntarily limit Chinese imports, though this is a temporary measure. Chinese traders in both rural and urban African markets, who can obtain consumer goods from China more cheaply through their networks, are usually able to undercut African traders, which breeds resentment. Michael Sata, a Zambian opposition politician, significantly boosted his support in last year’s presidential election by running on an anti-China platform popular with urban traders and mineworkers upset with wage and labor conditions. African governments and unions are also worried about labor and environmental standards in Chinese enterprises, and about safety standards in Chinese imports, especially given that they usually do not have the capacity to conduct inspections and enforce laws.

Finally, there are some worries about governance, particularly as evidence mounts that Chinese firms are only too happy to bribe their way to lucrative contracts. The anti-corruption and good governance agenda is no longer only a “Western”

agenda: it is shared by African people and many African leaders, and is expressed in continental agreements. In fact, to the extent that China’s aid and investment increase tax revenue and create “policy space” for Africa governments by reducing their intellectual dependence on donor agencies, it may actually be a boon to the quality of African democracy.

As one African leader commented privately, “Their game is clear. They say, I’ll build you a road, if you give me that mine. They are completely transparent.” But this is said without malice or surprise. The lesson for the United States is that it is okay to have a more “normal,” interests-based foreign policy with African partners that transcends humanitarian rhetoric. The lesson for Africa is that in order to derive maximum benefit from the current economic configuration, which places a premium on African resources, each African nation must enhance its diplomatic and investment relations with other Asian or developing countries that can offer similar advantages to China—Malaysia, India, Brazil, Japan, the Gulf States—in order to prevent a total dependence on China.

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NOTES

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Mining for Energy: China's Relations with Niger

By Andrew McGregor

A latecomer to the exploitation of foreign energy resources, China has resorted to developing economic relationships with high-risk yet energy-rich nations like Niger in order to maintain its extraordinary pace of development. According to the International Energy Agency, with China's demand for energy resources steadily increasing, it faces the possibility of having to import 80 percent of its energy needs by 2030 [1]. Demand for oil products in China is expected to grow by at least 5.6 percent each year for the next five years (Xinhua, October 25, 2005). For several years now, China has looked to Africa for its energy future, and the continent already supplies 25 percent of China's oil needs. Niger, an impoverished former French colony, has been targeted by China for energy resource development due to its potential reserves of petroleum and its vast confirmed reserves of uranium. Uranium production in Niger (until recently dominated by France) represents 8-10 percent of the world's supply (3,400 tons in 2006) and accounts for nearly 70 percent of the country's exports. Given China's recent emphasis on developing additional nuclear power plants, such a supply of uranium has proven to be incredibly attractive for China's state-owned energy companies.

THE DIPLOMATIC FRONT

China and Niger first established diplomatic relations in 1974. After a four-year hiatus due to Niger's short-lived diplomatic recognition of Taiwan, China resumed official relations with Niger in 1996. Since then, Nigerien and Chinese leaders have been frequent visitors to each other's capitals. The groundwork for the resumption of relations between the two nations was laid during meetings between Niger's President Mamadou Tandja and Chinese President Jiang Zemin in 2001. During the same visit, Tandja became the first foreign head of state to visit the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region of northwest China, a largely Muslim province that has had experience in anti-desertification and irrigation techniques (*People's Daily*, June 6, 2001).

China's main exports to Niger include textiles, communications equipment and rice. Niger, like most other African countries, supplies China with raw materials but has had great difficulty in establishing a Chinese market for its own manufactured goods. China's booming export industry tends to suppress the manufacturing sector in many African countries, hindering local development. Sino-Nigerien economic relations are governed by a bilateral trade agreement and a joint economic and trade commission. China also provides scholarships for Nigerien students to Chinese universities and medical assistance in the form of a 36-member medical team. In addition, Chinese goodwill has also been expressed through

prestige development efforts like the Zinder water supply project, completed in May 2006.

A STRATEGIC ENERGY SUPPLY

Niger presents the most promising source of uranium to fuel China's program to dramatically increase its use of nuclear power. China's current reliance on coal-powered energy plants is quickly choking its cities in layers of toxic smog. To remedy this, China plans to build one nuclear plant a year until 2020, mostly in the rapidly expanding industrial centers along the Chinese coast. The project will increase China's nuclear generating capacity from its current nine gigawatts (GW) to 40 GW (Reuters, September 20). China's attempt to develop cleaner energy sources, however, could come at a cost to Niger's environment, a cost Niger seems willing to bear given its desperate need for capital.

Chinese firms active in Niger's energy sector include the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), the China Nuclear International Uranium Corporation (Sino-Uranium), the China National Uranium Corporation (CNUC) and the Société des Mines d'Agelik, a Chinese prospecting company owned by the China Nuclear Engineering and Construction (Group) Corporation. The CNUC is developing two sites in the Agadez region of Niger, Teguidda and the smaller Madaouela. Production was scheduled to begin in 2010, though this is now threatened by rebel activity. The CNPC is currently exploring for oil in the Agadez region's Bilma and Tenere concessions.

DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

Rebel activity in Niger's resource-rich north has threatened the short-term development of its resource industry and has made it much more difficult for Chinese firms to operate in the region. A Tuareg-led rebel group, Le Mouvement des Nigériens pour la Justice (MNJ), is demanding an end to economic marginalization, environmental degradation and ethnic discrimination. Under pressure from the elusive rebels, the northern region of the country has reverted to military rule. While President Tandja has attempted to stifle all news coming out of the north, Niger's rebel movement has been effective in capitalizing upon modern communications technology as a medium for public relations [2].

Already, the rebels have already begun harassing Chinese companies, and the July kidnapping of a Sino-Uranium executive by the MNJ was intended as a warning to foreign mineral firms that their disregard for the environment and their present arrangements with the Niger government are unacceptable (Xinhua, July 7). (The executive was later released unharmed.) Rebels also attacked an armed supply convoy heading to a CNPC exploration camp in July, killing four soldiers. Following these incidents, the Chinese pulled out of their field operations to return under military escort

to Agadez.

The MNJ accuses China of supplying arms to Nigerien military operations in the north in exchange for mineral concessions. They also accuse the government of using mineral revenues to purchase military arms and equipment, including two Russian-made helicopter gunships. Niger's government denies the charges, and the Chinese Foreign Ministry maintains that it takes a "cautious and responsible approach" to arms exports, strictly observing "domestic laws and international obligations" [3]. Yet, rumors abound in West Africa of a Chinese military presence in the region; in January, the Nigeria's Defense Minister was forced to issue a public denial after reports of Chinese troops operating in the Niger Delta under contract from the Lagos government were published in a local newspaper (The Guardian [Nigeria], January 24).

FRENCH-CHINESE COMPETITION

Until recently, the French uranium company Areva had a virtual monopoly on uranium production since the material was first discovered in Niger in 1957. In early September, several Nigerien civil-society groups organized marches to demand Areva's departure from Niger for allegedly supporting the northern rebels, though no concrete proof was offered to support the charges. The leader of one of the groups involved in the protest suggested that Areva was hiring mercenaries to plant landmines (VOA, September 8). Concurrently, officials of the Niger government have accused Areva of plotting to frighten off their Chinese rivals in the uranium-rich Agadez region by financing MNJ attacks. Even the French government was pulled into the dispute, eventually offering resolution services as well as a team to demine northern Niger. After both the rebels and the French uranium miners denied the accusations of collaboration, Areva increased its payments to the Niger government and committed itself to improving environmental safety measures. It should be noted that Areva has hardly been immune to MNJ activities; on April 30, rebels attacked Areva's Imouraren exploration camp, killing one and wounding four (AFP, April 20). Areva was subsequently forced to halt operations in the area for a month.

Areva is also making efforts to enter China's nuclear development sector, but there are reports that China has recently cancelled plans for two Areva reactors to be built in Guangdong Province in favor of using domestic technology (though there is still the possibility that the Areva reactors might be relocated) (Reuters, September 20). France relies heavily on the Areva operations in Niger for uranium to supply its own reactors and nuclear weapons program. Without alternative sources of supply, France will use all of its influence to maintain its leading position in Niger's resource sector. Reflecting energy competition abroad, India has also suddenly emerged as a major competitor for undeveloped energy supplies in the West African region, though in Niger, China may have acted quickly to sideline India's offers to the Niger government (Times of India, September 23).

CONCLUSION

The recent international revival of interest in nuclear power has created an opportunity for Niger to break out of the neo-colonial legacy of French rule by broadening its trade and cooperation with countries like China. As Niger's Prime Minister Seyni Oumarou recently said of this shift in patrons, "Nothing is going to be as it was in Niger...Today the whole world is seeking to profit from the partnership with the Chinese and we should not isolate ourselves from that" (Reuters, August 1). Yet China's sense of urgency in locking up energy supplies makes it vulnerable to major disruptions from opposition groups, such as Niger's MNJ. Efforts to secure energy resources irrespective of market supply and demand threatens to destabilize global energy markets while perpetuating corrupt and undemocratic regimes that are able to offer protection to Chinese operations, thus leading China into a neo-colonial style relationship it has long tried to avoid in Africa.

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NOTES

1. Osumi, Yo, "World Energy Outlook, and Energy Security and Cooperation in Northeast Asia," presentation at IEA Conference, "The Korean Peninsula and Energy Security in Northeast Asia: Toward a Northeast Asian Energy Forum," November 27-28, 2006, available online at: http://www.iea.org/textbase/speech/2006/yo_neasia.pdf.
2. The MNJ posts information about itself at: <http://m-n-j.blogspot.com/>.
3. The statement from the Chinese Foreign Ministry is available online at: <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/gyzg/t339261.htm>.
