

# IAR

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS REVIEW



**SUMMER 2020 / XXVIII / 2**

- Prolific, Digital, and Violent: The Far-Right's Online "Republic of Letters"
- Which Side Are You On, Comrade? Potential for Convergent Protests across the People's Republic of China
- The Return of Foreign Terrorist Fighters: Opportunities for Chechnya and Dagestan to Quell Local Insurgencies
- China's Military Employment of Artificial Intelligence and Its Security Implications
- Implications for NATO: Latvia and the Russian Hybrid Warfare Threat
- A Talk With Tish: Leading With Integrity



VOLUME XXVIII / NUMBER 2 / SUMMER 2020

ADVISORS

---

**Christopher Kojm**

PROFESSOR OF PRACTICE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS  
The George Washington University

**Mike M. Mochizuki**

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS  
The George Washington University

**Peter Rollberg**

PROFESSOR OF SLAVIC LANGUAGES, FILM STUDIES, AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS;  
DIRECTOR, INSTITUTE FOR EUROPEAN, RUSSIAN, AND EURASIAN STUDIES  
The George Washington University

**Kimberly Thachuk, PhD**

PROFESSORIAL LECTURER  
The George Washington University

**Paul D. Williams**

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS  
The George Washington University

---

---

The International Affairs Review is a non-profit, student-run, peer-reviewed, academic journal published biannually in Washington, DC. It is an independent, graduate student-run publication sponsored by the Elliott School of International Affairs at the George Washington University.

Opinions expressed in International Affairs Review are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of International Affairs Review, the Elliott School of International Affairs, the George Washington University, or any other person or organization formally associated with International Affairs Review.

Editorial correspondence and submissions should be sent to the Editors-in-Chief. Submissions should include an abstract, the author's mailing address, telephone number, e-mail address, and a brief biographical statement. Articles should conform to Chicago Style guidelines, be 2500-5000 words, and should be submitted electronically as Microsoft Word documents or in a compatible file format. All submissions become the property of International Affairs Review, which accepts no responsibility for lost or damaged articles.

*International Affairs Review*  
1957 E Street, NW Suite 303K  
Washington, DC 20052  
E-mail: [iar@gwu.edu](mailto:iar@gwu.edu)  
Website: [www.iar-gwu.org](http://www.iar-gwu.org)

Rights and permissions to photocopy or otherwise reproduce any portion of this publication for circulation are granted only with the express, written consent of International Affairs Review. A restricted license for limited or personal use is granted to librarians and other users registered with the proper copyright authorities.

Cover Photo by Jad Limcaco on Unsplash

Copyright © 2020 International Affairs Review  
All Rights Reserved.

---

---

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Rebecca Giovannozzi

MANAGING EDITOR

Jacqueline Schultz

Wali Miller

SENIOR EDITORS

Diana Guan

Dayne Feehan

Rebecca Howe

Jesse Ramsdell

Eleanor Whitchurch

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Mehsum Basharat

Christopher Dickel

David Hetrick

Michelle Faverio

Roshni Shah

Joshua Glow

Breanna Krzyzak

Charley Lanter

Kristen Luck

Alexander Morales

Zareen Khan

INTERVIEW EDITOR

Jacqueline Schultz

LAYOUT EDITOR

Lydia Tissandier

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Christopher Estep

Jiayu Zhang

Alisa Tsaturov

Eli Patton

Joseph Kyle

# EDITORS' NOTE

---

2020 is the start of a new decade and presents with it an evermore interconnected world in disarray. The current pandemic, although universal in its distress, has divided governments by their response. The deadly virus has tested the resilience of states striving to protect their citizens against an unrelenting foe. The havoc wreaked by COVID-19 has also elevated the stature of conventional leaders, exposed regimes' tightening grip over society, and demonstrated the mounting perils of disinformation.

Our last issue asked that you read with an open mind, and enjoy essays shared by Elliott School graduate students. This issue is no different, but was produced in a radically different context. 2020 marks a year of transition where thoughtful scholarship must pave the way for changes in policy and the way government, industry, and academia operate.

Despite obstacles facing them, in the International Affairs Review's (IAR) Summer 2020 issue our peers were able to contextualize their studies, publish their work, and engage in further scholarship. The authors published here have actively engaged with the world around them by examining ongoing political issues that continue to shape governments, civil society, and daily life.

We would like to thank the IAR faculty advisors and the Elliott School of International Affairs for their continued support. We are also grateful to mentors and leaders, like Tish Long, who indicated a willingness to share their perspective and pay it forward. Additionally, we are especially grateful for our editorial staff whose flexibility, commitment, and hard work despite challenging circumstances continues to ensure that IAR is successful. Thank you to all who made this issue possible!

Rebecca Giovannozzi, *Editor-in-Chief*

Jacqueline Schultz, *Managing Editor*

Wali Miller, *Managing Editor*

---

# CONTENTS

---

- 1** Prolific, Digital, and Violent:  
The Far-Right’s Online “Republic of Letters”  
*Christopher Estep*
- 12** Which Side Are You On, Comrade?  
Potential for Convergent Protests across the  
People’s Republic of China  
*Eli Patton*
- 28** The Return of Foreign Terrorist Fighters:  
Opportunities for Chechnya and Dagestan to Quell  
Local Insurgencies  
*Joseph Kyle*
- 38** China’s Military Employment of Artificial  
Intelligence and Its Security Implications  
*Jiayu Zhang*
- 57** Implications for NATO: Latvia and the Russian  
Hybrid Warfare Threat  
*Alisa Tsaturov*
- 65** A Talk with Tish: Leading with Integrity  
*Jacqueline Schultz*
-

# Prolific, Digital, and Violent:

## The Far-Right's Online "Republic of Letters"

*Christopher Estep*

*Christopher Estep is a student at The George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs (ESIA), where he is pursuing a Master of Arts degree in Security Policy Studies with a concentration in U.S. National Security. Estep holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in History and Religion from Eastern Nazarene College. He currently serves as the Communications Specialist at the Center for a New American Security (CNAS), a bipartisan think tank in Washington, D.C. The views expressed in this article are his alone.*

### ABSTRACT

---

The publication of online manifestos has become a common element associated with far-right terrorist violence in the West. Perpetrators of extremist attacks produce and circulate written materials for inspiration, tactical instruction, and notoriety. This presents policymakers and media organizations with considerable analytical challenges. Each far-right text represents a constituent element within a growing body of extremist literature stewarded by a digitally interconnected community; situating texts in this way yields intriguing findings. This article examines the reception and circulation of four written texts, both printed and online, by the violent far-right: (1) William Luther Pierce's *The Turner Diaries*, (2) written works attributed to the White Wolves in Britain during the 1990s, (3) Anders Behring Breivik's 2011 manifesto, and (4) Christchurch attacker Brenton Tarrant's 2019 livestream and online manifesto. An analysis of contemporaneous responses to and critical examination of these four texts finds that the presence of undisputed authorship, extensive media attention, historical motifs, multiple references to other extremist works, and the use of creative literary devices all play critical roles in shaping how adherents to violent far-right ideology view the "success" of extremist texts. In light of these findings, this article concludes with recommendations for Western media organizations, policymakers, and the academic community to better address the challenges posed by the far-right's growing body of digital literature.

---

### INTRODUCTION

Written manifestos have become increasingly characteristic of planned, far-right terrorist attacks. The authors draw inspiration from across a spectrum of far-right ideologies, and commit attacks around the world in various countries.<sup>1</sup>

Each piece of violent far-right literature presents media organizations and governments with a challenge. Perceiving these manifestos as individual written materials underscores the extent to which online far-right communities are interconnected.<sup>2</sup> Attackers who publish far-right texts in connection with acts of violence seek ongoing recognition even after their attacks have ended.<sup>3</sup> This article analyzes four case studies in far-right literature to identify key elements in an “influential” manifesto in light of the challenges that governments and media face. Finally, this article concludes with recommendations for better addressing and analyzing this growing corpus of violent literature.

## **DEFINING AND ASSESSING THE SUCCESS OF FAR-RIGHT MANIFESTOS**

The body of online far-right literature grows with the circulation of each new manifesto that is published in association with a violent far-right terrorist attack. Unlike filmed content that is occasionally produced by attackers, written materials feature the use of literary devices in addition to historical references, instructional elements, and detailed ideological declarations.<sup>4</sup> Since the internet has broadened, amplified, and accelerated existing systems of communication (a phenomenon described as the “digital republic”), assessing the “success” of far-right manifestos requires an accounting for each text’s ongoing influence among online communities.<sup>5</sup> The most “successful” far-right manifestos provide fodder for subsequent terrorist-authors to cite and draw inspiration, as well as attract media coverage. Over time, the violent far-right has successfully constructed a violent republic of letters, and these shared citations and references can reflect patterns of influence and inspiration. Furthermore, the scale of media attention to a particular manifesto in the aftermath of an associated attack constitutes an additional measure of that document’s success, even as media coverage is a clear goal of many far-right terrorist-authors. Subsequent portions of this article use four case studies to identify several interchangeable features of influential far-right manifestos: (1) clear authorship, (2) media attention, (3) historical motifs, (4) multiple references to other far-right works, and (5) creative literary devices. Importantly, many influential pieces of far-right literature may feature only a few of these elements, but not all. Analysis of the case studies finds that instructional material contributes to the impact of far-right literature, but only to the extent that it may stimulate increased media attention. For this reason, instructional elements do not receive consideration as a primary source of success.

## **FAR-RIGHT MANIFESTOS AND THE MEDIA**

Similar to written materials produced by violent adherents from other extremist



movements, manifestos have presented media organizations with considerable ethical challenges in the wake of far-right terrorist attacks. Many terrorism experts have expressed concerns that media outlets may inadvertently facilitate future acts of violence by publishing far-right manifestos and thus providing their authors with larger audiences. As a result, some experts call for publishers to exercise greater caution when considering whether to post these texts online.<sup>6</sup> The 2014 case of Elliot Rodger, represented an inflection point in this debate. Rodger's violent acts resulted in the deaths of six people, and his 141-page manifesto helped provide the so-called "involuntary celibate" (or "incel") movement with newly-written underpinnings.<sup>7</sup> In response to widespread controversy following The New York Times' publication of Rodger's manifesto and filmed content, Margaret Sullivan, the outlet's public editor, wrote that "the idea of playing down a killer's 'manifesto' is, at the very least, worth consideration, on a case-by-case basis."<sup>8</sup> Amid contemporary debates about how media outlets can contextualize texts' ideological elements without including instructional components, the scale and rigor of press coverage remain crucial determinants of far-right literature's "success."

## **FAR-RIGHT MANIFESTOS AS INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS**

The incorporation of instructional elements into extremist manifestos long predates the beginning of the age of the internet and transcends ideological motivation. Since before the twentieth century, written materials produced by organizations and individuals have contained detailed information about how to commit acts of violence in service to a variety of extremist causes, including attacks within the United States.<sup>9</sup> Jihadist publications produced by Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria have also drawn attention to their inclusion of violent instructional content.<sup>10</sup> However, the authors of violent far-right literature, who are often attackers themselves, have combined the speed of the internet and the inclusion of detailed instructions in their written works to achieve new levels of notoriety. Contemporary far-right manifestos often contain information about assembling explosives, selecting targets, and even acquiring requisite financial support for attacks. Notable scholar, J.M. Berger, describes Norwegian white supremacist Anders Behring Breivik's manifesto, as combining "operational and ideological elements" and thus being capable of producing "a much longer and more intense news cycle."<sup>11</sup> Therefore, including detailed instructions about committing future acts of ideologically motivated violence can play a key role in the "successful" dissemination of far-right literature.

## THE FAR-RIGHT'S VIOLENT "REPUBLIC OF LETTERS"

The past several decades have witnessed the rise of a violent far-right corpus using the internet as a preeminent medium for content-sharing and communication.<sup>12</sup> Digitalization demonstrates that extremist literature has evolved significantly from William Luther Pierce's *The Turner Diaries*. The *Diaries* are texts attributed to the White Wolves, a supposed far-right group suspected for a series of bombings in Britain during 1999. From Pierce's *The Turner Diaries* to Christchurch attacker Brenton Tarrant's 2019 online manifesto, works of far-right literature have become a contributing factor to and a result of violent far-right extremism. Considered together, *The Turner Diaries*, Anders Behring Breivik's 2011 manifesto, and Tarrant's 2019 live stream and posted manifesto, provide critical examples of the factors that contribute to far-right writing's "success" or "failure." The ambiguity surrounding the actual authorship of writings attributed to the White Wolves consigned those works to relative obscurity. Meanwhile, clear authorship, media attention, historical motifs, multiple references to other far-right works, and creative literary devices all ensured that texts produced by Pierce, Breivik, and Tarrant became a part of the canon of influential far-right literature.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF *THE TURNER DIARIES*

Long before the popular use of the internet, *The Turner Diaries*, a 1978 far-right dystopian novel by William Luther Pierce, achieved remarkable heights of influence for both the violent and nonviolent far-right. It remains one of the most successful works of far-right literature in history. While individuals like Anders Breivik and Brenton Tarrant published their works in direct connection with violent attacks, Pierce became a leading organizational figure for the far-right in the latter quarter of the twentieth century. Still, *The Turner Diaries*, an anti-Semitic fictional portrayal of a white supremacist group's violent overthrow of the U.S. government, continues to be "a hit with the U.S. violent right," as well as far-right attackers and their manifestos around the world.<sup>13</sup>

The depiction of a fictional diary, a literary device that Berger describes as "epistolary fiction," constitutes one of *The Turner Diaries*' most distinguishing textual features and a compelling element behind its enormous success.<sup>14</sup> That vehicle, Berger writes, allows readers to "attribute awkward or crude language to the narrator rather than the author, and the lack of polish can even enhance the feeling of authenticity."<sup>15</sup> Even mainstream works of literature employ this method, including Jack London's *The Iron Heel* (which may have even inspired Pierce to write *The Turner Diaries*), C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters*, and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. In addition to its unique literary scope, *The Turner Diaries*' dystopian aesthetic also helps to explain its influence

for the violent far-right.<sup>16</sup> To this end, Berger argues that “dystopian fiction is a natural vehicle for political and especially extremist propaganda.”<sup>17</sup> Pierce, of course, wrote prolifically following the publication of *The Turner Diaries*.<sup>18</sup> The creative literary elements in that particular work, however, made it a unique source of ideological and textual inspiration for violent far-right figures past and present.<sup>19</sup>

The publication of *The Turner Diaries* represented a turning point in the history of violent far-right literature. The book has inspired readers that are responsible for dozens of far-right terrorist attacks and hate crimes. Most notable might be Timothy McVeigh, whose 1995 truck bombing in Oklahoma City killed over 150 people.<sup>20</sup> In some cases, an alleged attacker’s possession of *The Turner Diaries* has even helped identify or establish the suspect’s ideological motivations.<sup>21</sup> While William Luther Pierce does not fit the conventional mold of a far-right terrorist, his written work merits consideration as an impactful piece of literature for the violent far-right due to its clear authorship and particularly creative literary elements.

## **THE WHITE WOLVES: A CASE STUDY IN “UNSUCCESSFUL” FAR-RIGHT LITERATURE**

A 1994 “blueprint for terror” allegedly circulated by the White Wolves represents a case study in “unsuccessful” far-right literature. This work’s relative unpopularity stands in stark contrast to the widespread circulation of *The Turner Diaries*. The fifteen-page document included recognizable thematic elements from the far-right’s broader body of written texts, most notably an emphasis on historical motifs.<sup>22</sup> The group’s writings even reflected a transatlantic consciousness regarding far-right figures and activities, as manifested by the dedication of one particular document to American neo-Nazi Robert Jay Matthews.<sup>23</sup> However, the written materials attributed to the White Wolves receive hardly any attention from violent far-right figures and texts today, especially when compared to *The Turner Diaries* or Anders Breivik’s manifesto.<sup>24</sup>

Three elements contributed to the failure of the White Wolves’ writings to inspire subsequent acts of far-right violence or literature. First, the writings themselves did not actually describe the authors in explicit ideological terms like “fascist” or “neo-Nazi.”<sup>25</sup> Second, while many contemporary observers attributed a collection of far-right writings in 1990s Britain to the White Wolves, experts have failed to conclusively determine the authorship of the materials. Finally, the very existence of the White Wolves organization remains contested, thus complicating any subsequent efforts by the violent far-right to situate the texts attributed to the group within a firm interpretation.<sup>26</sup> The ambiguity surrounding the writings’ exact authorial and ideological origins has constricted subsequent attention to these texts in violent far-right literature.

From this case study, it becomes clear that far-right writings require distinct attribution and near-explicit ideological expression to shape subsequent literature. Furthermore, these texts highlight the importance of exercising caution when making real-time attempts to connect new far-right writings and suspects in violent attacks.<sup>27</sup>

## **ANDERS BREIVIK AND 2083: A BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESSFUL FAR-RIGHT MANIFESTOS**

If *The Turner Diaries* represented a turning point in the history of far-right literature, the 2011 online publication and subsequent ideological influence of Anders Behring Breivik's *2083: A European Declaration of Independence* signified the beginning of that history's digital chapter. Breivik, a militant far-right chauvinist, committed a series of bombings and shootings in Norway that resulted in the violent deaths of over 70 people. While his attacks prompted widespread condemnation, Breivik's 1,500-page online manifesto has become a potent source of inspiration for subsequent acts of far-right violence.<sup>28</sup> In fact, before committing his attacks, Breivik stated that he intended such acts of violence to bring attention to his written work.<sup>29</sup>

In the age of the internet, *2083* represents a clear example of "success" for violent far-right literature due to four factors that have contributed to the subsequent influence of Breivik's manifesto for far-right communities online. First, the author maintained a robust network of like-minded Internet users, many of whom received the document directly from Breivik in the minutes before his attack.<sup>30</sup> This method of transmission underscored Breivik's identity as the author of the text. Additionally, Breivik's manifesto included references to the works of other notable figures within the far-right community, as well as pseudo-historical motifs and literary devices familiar to many far-right readers.<sup>31</sup> Finally, *2083* contained a mixture of instructional and ideological elements that have proven compelling for subsequent readers, including would-be attacker Christopher Hasson among others.<sup>32</sup> These elements vaulted Breivik's manifesto and his deeds to such heights that many online users refer to the author as "Saint Breivik" and subsequent violent attacks as "going Breivik."<sup>33</sup> This durable ideological and instructional influence has ensured a place for Breivik's manifesto as a leading text among the violent far-right.

## **BRENTON TARRANT, *THE GREAT REPLACEMENT*, AND FAR-RIGHT LITERARY IRONY**

While Anders Breivik's 2011 manifesto represents a clear example of influential far-right literature in the Internet Age, the document does not constitute the only successful path for violent far-right writing online. In

early 2019, a gunman later identified as Brenton Tarrant, armed with lethal weapons and a Facebook Live connection, attacked a mosque and a Muslim community center in Christchurch, New Zealand. Tarrant killed over fifty individuals. Authorities and news reports subsequently attributed a 74-page white supremacist manifesto to the attacker. The online document, titled *The Great Replacement*, resembles other recognizable far-right writings in its ideological expressions, references to other far-right figures and texts, and contestable historical motifs.<sup>34</sup> However, widespread coverage of the text's highlighted the use of "shitposting," which is described as "the act of posting trollish and usually ironic content designed to derail a conversation or elicit a strong reaction from people who aren't in on the joke." This suggests that far-right literature's pathway to notoriety has widened.<sup>35</sup>

Tarrant's use of "shitposting" as a literary device within his manifesto merits further scrutiny as a textual element that may have contributed to its widespread circulation in the aftermath of the attack. Tarrant's references to controversial public figures such as Swedish online entertainer PewDiePie and American conservative provocateur Candace Owens reflects an apparent anticipation of the widespread attention that would fixate upon these seemingly tangential references.<sup>36</sup> *The Great Replacement* represents an early example of how digitally native literary methods like "shitposting" can position a far-right manifesto for widespread online circulation and amplified media coverage following a terrorist attack. In an increasingly digital future, observers should anticipate subsequent attempts by far-right attackers, perhaps as well as perpetrators with other ideological motivations, to replicate Tarrant's impact using a similar form of violent irony.<sup>37</sup>

## **ADDRESSING THE FAR-RIGHT'S ONLINE "REPUBLIC OF LETTERS"**

Today's growing body of violent literature- past and present, online and offline-present simultaneous opportunities and challenges for those who seek to better understand and prevent planned acts of far-right violence. The success of works with clear authors such as Anders Breivik and Brenton Tarrant shows how the authors of violent far-right texts can use contested historical interpretations and creative writing devices to considerable effect. These works can provide crucial insights into how violent far-right individuals draw inspiration, form communities of thought, share instructional information, and ultimately seek to shape public narratives in the aftermath of an attack. However, this article has highlighted the ethical dilemmas for media outlets when it comes to covering far-right manifestos, the difficulty in distinguishing between ideological and instructional elements in these texts, and the interpretive challenges posed

by the use of new literary devices. Concerned journalists, policymakers, and scholars can learn from past examples of both “successful” and “unsuccessful” far-right manifestos in order to better understand and address future products of the far-right “republic of letters.”

In a period of increased debate over how media outlets should treat far-right manifestos in television, print, and online coverage, journalists and their editors must devote increased attention and resources to the online presentation of far-right texts. The sheer size and density of online far-right communities require that established media organizations exercise greater caution when publishing far-right writings online.<sup>38</sup> Some experts have argued that media outlets must never post attackers’ manifestos.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, others have simply called for the press to “reconsider the standard” for publication.<sup>40</sup> Media outlets should ultimately distinguish between ideological and instructional elements in far-right texts and, where possible, publish excerpted manifestos which contextualize their ideological elements without providing their instructional components. The past several years have witnessed a veritable revolution in creative online storytelling, giving established media outlets considerable capabilities for discernment when presenting far-right manifestos.<sup>41</sup>

Published manifestos allow policymakers and counterterrorism experts a warped glimpse into the worldview of violent far-right attackers. The ideological and instructional nature of many far-right writings, can complicate Western governments’ efforts to prevent future attacks, respond to imminent threats, and erode violent extremism. Manifestos’ instructional elements can occasionally distract policymakers from the violent ideologies which incubate these texts in the first place.<sup>42</sup> When an individual commits an act of far-right terrorism and spreads an associated text, governments must pay heed to the manifesto’s instructional elements and still devote considerable resources to undermining the violent ideology at its roots.

To better understand the expanding universe of far-right literary devices, academic communities interested in terrorism and the far-right should create more opportunities for scholars from the humanities disciplines—especially English literature—to participate in research, teaching, writing, and conference presentations traditionally conducted by experts in terrorism studies and other fields. The impact of published manifestos by Anders Breivik and Brenton Tarrant, among others, demonstrates that the creators of violent far-right writings use both disputed historical interpretations and creative literary devices when crafting their texts.<sup>43</sup> While the number of undergraduate students studying in the humanities has declined considerably, especially at elite liberal arts colleges and leading research universities, scholars from the humanities disciplines could still wield sharp intellectual tools when attempting to understand the substantial and stylistic construction of far-right texts. Furthermore, identifying new areas in terrorism studies where the humanities

disciplines could make greater contributions may also broaden the appeal of those disciplines for future scholarship.<sup>44</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The most “successful” violent far-right manifestos have drawn from a variety of features: media attention, references to other ideological works, and creative literary elements, among others. Each new contribution to this growing body of violent literature presents media organizations and governments with interpretive challenges, especially when it comes to the far-right literature’s blend of ideological and instructional materials. Far-right attacker-authors do not only draw from past works when constructing their texts; as the case of Brenton Tarrant demonstrates, far-right manifestos today feature new—and even more challenging—literary innovations. In the end, media organizations, Western governments, and scholars should understand this far-right republic of letters online as such, and devote increased, nuanced attention to interpreting its most influential texts.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 This article will use the term “far-right” in reference to what the Anti-Defamation League describes as “political, social, and religious movements that exist outside of and are more radical than mainstream conservatism.” See Anti-Defamation League, “Extreme Right/Radical Right/Far Right,” accessed December 4, 2019, <https://www.adl.org/resources/glossary-terms/extreme-right-radical-right-far-right>
- 2 This article will consistently punctuate the term “success” with quotation marks, in order to clearly differentiate between the views of the author and those of the far-right community toward far-right manifestos.
- 3 J. M. Berger, “The Dangerous Spread of Extremist Manifestos,” *The Atlantic*, February 26, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/02/christopher-hasson-was-inspired-breivik-manifesto/583567>
- 4 Christopher C. Harmon and Randall G. Bowdish, *The Terrorist Argument: Modern Advocacy and Propaganda* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2018), 15.
- 5 Peter Burke, “The Republic of Letters as a Communication System: An Essay in Periodization,” *Media History* 18, no. 3–4 (2012): 395–6, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688804.2012.721956>
- 6 Ari N. Schulman, “What Mass Killers Want—And How to Stop Them,” *The Wall Street Journal*, November 8, 2013, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/what-mass-killers-want8212and-how-to-stop-them-1383957068?tesla=y>
- 7 Berger, “The Dangerous Spread of Extremist Manifestos.”
- 8 Margaret Sullivan, “Giving Killers Coverage, Not Platforms,” *The New York Times*, May 31, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/01/public-editor/giving-killers-coverage-not-platforms.html>
- 9 Kenneth Anderson, “The History of Do-It-Yourself Weapons and Explosives Manuals in America,” *Lawfare*, June 21, 2016, accessed October 22, 2019, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/history-do-it-yourself-weapons-and-explosives-manuals-america>; Alastair Reed and Haroro J. Ingram, “Exploring the Role of Instructional Material in AQAP’s *Inspire* and ISIS’ *Rumiyah*,” paper presented at the *European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC) Conference on Online Terrorist Propaganda, The Hague, Netherlands, April 11–12, 2017*, 3, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-documents/exploring-role-of-instructional-material-in-aqaps-inspire-and-isis-rumiyah>; and Blake Hounshell, “What Did

- the Oslo Killer Want?," *Foreign Policy*, July 23, 2011, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/07/23/what-did-the-oslo-killer-want>
- 10 Reed and Ingram, "Exploring the Role of Instructional Material in AQAP's *Inspire* and ISIS' *Rumiyah*," 15.
  - 11 Berger, "The Dangerous Spread of Extremist Manifestos."
  - 12 The website Stormfront.org, which emerged as early as the 1990s and once boasted over 100,000 users, serves as just one example of the sheer size of the online far-right community. Harmon and Bowdish, *The Terrorist Argument*, 14.
  - 13 Ibid., 116.
  - 14 J.M. Berger, "The Turner Legacy: The Storied Origins and Enduring Impact of White Nationalism's Deadly Bible," *The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague* 7, no. 8 (September 2016): 14, <http://dx.doi.org/10.19165/2016.1.11>.
  - 15 Ibid.
  - 16 Ibid., 19.
  - 17 Ibid., 38.
  - 18 Ibid., 9.
  - 19 Notably, Anders Breivik's 2011 manifesto does not explicitly reference *The Turner Diaries*. However, *2083: A European Declaration of Independence* includes an 82-day diary which demonstrates the widespread influence of the epistolary form for far-right literature. See Berger, "The Turner Legacy," 32; and Will Englund, "In Diary, Norwegian 'Crusader' Details Months of Preparation for Attacks," *The Washington Post*, July 24, 2011, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/in-diary-norwegian-crusader-details-months-of-preparation-for-attacks/2011/07/24/gIQACYnUXI\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/in-diary-norwegian-crusader-details-months-of-preparation-for-attacks/2011/07/24/gIQACYnUXI_story.html)
  - 20 Berger, "The Turner Legacy," 3, 30.
  - 21 Ann Larabee, *The Wrong Hands: Popular Weapons Manuals and Their Historic Challenges to a Democratic Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 156.
  - 22 Paul Stott, "The White Wolves: The Terrorist Manifesto That Wasn't?," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 13, no. 4 (2019): 57, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26756703>
  - 23 Ibid.
  - 24 Ibid., 59.
  - 25 Ibid., 57.
  - 26 Ibid.
  - 27 Ibid., 60.
  - 28 Berger, "The Dangerous Spread of Extremist Manifestos."
  - 29 Isaac Stanley-Becker, "'They Hate White Males': A Norwegian Mass Murderer Inspired the Coast Guard Officer Accused of Plotting Terror, Feds Say," *The Washington Post*, February 21, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/02/21/they-hate-white-males-norwegian-mass-murderer-inspired-coast-guard-officer-plotting-terror-feds-say/>
  - 30 Ibid.
  - 31 Ramon Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism: Global Patterns, Motivations and Prevention*, Springer Briefs in Criminology (New York, NY: Springer, 2012), 56–7.
  - 32 Stanley-Becker, "'They Hate White Males'" and Blake Hounshell, "What Did the Oslo Killer Want?"
  - 33 Berger, "The Dangerous Spread of Extremist Manifestos."
  - 34 Jane Coaston, "The New Zealand Shooter's Manifesto Shows How White Nationalist Rhetoric Spreads," *Vox*, March 18, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/identities/2019/3/15/18267163/new-zealand-shooting-christchurch-white-nationalism-racism-language>



- 35 While the long-term reception of Tarrant's manifesto remains unclear, the early reception of *The Great Replacement*, Tarrant's alleged use of Facebook Live to broadcast his attack, and the global media's intense attention to his methods all suggest that Tarrant's manifesto will shape future far-right attacks and writings. In the immediate aftermath of the Christchurch attacks, one 8chan user described Tarrant as "the next Breivik." See Robert Evans, "Shitposting, Inspirational Terrorism, and the Christchurch Mosque Massacre," Bellingcat, March 15, 2019, <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/rest-of-world/2019/03/15/shitposting-inspirational-terrorism-and-the-christchurch-mosque-massacre/>; For Lorenz's definition of "shitposting," see Taylor Lorenz, "The Shooter's Manifesto Was Designed to Troll," *The Atlantic*, March 15, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2019/03/the-shooters-manifesto-was-designed-to-troll/585058/>
- 36 For a thoughtful consideration of challenges "shitposting" poses for media coverage, see Evans, "Shitposting, Inspirational Terrorism, and the Christchurch Mosque Massacre." For analysis situating Tarrant's manifesto within the violent far-right's attention-seeking efforts online, see Coaston, "The New Zealand Shooter's Manifesto Shows How White Nationalist Rhetoric Spreads."
- 37 The future of online extremism does not belong to the far-right alone. According to Harmon and Bowdish, "in exploring the possibilities of the personal computer and the World Wide Web, ecology militants are blazing their own unique trails through the thickets of modernity." See Harmon and Bowdish, *The Terrorist Argument*, 109; and Coaston, "The New Zealand Shooter's Manifesto Shows How White Nationalist Rhetoric Spreads." The future of online extremism does not belong to the far-right alone. According to Harmon and Bowdish, "in exploring the possibilities of the personal computer and the World Wide Web, ecology militants are blazing their own unique trails through the thickets of modernity." See Harmon and Bowdish, *The Terrorist Argument*, 109.
- 38 Ariel Koch, "The New Crusaders: Contemporary Extreme Right Symbolism and Rhetoric," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 11, no. 5 (2017): 14, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26297928>; and Gabriel Weimann, "Lone Wolves in Cyberspace," *Journal of Terrorism Research* 3, no. 2 (2012): 76.
- 39 Schulman, "What Mass Killers Want—And How to Stop Them."
- 40 Berger, "The Dangerous Spread of Extremist Manifestos."
- 41 For an example of "bold" digital innovation by traditional media outlets, see Rebecca Greenfield, "What The New York Times's 'Snow Fall' Means to Online Journalism's Future," *The Atlantic*, December 20, 2012, <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/12/new-york-times-snow-fall-feature/320253/>
- 42 This particular challenge has received more attention in the context of written texts produced by violent Islamic extremists. See Reed and Ingram, "Exploring the Role of Instructional Material in AQAP's *Inspire* and ISIS' *Rumiyah*," 15.
- 43 Even contemporary far-right literature maintains a fascination with pseudo-historical motifs. For a thorough examination of how Anders Breivik's manifesto, for example, highlighted the online "revitalization of the crusader image," see Koch, "The New Crusaders."
- 44 As the number of conferred graduate degrees in the humanities continues to trend downward, increased interdisciplinary work between terrorism scholars and humanities scholars could yield broader benefits for both. See American Academy of Arts and Sciences, "Undergraduate and Graduate Education," accessed November 20, 2019, <https://www.humanitiesindicators.org/content/indicatorDoc.aspx?i=9>; and Benjamin Schmidt, "The Humanities Are in Crisis," *The Atlantic*, August 23, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/08/the-humanities-face-a-crisis-of-confidence/567565/45>
- Ibid.

# Which Side Are You On, Comrade?

## Potential for Convergent Protests across the People's Republic of China

*Eli Patton*

*Eli Patton has been studying China for nearly two decades ever since his first encounter with the writings of Master Kong (Confucius). He is most interested in how the rise of China will impact great power politics in the twenty-first century, especially relating to global governance and climate change policy. Eli has traveled extensively in China and lived in Asia for more than five years. He feels a deep connection to Chinese cultures and languages. Mr. Patton is currently living and working in the Washington, D.C. area, with present research focused on the environmental impacts of the Belt and Road Initiative.*

### ABSTRACT

---

The Communist Party of China (CCP) has ruled from its palaces in Beijing for seventy years, but that does not mean that their rule for another seventy is inevitable. The Party faces serious challenges not only to its legitimacy, but also its own psyche, its soul. The plight of environmental pollution has spurred ever more citizens to protest year by year, often violently. At the same time, much of the Party's legitimacy is drawn from its image as having successfully modernized and industrialized a once poor country. Yet, should this economic prosperity run out, can the Party find another way to win support from the people?

Every Chinese ruling organization for the last two-thousand odd years has had to maintain its control over the "mandate of heaven" (the divine right to rule), or force being replaced with a different administration. Xi Jinping and his allies within the Party are staring into a stark mirror: one that is ever changing, and growing ever more perilous. Can they do what it takes to continually renew the Party and its mandate in the face of social, environmental, economic, and even existential threats? This article argues that social tensions, environmental stresses, and economic downturn could severely undermine the Party's legitimacy in the eyes of the population, and – over time – could even threaten the continued rule of the CCP.

---

### INTRODUCTION

The Communist Party of China (CCP) is currently facing numerous challenges to its continued rule as the country's legitimate government. Political scientist

Bruce Dickson dubs this crossroads a “dictator’s dilemma,” as the more they work to tighten their grasp, the more people will slip through their fingers, as authoritarianism can inflame underlying tensions and rebellious sentiment.<sup>1</sup> These existential threats to the Party’s rule include societal, economic and environmental discontent. The Party is clearly aware of the threats: in Xi Jinping’s first-ever speech as General Secretary, he declared that “the whole Party must be vigilant” against acts that reduce their legitimacy in the eyes of the people.<sup>2</sup> According to the scholar Minxin Pei, the CCP has long worked to achieve “authoritarian resilience,” to which he states there are three main tactics: “refined repression, economic statism, and political cooptation.”<sup>3</sup> To date, it has been through these coercive methods that the Party has survived, but has the tide now turned against the Party? Will economic, environmental, and social degradation lead to all-out revolt? Can Xi Jinping manage to salvage a status quo with the Party still holding the reins of power?

This paper argues that there are three main factors of unrest among the Chinese populace that threaten the continued rule of the CCP: social tensions, environmental stresses, and economic downturn. The paper first introduces the reader to the contextual map of how the CCP arrived to where it is now. Then an outline of the threats is followed by a short description of three potential scenarios should any of the above threats escalate or intensify. Finally, the paper seeks to explain the existential threat that the Party poses to itself and proposes possible future visions for China.

## **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Threats to the Party’s legitimacy are not recent phenomena, and the Party has long worked to mitigate such threats and stay in power. For example, following the disasters of the Great Leap Forward (1958-62) and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-76), both the Party and the nation were severely damaged. Thus, in 1978, when Deng Xiaoping assumed the mantle of paramount leader following the death of Chairman Mao Zedong, the Party stood at an inflection point. Deng aimed to rekindle the Party’s relationship with the masses. Doing so would mean taking actions to improve the lives of the hundreds of millions of peasant farmers. To win stomachs, Deng prescribed economic reforms. To win hearts, he defended the core of CCP ideology, the Four Cardinal Principles (“the socialist road, dictatorship of the proletariat, leadership by CCP, Marxism-Leninism and Mao Thought”).<sup>4</sup> To win minds, he prescribed the strengthening of state institutions and “limits on the authority of the Party.”<sup>5</sup> Another crucial component prescribed was the orderly transition of power.

Yet despite best efforts, Deng’s coalition experienced continual struggle. During his leadership, and that of his successors, the Party found little unity.

Instead, reform was rather sporadic and contradictory. Deng was forced to come to terms with the fact that most Party members and peasants were tired of upheaval: they favored the stability of gradual reforms over the “big bang” style of revolutions of the past.<sup>6</sup> Thus, in the words of a Chinese saying attributed to Deng, the CCP “crossed the river by feeling the stones” – results were frequently two steps forward and one step back.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, when Deng retired in 1992, the Party and the nation had come a long way from the cold communist winters of yore. He had accumulated enough power to hand-pick not only his successors, but also the successors to his successors.<sup>8</sup> And since the 1980s, his mandate of term limits worked to force the Party to care about its own future.<sup>9</sup> Harmony, or at least acquiescence, was a precept of governance.

For two decades, this system of joint rule and retirement served to prevent ideologues or radicals from seizing the reins and keeping hold of them. However, it eventually failed due to the political weakness of President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao (both in office from 2003 to 2013), both of whom lacked significant support other than that they were chosen by Deng himself. The rise of Xi Jinping represented the end of the Deng era and a return to personalized strongman rule similar to that of Mao Zedong, Chiang Kai-shek, and Yuan Shikai. He has no heir. In governance, Xi has placed himself at the top of new “Leading Small Groups (LSG)” which act almost as cabinet positions, and in doing so, the “Chairman of everything”<sup>10</sup> has extended his power downward into the inner workings of the Chinese government.<sup>11</sup> While this does allow him ultimate authority, it also places squarely on his shoulders the ultimate responsibility for the outcome of the CCP’s struggle to maintain legitimacy.

## **KEY INTERNAL THREATS TO CHINA’S POLITICAL FUTURE**

Today’s China is one of glaring contradictions and drastic inequity. It is a China where the people on the whole believe their immediate future is a better one<sup>12</sup>, but it is also a China where a consensus is building that corruption among local Party cadre – a major source of discontent – is also increasing.<sup>13</sup> In a nationwide survey, results showed a roughly 17 percent disparity in trust between local and central government, with Beijing decidedly more popular.<sup>14</sup> The same survey showed that public trust in civil servants across the country was almost 30 percent lower than in central officials.<sup>15</sup> The unrest is very real: “mass incidents” of protest “surged from 10,000 in 1994 to 74,000 in 2004, to more than 120,000 in 2008.”<sup>16</sup> What is worse is that when the government reacts to opposition, it can further inflame the issue. For example, protests in Zhejiang province in 2005 escalated symmetrically with repression tactics by the government as the plight of the protestors became more visible and the participants became more implacable.<sup>17</sup>

Since the nationwide democracy movement and crackdown of 1989, localized protests have not spread across the country in any sort of wave, but embers of discontent have nevertheless remained among some of the populace. Currently, there exists a possibility for the disintegration of the social fabric. Growing pollution and the threat of associated natural disasters threaten to mobilize wider protest. An urban-rural economic gulf is widening, while growth everywhere is slowing. These grievances, if they grow and are harnessed by protest leaders, could become very real concerns to not only Xi Jinping, but the entire CCP itself. Potential outcomes could include widespread protests, resulting in another vicious Tiananmen-style crackdown. Worst of all, the people's faith in the Party has been compromised.<sup>18</sup> Any action or inaction that further rocks enough of the population's faith in the Party could be the straw that breaks the camel's back, sending China into an uncertain, chaotic future.

## **THREAT #1: SOCIETAL TENSION AND IDEOLOGICAL DRIFT**

The Party's rhetorical claim to legitimacy is often based on its past achievements: whether that be wartime actions, post-war land reforms, or even the opening-up reforms.<sup>19</sup> However, the Party's legitimacy has in recent years been threatened by three interrelated phenomena: the population's distrust in the local officials that represent the Party; rising expectations and increasing "rights consciousness" among the population; and its own ideological drift from its core values.

The population's distrust in local officials -who, for most, are the primary point of contact with the Party- has proven to be disruptive to the Party's legitimacy among the populace. While more than 90 percent of the nation believes that the system of government itself is "very trustworthy,"<sup>20</sup> there is a "local legitimacy deficit,"<sup>21</sup> with trust in local leaders at only 58.9 percent.<sup>22</sup> Proclamations and regulations from Beijing are often ignored due to simple corruption or lack of funding and enforcement.<sup>23</sup> Often, villagers' only resort is to fight for what Beijing had promised them, described by Kevin O'Brien as "rightful resistance."<sup>24</sup> As far back as the 1990s, violence between farmers and Party cadres has sometimes escalated to the point that "even national leaders were worried that local power holders were 'driving the peasantry toward rebellion.'"<sup>25</sup> Popular and widespread discontent with corrupt or inept local authorities - or those that are perceived as such - could undermine the CCP's legitimacy.

At the same time, the Party has created structures that have increased the population's expectations of what the government should provide, and the personal rights they should uphold. In 1987, the Chinese government began to allow the people to experiment with democracy and direct elections

on the local level by way of the Organic Law of Village Committees.<sup>26</sup> At the beginning, this may have seemed like a nuisance to the average Chinese peasant; however, over time, it has grown, and these newly enfranchised voters have “gradually mobilized.”<sup>27</sup> Today, these elections are “semi-competitive” with “more candidates than seats” up for election.<sup>28</sup> Secret ballots are now used in the overwhelming majority of cases.<sup>29</sup> By 2002, voter turnout for local elections reached as high as 90 percent, with almost all of rural Chinese citizens participating in village elections.<sup>30</sup>

As access to such civil rights has grown, “rights consciousness” demands to the government are also growing.<sup>31</sup> Educational attainment in China is exploding upward. In 2016 alone, Chinese universities enrolled over 7 million new domestic students, which represents a huge increase over averages from the previous decade (compared to around 1 million in 2000 and around 5 million in 2009).<sup>32</sup> Trends toward a more rules-based society (authoritative legal systems, higher education rates, more internationalization, open local elections, etc.) may have led the growing Chinese middle class to a state of “informed disenchantment” whereby they feel the Party is lagging behind their expectations – within the Party there is rule *by* law, not rule *of* law.<sup>33</sup>

Many scholars argue that there has been a loss of popular faith in the Party in recent years, stemming from a “values vacuum” whereby its version of Communism is no longer true Communism.<sup>34</sup> To proponents of this argument, the CCP is losing the ideological war by ceasing to have a coherent ideology at all.<sup>35</sup> In the 1980s, Deng Xiaoping recognized an earlier iteration of this as the “Three Beliefs Crisis” in which the masses had a crisis of faith in socialism, Marxism, and the Party.<sup>36</sup> When Deng Xiaoping argued that any cat that catches mice is a good cat – meaning that any economy that works is a good economy – and that poverty was not socialism, both were a direct attack on Communist ideology.<sup>37</sup> Under Mao, Deng was purged as a “Capitalist Roader” – or, someone who believed that socialism could include markets.<sup>38</sup> However, after Mao’s death, Deng’s rule of the Party saw Maoist thought replaced with the one “hard truth”<sup>39</sup> of economic development – which, in reality, meant free markets. To many, this was not Communism at all.<sup>40</sup>

In 2002, President Jiang Zemin expanded the base of the Party to include the “advanced productive forces” in his “Three Represents,” allowing magnates and titans of business to join the Party for the first time. It was seen in the eyes of many as the Party continuing to turn away from its core ideologies, leaving Communism spiritually rudderless.<sup>41</sup> The reality of discontent and lack of faith in the Party has certainly not been missed by its leadership. In 2004, during the fourth Plenum of the 16th Party Congress, President Hu introduced the idea of “social management,” by which the Party saw it as its rightful duty to craft public opinion at every level.<sup>42</sup> The Leftist clique of the Party has long clamored about the “sugar-coated bullets” of reform, whereby liberalization might seem

appealing, but would be the death of the Party.<sup>43</sup> As China's decades-long period of miracle growth indicates, Deng's vision of economic development did manifest. But can it continue to survive? Can the CCP continue to maintain enough legitimacy in the eyes of the people while trust in the Party's local officials is low, expectations are rising, and the Party does not have a unified, coherent ideology?

## **THREAT #2: ENVIRONMENTAL STRESS**

In the 2015 banned film "Under the Dome," journalist Chai Jing brought to the attention of the masses that children were growing up under such a blanket of smog they did not know the color of the sky and had never seen a star.<sup>44</sup> In the race to modernize, China has degraded its ecosystems; polluted its air, water, and soil; and used up large swathes of its natural resources. As much as 60 percent of China's groundwater has been polluted to the point that it cannot be used.<sup>45</sup> Industrial accidents, such as the Tianjin plant explosion in 2015,<sup>46</sup> are grim reminders of the cost of development. Other accidents, such as coal mine cave-ins, also occur regularly.<sup>47</sup> For example, in 2005, a petrochemical plant explosion in Jilin city spilled benzene into the Songhua river, leaving millions of freezing residents in Harbin city without access to water.<sup>48</sup> Xi Jinping has promised a "War Against Pollution" and warned that damaging the environment "will eventually return to haunt us."<sup>49</sup> While China does have regulations and environmental law, enforcement is rare, due in no small part to the strong backlash against whistleblowers who often end up ostracized by local officials, or even jailed.<sup>50</sup> As such, in recent years, a full two-thirds of "mass incidents" of protest in China can be attributed to anger over local pollution.<sup>51</sup> Due to dramatic increases in reported protests since the 1990s, spending on public security has spiraled upward.<sup>52</sup>

Some protests have inspired further demonstrations, often in response to the government's handling of the initial protest and its demands. In 2011, two herdsmen in Inner Mongolia were killed while protesting polluted ground – caused by rare-earth mineral mines – and this sparked a much larger protest in the region, culminating in a short period of martial law.<sup>53</sup> In the Haidian District of Beijing in 2009, citizens gathered to protest a planned incinerator. This protest followed previous demonstrations protesting the odor from the landfill that the incinerator sought to replace.<sup>54</sup> Studying events such as these also highlights that environmental protests are not just the domain of one specific demographic group among Chinese society: for example, in 2011, there were many children among those holding banners against a proposed chemical plant in Dalian, Liaoning.<sup>55</sup> In 2012, a small protest against the planned extension of a Sinopec plant in Ningbo, Zhejiang, quickly spread from suburban farmers to middle-class urban dwellers, and resulted in clashes

between protestors and the police.<sup>56</sup> In case after case, people across in China want a decrease in pollution and are often willing to protest to see an end to it.

Whether they were isolated events or influenced by others, protests in China have had varying levels of success. In the above case of Ningbo in 2012, for example, the government eventually capitulated and moved the planned plant elsewhere.<sup>57</sup> While this was a success for the protestors of Ningbo, it was only partial: the plant was still built nearby. Similarly, in Xiamen, Fujian in 2007, there were protests against the planned construction of a toxic chemical plant. The original plans were scrapped, but the plant was still constructed – just further away from the protestors.<sup>58</sup> In other cases, the protestors not only do not succeed, but face government backlash in the process. For example, Wu Lihong, an “eco-warrior,” was arrested as a troublemaker after interviews with foreign journalists emerged during a 2007 protest caused by toxic algae blooms in the famous Lake Tai.<sup>59</sup>

The government’s response to many of these protests, as shown above, is to move rather than solve the problem, or to respond with police force or arrest. This could prove to be unsustainable. Protestors are already making use of technology to increase protest networks and better coordinate: in the case of Xiamen in 2007, roughly a million text messages calling people to protest were circulated by over 20,000 people.<sup>60</sup> Should environmental protests become more coordinated and more focused on wider climate change than local pollution, and should networks of leaders emerge, the CCP will have a far larger problem on their hands that cannot be solved simply by relocating their planned projects. Ultimately, progress on curbing pollution must be made to ensure the survival of the Party against the risk of an environmentally-minded mass protest movement. Some within the Party seem to recognize this. In 2011, an engineer from the Ministry of Environmental Protection spoke at the National People’s Congress warning that over just the previous year alone, “major environmental incidents” (protests) had increased by 120 percent.<sup>61</sup> Environmental and climate change grievances will not vanish on their own and neither will the protests they inspire.

### **THREAT #3: ECONOMIC DOWNTURN**

Under Deng Xiaoping’s “new cat theory” – which stated that “whatever promoted the socialist economy was socialist” – the economy began its bonanza.<sup>62</sup> Yet, this was not without its problems: economic growth was very unequal across society.<sup>63</sup> In this “moderately prosperous society,” few are prosperous and the inequality is not moderate.<sup>64</sup> As of 2010, China had “more billionaires than Russia” while over “five hundred million people continued to live in grinding poverty on less than \$2 a day.”<sup>65</sup> To maintain the CCP’s image in the 1980s, Premier Zhao Ziyang attributed growing inequality to the fact that capital



markets were the “primary stage of socialism,” which is a line that held out longer than Zhao did.<sup>66</sup> Now, China’s economy is slowing. Debt has reached unsustainable levels, with a combined household, corporate, and government debt-to-GDP ratio of over 300 percent.<sup>67</sup> The amount of investment needed to maintain growth – known to economists as Incremental Capital Output Ratio (ICOR) – is quickly becoming too high. The Shanghai stock market is young and volatile, with a huge crash occurring as recently as 2015.<sup>68</sup> The growth that Deng promised looks to be running out.

Further factors are coalescing to create a potentially turbulent economic future for the country and the CCP. The trade situation with the United States appears to be a tug of war with no clear winner as of yet, and despite the hope for deals, the way forward looks to be rocky. Worse still, China’s demographic dividend (the economic benefits of having a larger working-age than non-working-age population) is over, and the population is rapidly ageing.<sup>69</sup> The tax base is therefore dramatically shrinking: “in 2009, there were 13 people of working age for every elderly person, by 2050, the ratio will decline to just 2:1, at which time 40 percent of China’s population will be over retirement age.”<sup>70</sup> This demographic shift will continue to increase the economic burden on the country and government of providing a social safety net. At the same time, China is rapidly urbanizing. Roughly 25 percent of these new urban residents have no legal claim to public services in urban areas, as their “hukou,” or legal status, is rural, not urban.<sup>71</sup> Lastly, China’s growing middle-class is much younger than the populace at large, and they are much more likely to be vocal about any negative impacts on the standard of living they have come to expect.<sup>72</sup>

As a result of these socioeconomic and demographic trends, two different realities exist within the borders of the People’s Republic: the huge urban megalopolises, mostly along the east and southeast coast, and the bucolic hinterlands where few outsiders wander. The divide between rural and urban China is stark. During their administration, President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao were acutely aware of growing resentment among the rural poor. In response, taxes on farmers were abolished and rural healthcare was expanded. Promises were made of a “harmonious society” with “inclusive development” that would heal the divisions between the people and the Party.<sup>73</sup> However, the fact remains that many Chinese people today are still forced to migrate to the major cities on the coast in search of work: the urban-rural divide still exists.<sup>74</sup>

The modern Party is aware that if they cease to control the economy, then the average person has far less reason to be beholden to the Party; thus, they strive to maintain Party influence over critical sectors and key positions.<sup>75</sup> A recent turn toward further Party control has been to privatize public services into Party-run companies – what Patricia Thornton calls “Party-organized Non-governmental Organizations” (“PONGOs”) – thus cutting out the

government while enhancing the Party's grip on the economy.<sup>76</sup>

However, moves like this could have a negative impact. While economic growth alone may not have ever been enough to maintain the Party's power, overly controlling the economy could have unintended consequences, given that few rich societies tolerate authoritarian governance. According to the scholar Minxin Pei, China is entering into an economic "transition zone," whereby autocracies are at the highest risk of being subsumed by popular democratic waves.<sup>77</sup> An economic crisis could be the spark that ignites the powder keg.

## **JOURNEY'S END: POTENTIAL SCENARIOS**

Based on the three threats described in the previous section, there are three potential scenarios that seem the most plausible. The first scenario resembles something akin to a status quo; the sands are shifting, but no major uprising occurs. The second of these scenarios is a situation where protests spiral out of control and spread across the nation and ultimately remove the CCP from power in Beijing. The third scenario envisions a crushed uprising where the Party is able to bring protests to heel. The first scenario is also the baseline where China is today, and this would be where the second or third scenario would begin.

Given that it has already ruled China for decades, there is no doubt that the Party has an ingrained toolkit to help maintain its "authoritarian resilience."<sup>78</sup> However, these scenarios represent a stark reality with which Beijing may be forced to reconcile sooner, rather than later. According to Dickson, "a stable situation can turn unstable very quickly, often for unexpected and idiosyncratic reasons."<sup>79</sup> Dickson also explains that there may not even be a single spark that starts mass popular unrest, because "even if the Party does not face organized opposition at present, it may be undone by the revolution of rising expectations."<sup>80</sup>

### **SCENARIO 1: COOLING COALS**

If the Party can deal with the social, economic, and environmental factors that it faces, it would go a long way toward reinforcing their legitimacy and ensuring a compliant populace for years to come. The biggest threat to a new protest movement is a lack of popular support for disruption. Knowing this, the Party remains committed to achieving social stability by building a regulatory state of "consultative authoritarianism."<sup>81</sup> In this world, the system remains authoritarian, but the will that is being enforced is that of the people, or in other words, a "dictatorship of the proletariat" – a core Maoist belief.<sup>82</sup> If the Party can prove to the people that they work for them, then the people – in theory – have little reason to work against the Party. The Party can therefore frame their

response as follows: because protests do not have widespread popular support, the Party is right to counter any disruptive movements. This scenario sees a future for China where the status quo is mostly maintained, through continued accommodation, repression, and cooptation.

### *SCENARIO 2: INSURGENCY EMERGENCY*

Mao once said, “Destroy and there will be destruction. Do not destroy and there will also be destruction.”<sup>83</sup> This may be the exact case for rebellion in China again today. In effect, if the Party is perceived by the population as illegitimate and causing personal suffering, then why suffer the Party? What happens if the “local legitimacy deficit” is so widespread that it becomes national? The potential for the dominoes to fall is there. The economy is no longer growing like it once was and the private sector is smaller than it has been since reforms were initiated. The environmental crisis, local or global, is unlikely to abate. Sea-level rise alone threatens to displace hundreds of millions of the coastal population.<sup>84</sup> If cells of “rightful resisters”<sup>85</sup> coalesce or congeal around a central leader or idea, they may prove to be an immovable union from which protests become revolution.

### *SCENARIO 3: FAILED REVOLUTION*

Should the protests in Hong Kong continue and spread into the mainland, a second Tiananmen Square-style situation could emerge. Of course, as discussed above, large numbers of protests are already occurring in China; but, should the Party take a more openly violent stance against them, then the protestors might have little hope. Public security funding was around \$25.6 billion U.S. dollars in 2016.<sup>86</sup> This was an increase of 5.3% from the previous year.<sup>87</sup> If there are forces at work within China that seek to undermine the Party, the Party, like any rational actor, will work to save itself by any means it deems necessary. In a scenario where there is a full crackdown to end protests, the question then becomes: what will be the social cost for calm? How long would the peace based on violence last?

## **THE ROAD AHEAD: WITHER THE PARTY?**

The scenarios above – and the threats they respond to – could become existential challenges to the CCP. At the same time, threats from within the Party could undermine its ability to respond to these external stressors. In order for the Party to remain in power, it must remain intact. As factions within the CCP are constantly striving to gain advantage against each other, Party in-fighting could lead to collapse. Minxin Pei reminds us that “regime decay” may lead to “open

factionalism” within the top ranks of the Party.<sup>88</sup> Xi Jinping is keenly aware of these threats between and even within factions – indeed, he achieved his own rise in part by toppling and replacing the rival flagbearer of the “Neo-Maoist” movement, Bo Xilai.<sup>89</sup> Dubbed “China’s Hope” by the Neo-Maoist Journalist Red Wing,<sup>90</sup> Xi sees returning to the Party’s Maoist roots as the way forward and has warned of what he calls “historical Nihilism” (erasing or questioning the glorious history of the Party).<sup>91</sup>

Xi has taken various measures to maintain Party discipline and commitment to these ideals, and to his rule. In 2012, the infamous “Document 9” was leaked, which outlined the Party line on the “seven no’s” that will not be tolerated: “universal values, press freedom, civil society, citizens’ rights, the party’s historical aberrations, the “privileged capitalistic class,” and the independence of the judiciary.”<sup>92</sup> The document is widely thought to have been issued by the Central Committee General Office, and approved by Xi.<sup>93</sup> In his quest to tackle powerful regional semi-warlords, or “tigers,” and armies of local corrupt cadre, or “flies,” all who would dare oppose him know danger.<sup>94</sup> Xi is working actively to reduce the threats to his rule from both left and right, including by removing websites deemed radical.<sup>95</sup> The Party has a member on the boards of many major state companies.<sup>96</sup> Cadres are embedded on almost every corner, tracking the actions of citizens to assign them a lifelong “social credit” score.<sup>97</sup> The longer the Party, and Xi Jinping in particular, is in power, the more they can construct a narrative of legitimacy – through their patriotic education campaigns, every year more and more students are learning from history texts that continue the Party’s approved narrative.<sup>98</sup> Xi Jinping believes that unity, hierarchy, and institutionalization are more important than correctness.<sup>99</sup> To prove it, he removed term limits.<sup>100</sup>

Not all of the CCP’s destiny is determined within China’s borders. In the United States, politicians continue to condemn CCP authoritarianism and human rights abuses. Our own Congress currently has a fellowship named after the Nobel peace prize-winning civil rights activist Liu Xiaobo, who spent ten years in a Chinese prison before his death.<sup>101</sup> As recently as December 2019, a bill scrutinizing the “one country, two systems framework” passed the House of Representatives, in response to six months of massive unrest in Hong Kong.<sup>102</sup> In the same month, a bill was passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate that condemns China’s repression against Muslims in Xinjiang.<sup>103</sup> The national mood in America has changed: China is no longer a partner, but a competitor.<sup>104</sup> While Western political moves such as these aim – in part – to pressure the CCP to change, and to encourage the Chinese population to question their leadership, it could have the opposite impact. Our response may in fact strengthen Xi’s position by allowing him to continue to stoke nationalism – in response to hypocritical Western attacks – as a justification for Party rule.<sup>105</sup>

According to Suisheng Zhao, the reducing centrality of Communism in the CCP's rhetorical pull in recent decades has been "accompanied by the rise of nationalism."<sup>106</sup> To buttress against another democracy movement, the Party has sought to be the "paramount patriotic force and guardian of national pride."<sup>107</sup> Thus, the Patriotic Education Campaign was born. The 1993 State Education Commission document, "Program for China's Education Reform and Development," urged patriotism as a "guiding principle" for the future of the Party.<sup>108</sup> All students would learn official CCP history, emphasizing how the Party delivered a glorious return to national unity.<sup>109</sup> Many scholars agree that nationalism in China remains just as much top-down as it is bottom-up.<sup>110</sup> It is now common practice for the government to encourage protests against foes like Japan, using the masses as a tool of foreign policy, all while stoking nationalism.<sup>111</sup>

## **LIKELY OUTCOMES: FATES AND FORTUNES**

The present outlook indicates the Party will maintain asymmetrical and diffuse power by continuing proven methods of coercion and repression.<sup>112</sup> While threats to Party rule are vast and myriad, Richard McGregor warns us from being overly cavalier in our predictions, saying: "as a political machine, the Party has so far proved to be a sinuous, cynical and adaptive beast in the face of its multiple challenges."<sup>113</sup> Ultimately, even though the populace has grievances with the Party, the lasting impacts are more likely to result in a change of mentality or way of thinking, rather than political upheaval.<sup>114</sup> Naturally, the main goal for Beijing remains sailing a straight and smooth course while keeping the ire of the people focused on their local cadre. How long Xi Jinping and the Party will be able to hold onto these red coals has yet to be determined.

Attempting to gauge China's future is often futile: frankly, nobody knows what will happen until it does. China experts were on the television here in the United States in 1989, the day that the tanks rolled into Beijing, and almost all of them said it would never happen. We know that today, if the Party does not take more stringent action to address the sources of instability in China – grievances over pollution, corruption, and economic inequality, coupled with party infighting – then there will be serious social consequences. More polluting factories means more protests. More graft and bribery means less faith in the system. More international scorn – if not convincingly dismissed by the CCP in nationalist terms – means more divisiveness and a more implacable populace.

While the threats outlined in this article could be effectively mitigated by the CCP over time, it is not inconceivable that they could become too powerful for the Party to contain, and eventually come to a head forcing a change of the winds and ushering a new government – or even a new system of government – into power. In the meantime, the Party will continue to squeeze its grip on the

people in order to ensure it stays in power in perpetuity.

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 Bruce Dickson, *The Dictator's Dilemma: The Chinese Communist Party's Strategy for Survival* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).
- 2 Kerry Brown, *The New Emperors: Power and the Princelings in China* (New York: I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2014), 102.
- 3 Minxin Pei, "Is CCP Rule Fragile or Resilient?" in *The China Reader: Rising Power*, ed. David Shambaugh (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 84-93 at 87.
- 4 Roderick MacFarquhar, "Succession to Mao and the end of Maoism," in *The Politics of China (Third Edition)*, ed. Roderick MacFarquhar (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 246-336 at 321.
- 5 Ibid, 335-336.
- 6 Richard Baum, "The road to Tiananmen: Chinese politics in the 1980s," in *The Politics of China (Third Edition)*, ed. Roderick MacFarquhar (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 337-468 at 339.
- 7 "Crossing the river by feeling the stones," *South China Morning Post*, July 22, 2002, <https://www.scmp.com/article/385907/crossing-river-feeling-stones>
- 8 David Lampton, *Following the Leader: Ruling China from Deng Xiaoping to Xi Jinping* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2014), 62.
- 9 Alice Miller, "Dilemmas of globalization and governance," in *The Politics of China (Third Edition)*, ed. Roderick MacFarquhar (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 528-599 at 597.
- 10 Graham Allison, "The Chairman of Everything," *New Statesman*, December 4, 2017, <https://www.newstatesman.com/world/asia/2017/12/chairman-everything-why-chinese-president-xi-jinping-will-change-history>
- 11 Elizabeth Economy, *The Third Revolution: Xi Jinping and the New Chinese State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 23.
- 12 Dickson, *Dictator's Dilemma*, 210.
- 13 Joseph Fewsmith, "The Challenges of Stability and Legitimacy," in *China in the Era of Xi Jinping: Domestic & Foreign Policy Challenges*, ed. Robert Ross and Jo Inge Bekkevold (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2016), 92-115 at 111.
- 14 Bruce Dickson, "No 'Jasmine' for China," in *The China Reader, 6th edition: Rising Power*, ed. David Shambaugh (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 93-99 at 97.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Carl Minzner, *End of an Era: How China's Authoritarian Revival is Undermining Its Rise* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 87.
- 17 Ibid, 97.
- 18 Minxin Pei, "The Beginning of the End," *Washington Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (Fall 2016): 131-142 at 137, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2016.1232640>
- 19 Lotus Rang Ruan, "The Chinese Communist Party and Legitimacy," *The Diplomat*, September 30, 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/09/the-chinese-communist-party-and-legitimacy/>
- 20 Bruce Dickson, *The Dictator's Dilemma: The Chinese Communist Party's Strategy for Survival* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 209.
- 21 Ibid, 210.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid, 212.
- 24 Kevin J. O'Brien, "Rightful Resistance," *World Politics* 49, no. 1 (October 1996): 31-55 at 36, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25053988>
- 25 Kevin J. O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, "Selective Policy Implementation in Rural China," *Comparative Politics* 31, no. 2 (January 1999): 167-186 at 168, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/422143>

- 26 Tianjin Shi, "Village Committee Elections in China: Institutional Tactics for Democracy," *World Politics* 51, no. 3 (April 1999): 385-412 at 385, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25054084>
- 27 Ibid, 389.
- 28 Ibid, 386.
- 29 Kevin J. O'Brien and Han Rongbin, "Path to Democracy? Assessing Village Elections in China," *Journal of Contemporary China* 18, no. 60 (June 2009): 359-378 at 365-6, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670560902770206>
- 30 Ibid, 360.
- 31 Mary Gallagher, "Mobilizing the Law in China: 'Informed Disenchantment' and the Development of Legal Consciousness," *Law and Society Review* 4, no. 4 (December 2006): 783-816 at 784, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4623347>
- 32 Minzner, 45.
- 33 Gallagher, 785.
- 34 Klaus Mühlhahn, *Making China Modern: From the Great Qing to Xi Jinping* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), 604.
- 35 Suisheng Zhao, "Xi Jinping's Maoist Revival," *Journal of Democracy* 27, no. 3 (July 2016): 83-97 at 83, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2016.0051>
- 36 Suisheng Zhao, "A State-Led Nationalism: The Patriotic Education Campaign in Post-Tiananmen China," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31, no. 3 (September 1998): 287-302 at 288, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0967-067X\(98\)00009-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0967-067X(98)00009-9)
- 37 Orville Schell and John Delury, *Wealth and Power: China's Long March to the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Random House Publishing, 2014), 280.
- 38 Ibid, 269.
- 39 Jude Blanchette, *China's New Red Guards: The Return of Radicalism and the Rebirth of Mao Zedong* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 51.
- 40 Richard McGregor, *The Party: The Secret World of China's Communist Rulers* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), 34.
- 41 Zhao, "A State-Led Nationalism," 289.
- 42 Jude Howell, "NGOs and Civil Society: The Politics of Crafting a Civic Welfare Infrastructure in the Hu-Wen Period," *China Quarterly* 237 (March 2019): 58-81 at 66, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741018001236>
- 43 Blanchette, 49.
- 44 Chai Jing, "Under the Dome" (film), 2015.
- 45 Judith Shapiro, *China's Environmental Challenges Today* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2016), 36.
- 46 Caroline Mortimer, "Tianjin explosion: Gigantic crater left by Chinese factory accident revealed," *Independent* (London), August 19, 2016, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/tianjin-explosion-photos-china-chemical-factory-accident-crater-revealed-a7199591.html>
- 47 "15 killed, 9 injured in northern China coal mine explosion," *Associated Press*, November 19, 2019, <https://apnews.com/d6c17df865024b03b7d2ca9a4031d77f>
- 48 Shapiro, 68.
- 49 George Magnus, *Red Flags: Why Xi's China is in Jeopardy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 111.
- 50 Shapiro, 38.
- 51 Lampton, 160.
- 52 Dickson, "No 'Jasmine' for China," 95.
- 53 Shapiro, 150.
- 54 Ibid, 136.

- 55 Ibid, 126.
- 56 Lampton, 165.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 Shapiro., 69.
- 59 Ibid, 68.
- 60 Ibid, 69.
- 61 Shapiro, 39.
- 62 Fewsmith, 495.
- 63 Ibid, 421.
- 64 Schell and Delury, 348.
- 65 Ibid, 367.
- 66 Fewsmith., 420.
- 67 Magnus, 119.
- 68 Ibid, 150.
- 69 Dickson, *Dictator's Dilemma*, 92.
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 Dickson, *Dictator's Dilemma*, 304.
- 72 Andrew Nathan, "The Puzzle of the Chinese Middle Class." *Journal of Democracy*, 27, no. 2 (April 2016): 5-19 at 16, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2016.0027>
- 73 Howell, 66.
- 74 Xiaochu Hu, "China's Young Rural-to-Urban Migrants: In Search of Fortune, Happiness, and Independence," *Migration Policy Institute*, January 4, 2012, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/chinas-young-rural-urban-migrants-search-fortune-happiness-and-independence>
- 75 Pei, "Is CCP Rule Fragile or Resilient?," 88.
- 76 Patricia Thornton, "The Advance of the Party: Transformation or Takeover of Urban Grassroots Society?," *China Quarterly* 213 (March 2013): 1-18 at 9, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741013000039>
- 77 Pei, "The Beginning of the End," 133.
- 78 Andrew J. Nathan, "China's Changing of the Guard: Authoritarian Resilience," *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 1 (January 2003): 6-17 at 6, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2003.0019>
- 79 Dickson, "No 'Jasmine' for China," 98.
- 80 Dickson, *Dictator's Dilemma*, 304.
- 81 Jessica Teets, "Let Many Civil Societies Bloom: The Rise of Consultative Authoritarianism in China," *China Quarterly* 213 (March 2013): 19-38 at 32, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741012001269>
- 82 John Bryan Starr, "Conceptual Foundations of Mao Tse-Tung's Theory of Continuous Revolution," *Asian Survey* 11, no. 6 (June 1971): 610-628 at 610, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2642773>
- 83 Schell and Delury, 215.
- 84 Jonathan Watts, "Rising sea levels pose threat to homes of 300m people – study," *Guardian* (London), October 29, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/oct/29/rising-sea-levels-pose-threat-to-homes-of-300m-people-study>
- 85 O'Brien, "Rightful Resistance," 44.
- 86 Diana Fu and Greg Distelhorst, "Grassroots Participation and Repression under Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping," *The China Journal* 79 (2018): 100-122 at 106.
- 87 Ibid.
- 88 Pei, "Is CCP Rule Fragile or Resilient?," 92.



- 89 Blanchette, 110, 113, 126.
- 90 Ibid, 156.
- 91 Ibid, 139.
- 92 Economy, 38.
- 93 Ibid.
- 94 Economy, 30.
- 95 Zhao, "Xi Jinping's Maoist Revival," 93.
- 96 Nicholas R. Lardy, *The State Strikes Back: The End of Economic Reform in China?* (Washington, D.C.: Peterson Institute for International Economics, January 29, 2019), 141.
- 97 Economy, 80.
- 98 Zhao, "A State-Led Nationalism," 287.
- 99 Xi Jinping, *The Governance of China I: English Version* (Shanghai: Shanghai Press, 2015), 162.
- 100 Joseph Fewsmith and Andrew J. Nathan, "Authoritarian Resilience Revisited: Joseph Fewsmith with Response from Andrew J. Nathan," *Journal of Contemporary China* 28, no. 116 (2019): 167-179 at 175, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2018.1511390>
- 101 Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "Liu Xiaobo Fellowships," <https://www.cecc.gov/about/employment-opportunities>, accessed March 18, 2020.
- 102 United States House of Representatives, H.R.3289 - *Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act of 2019*, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/3289>
- 103 United States Senate, S.178 - *Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2019*, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/178/text?format=txt>
- 104 Robert Sutter, "The United States and Asia: Regional Dynamics and Twenty-First Century Relations" (Lecture, George Washington University, Washington, D.C., December 9, 2019).
- 105 Wenfang Tang and Benjamin Darr, "Chinese Nationalism and its Political and Social Origins," *Journal of Contemporary China* 21, no. 77 (2012): 811-826 at 823, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2012.684965>
- 106 Zhao, "A State-Led Nationalism," 287.
- 107 Ibid, 289.
- 108 Ibid, 292.
- 109 Ibid.
- 110 Zheng Wang, "National Humiliation, History Education, and the Politics of Historical Memory: Patriotic Education Campaign in China," *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (December 2008): 783-806 at 800, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/29734264>
- 111 James Reilly, "A Wave to Worry About? Public Opinion, Foreign Policy and China's Anti-Japanese Protests," *Journal of Contemporary China* 23, no. 86 (2014): 197-215, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2013.832519>
- 112 Bruce Dickson, *Dictator's Dilemma*, 13.
- 113 McGregor, 31.
- 114 O'Brien, "Rightful Resistance," 53.

# The Return of Foreign Terrorist Fighters:

## Opportunities for Chechnya and Dagestan to Quell Local Insurgencies

*Joseph Kyle*

*Joe Kyle is a graduate student in the Security Policy Studies program in the Elliott School of International Affairs at the George Washington University, with a dual focus on the Eastern Europe, Eurasia, and Russia region and transnational security issues.*

### ABSTRACT

---

The Russian republics of Chechnya and Dagestan were two of the largest contributors of foreign terrorist fighters to the Islamic State (IS). Now, after IS has largely been defeated, these two republics must deal with the return of men, women, and children who fought for IS. Both republics are concerned that the influx of experienced fighters from Syria will bolster local insurgent groups and increase violence. By creating opportunities for the deradicalization and demobilization of returning fighters, local governments will have a chance to correct the underlying causes of local insurgencies and offer alternative incentives to insurgents.

---

### INTRODUCTION

#### *WHAT IS A FOREIGN FIGHTER?*

Foreign fighters are not a phenomenon of the twenty-first century. Modern history is teeming with examples of people volunteering to fight in foreign wars: the Lafayette Escadrille in the First World War, the International Brigade during the Spanish Civil War, and the Crippled Eagles in the Rhodesian Bush War. Even Lord Byron, a famous British poet and leading figure of the nineteenth-century Romantic movement, could be considered a foreign fighter for fighting alongside the Greeks during their War of Independence.

Since the September 11 attacks in the United States of America however, governments and international bodies have actively differentiated between persons fighting wars in which their government is not involved, e.g. mercenaries and private military contractors, and those fighting for terrorist organizations. A new term has emerged to describe the latter group: 'foreign terrorist fighter.' According to the United Nations, a foreign terrorist fighter is someone "who travel(s) to a State other than their States of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning, preparation of, or participation in, terrorists acts or the providing or reviewing of terrorist training, including in connection with armed conflict."<sup>1</sup>

### *FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS AND THE ISLAMIC STATE*

In 2017, official estimates placed the number of foreign terrorist fighters employed by the Islamic State between 25,000<sup>2</sup> and 42,000.<sup>3</sup> These numbers vastly exceed the number of foreign fighters participating in other conflicts such as the Russo-Afghan War or the American wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>4</sup>

Several studies have examined foreign terrorist fighters and their motivations for joining the Islamic State. Broadly, these studies found most foreign terrorist fighters to be single and economically disadvantaged men from large families, between the ages of 18-29, with low education levels, and a limited understanding of Islam.<sup>5</sup> Their motivations for leaving home and joining the Islamic State vary widely. Some sought self-respect, guidance, or identity. Others received encouragement to travel to Syria from social networks and friends. Still others were convinced by IS propaganda of the need to defend their fellow Sunnis.<sup>6</sup>

### *RUSSIAN FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS*

Between 5,000 and 7,000 Russian nationals joined the Islamic State, the majority of which came from the North Caucasus, specifically Chechnya and Dagestan.<sup>7</sup> Roughly 1,200 were Dagestani and 3,000 Chechen. Of these 3,000 Chechen foreign fighters, approximately 600 came from geographic Chechnya and 2,400 from the diaspora community.<sup>8</sup> Fighters from other areas in the North Caucasus also traveled to Syria such as the approximately 100 Ingush, 50 Georgian Kists and 175 Kabardino-Balkarians.<sup>9</sup> The large proportion of Russian speakers in IS is reflected in the Islamic State's move to create a Russian language magazine (Istok) and media platform (Furat Media).<sup>10</sup> Fighters from the North Caucasus played a disproportionately large role in the Syrian conflict. They were highly valued for their combat experience during the First and Second Chechen Wars. Former IS leader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi actively sought to integrate Chechens into IS ranks as a result of their discipline and

abilities.<sup>11</sup> Chechens also served as the main IS recruiters in Syria and as the IS Minister of War.

Though many Chechens and Dagestanis had motivations similar to other foreign terrorist fighters, they were driven by additional push factors. By the end of the Second Chechen War in 2011, Ramzan Kadyrov – a close ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin – was head of the Chechen Republic and Russia was firmly in control of the region for the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Russia successfully cracked down on separatist and radical Islamist groups. The resulting inability of these groups to wage their war against Russia in the North Caucasus forced many to look for alternative methods to retaliate. Syria was a logical choice: Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was an ally of Putin and an important recipient of Russian military aid. For younger fighters, the Syrian war constituted an opportunity to gain combat experience and establish a name for themselves before returning home to continue their separatist struggle. The increasingly severe crackdown in the North Caucasus also required certain fighters to flee for their safety, often aided by the state itself.<sup>12</sup> Prior to the 2014 Sochi Olympics, the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) eased and even aided the travel of militant Islamists to Syria. According to reports, the FSB provided passports, travel documents, new identities, and one-way tickets to Turkey.<sup>13</sup>

## **THE CHALLENGES OF RETURNING FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS**

With the establishment of the IS Caliphate in 2014, an Islamic state under the leadership of religious successors to the prophet Muhammed,<sup>14</sup> came a call for doctors, teachers, engineers, accountants and people with the different necessary backgrounds to create and maintain a functional state. Around 40,000 people representing 110 different countries, including women and children, answered the call.<sup>15</sup> Ever since the international coalition began recapturing IS territory, there remains a major concern on how to address and reintegrate foreign nationals. Many foreign fighters were not active combatants and instead played civilian roles as part of the Caliphate.

Just as motivations for joining the Islamic State varied, so did the reasons for leaving. For many, the reality of living in Syria and under the Islamic State did not match the promises made by recruiters and propaganda. Extensive corruption and hypocrisy among IS leaders also pushed people away. Some were disgusted by the levels of brutality they witnessed and by the ongoing slave trade.<sup>16</sup> None of these ex-Caliphate citizens pose a major threat upon returning to their native country. However, some returnees remain loyal to the Caliphate and seek to radicalize others or to continue attacks outside of Syria. As the Caliphate continues to lose ground, how do states deal with their own

citizens who joined IS and now wish to return to their native country? How do states determine which returnees are disillusioned with IS, and which intend to continue the Caliphate's fight at home?

The Soufan Center, a nonprofit organization dedicated to global security issues, divides returnees into five categories based on risk:<sup>17</sup>

- 1. Those who left early or after only a short stay and were never fully integrated with IS;*
- 2. Those who stayed longer, but did not agree with everything IS was doing;*
- 3. Those who had qualms about their role or IS tactics, but decided to move on;*
- 4. Those who were fully committed to IS but forced out by circumstances –such as loss of territory– or were captured and sent to their home countries; and*
- 5. Those who were sent abroad to fight for the caliphate elsewhere.*

It is important to note each category poses a different level of risk, and that none are risk-free. Those who chose to join IS did so for a reason. Even if returning disillusioned, the underlying circumstances that drove them to join IS in the first place means they remain susceptible to extremist propaganda. All returnees thus present a certain risk, especially if the original causes of their recruitment remain unaddressed and unchanged.<sup>18</sup> It is vital to evaluate each individual returnee and determine the risk they pose, as well as to tailor deradicalization programs to their specific situation. Most importantly, it is imperative to address the push factors that drove people to radicalize.

A lot of states fear the return of their citizens from Syria. They are concerned that those who lived with IS have been indoctrinated into extremist ideology, or that they might have received combat training. In addition, fears persist that transnational terrorist cells might grow from the friendships and networks forged in Syria.<sup>19</sup> These concerns are especially true in the republics of Chechnya and Dagestan, which already face long-lasting insurgencies. Attacks in recent years have only reinforced Chechen and Dagestan fears about returning fighters. In 2016 the Islamic State declared a jihad in Russia, and several insurgent groups in Chechnya and Dagestan pledged allegiance to IS. That same year, six attacks were linked to the Islamic State: five in Dagestan and one in Chechnya. In the first four months of April 2017, at least four attacks had connections to IS. A video of one of the attacks purportedly depicts

several fighters who had returned from Syria. Returning fighters could grow the ranks of domestic insurgents, increase the levels of insurgent activity through their Syrian connections and bring additional combat experience as well as new tactics and strategies.

## **CHECHEN RESPONSE**

The Chechen state's approach to counterinsurgency has been brutal. Reports of torture, executions, hostage-taking, illegal detention, falsification of criminal cases and unfair trials are common.<sup>20</sup> A major component of Ramzan Kadyrov's counterinsurgency policy is collective responsibility. Under this policy, the relatives and family members of insurgents are considered responsible for the insurgent's actions. Human rights groups have reported "a practice of taking insurgents' relatives as hostages, subjecting them to torture or summary execution and burning their homes."<sup>21</sup> The European Court of Human Rights has held Chechen security forces responsible for the abduction and death of the brother of an insurgent. Security forces tortured the father of another insurgent and fined him three million rubles (nearly 75,000 U.S. dollars). In December 2014 alone, security forces burned down fifteen houses belonging to family members of known insurgents.<sup>22</sup> Such retaliatory efforts on behalf of the Russian government will only serve to push insurgents, and those already on the brink of radicalization, towards further acts against the state.

There are no signs that Kadyrov will rescind the policy of collective responsibility for existing insurgents, but alternative and softer approaches have emerged towards the issue posed by returning foreign fighters. Heda Saratova, a member of the Chechnya's Human Rights Council, is trying to build a rehabilitation center in Grozny for women and children returning from Syria. In addition to Saratova's efforts, Kadyrov proclaimed a 'safe corridor' for women returning to Syria.<sup>23</sup>

## **DAGESTANI RESPONSE**

Dagestan has been more nuanced in its approach to homegrown insurgencies than Chechnya. After violence peaked in 2011, then Head of the Republic of Dagestan, Magomedshah Magomedov, instituted a new set of policies aimed at defeating the insurgency. Magomedov created a commission that offered insurgents a way to surrender. The commission operated transparently and offered numerous services to insurgents and their families, including legal and medical counseling, solutions to housing and employment problems and relocation assistance.<sup>24</sup> Magomedov then launched efforts to encourage intra-religious reconciliation between the Sufi and Salafi Islamic communities. These efforts were largely successful. The commission demobilized dozens of

insurgents, while non-violent Salafis saw an improvement in their social and legal status. Most importantly support for the insurgency among young Salafis, the group most susceptible to recruitment, collapsed.<sup>25</sup>

However in 2013, the new Head of Dagestan, Ramazan Abdulatipov, reverted to the old policies of heavy-handedness and violence. He closed the commission established by Magomedov and curtailed efforts to reach out to the Salafi populations. Allegations of abductions, executions, planted evidence, and torture soon proliferated.<sup>26</sup> Repression of Salafis increased, as did state harassment. The Ministry of Interior created the profuchet, a list of suspected extremists that could be detained and questioned. This list can be cited as evidence during trials against insurgents.<sup>27</sup>

The last few years have seen a slight shift in policy towards a more nuanced counter-insurgency approach. The Commission on Reconciliation opened in 2016, but its operations are not transparent and are more focused on Dagestanis returning from Syria than domestic insurgents. Additionally Sevil Navruzova, a private citizen, opened the Center for Countering Extremism to help local communities locate and bring back family members that joined IS. The Center is independent but works closely with local officials. Local courts ruled the profuchet illegal but it is reportedly still in use. Salafis also continue to face acts of repression, such as the closure of mosques and the arrest of Salafi imams.<sup>28</sup>

## **POLICY SUGGESTIONS**

### *CHECHNYA*

#### **1. Reinforce Russian Regulations**

Dealing with foreign terrorist fighters returning from Syria also means dealing with the underlying causes of insurgency in Chechnya. Even after the Second Chechen War, the Chechen Republic still retains a large degree of autonomy from the Russian Federation. While Ramzan Kadyrov is loyal to Russian President Vladimir Putin, he rules Chechnya as a personal fiefdom. Chechen laws and practices can run counter to Russian state law. For instance, collective responsibility is illegal under Russian law and Vladimir Putin had stated that “no one, including the head of Chechnya, had the right to impose extrajudicial punishments.”<sup>29</sup> Despite this, the policy of collective responsibility in Chechnya continues. In the previously mentioned example of Chechen security forces burning down fifteen houses belonging to families of insurgent members, two of those fifteen houses were burned down after Putin’s statement condemning extrajudicial reprisals.

According to an expert on Chechen governance: “None of the [Chechen] rule-of-law institutions work in compliance with the Russian law, not only

in law enforcement, but also in civil law. Land code, social and commercial law function through administrative management by local officials who have turned it into a tool for extortion and a source of self-enrichment.”<sup>30</sup> This must change. Unfortunately, it will require opening investigations into abducted and missing persons, necessitate reinvestigating cases with falsified evidence, and require investigating acts of malfeasance by the Chechen security forces – all actions that Kadyrov is unlikely to take.

However, if Putin begins to reassert Russia’s control over Chechnya, reestablishing the rule of law will be paramount to his success. The Russian *Politsiya* (federal police) and Investigative Committee must liaise and operate jointly with the Chechen police force to ensure Russian criminal and civil laws are being followed. The *Politsiya* can and should not replace or otherwise take over the Chechen police service because this would stir up discontent among the Chechen population at large. The *Politsiya* will work alongside the Chechen police service to guarantee compliance with Russian law. The Investigative Committee will act in its role as Russia’s anti-corruption agency to investigate and punish members of the Chechen police who are abusing their power or using their position for self-enrichment. By working with the Chechen police (instead of directly enforcing the law themselves) and by combating corruption within the Chechen police, the *Politsiya* will be a positive force and not be seen as another Russian attack on the Chechen people.

## **2. End the policy of collective responsibility**

Many people in Chechnya attribute the reduction of insurgent activity to the collective responsibility policy. Despite the claimed success of this policy, it is not a long-term solution. Burning down houses, torturing family members and issuing large fines only breeds further resentment of the government. In addition, enforcing collective responsibility can drive previously neutral family members into joining the insurgency, as a result of the suffering incurred by collective responsibility policies. Ending collective responsibility must be one of the major duties of the *Politsiya* working with Chechen law enforcement. Further punitive measures, like punishing the families of returning fighters, only reinforce the belief that IS beliefs were just and appropriate.

## **3. Allocate funding to Saratova’s rehabilitation center**

Heda Saratova is an established human rights activist and already sits on the Chechen Human Rights Council. She is currently trying to establish a center in Grozny to rehabilitate women returning from Syria. These efforts must be funded and expanded to cover both returnees as well as insurgents within Chechnya. Fighters who want to break with the insurgency need a chance to



do so. A hardline approach with no possibility of reconciliation gives insurgents no other option than to continue fighting. Reassurance that their family will not be punished for their actions increases the incentive of returning fighters to end insurgent activity.

## **DAGESTAN**

### **1. Make the Commission on Reconciliation more transparent and formalize demobilization steps**

In its original iteration under Magomedov, the demobilization process was clearly laid out, publicized, and understood by all parties. In its current form as the Commission on Reconciliation, it is not as transparent. The Commission must also offer clear alternatives to extremist activity for foreign terrorist fighters returning from Syria and the insurgents who never left Dagestan. To continue the record of success already seen by the demobilization program,<sup>31</sup> the Commission on Reconciliation must make its decision-making more transparent and open to the public. It must formalize the demobilization process and assume control over local commissions. Lastly, it must better publicize this process within Dagestan and to the foreign terrorist fighters returning from Syria.

### **2. Expand the Center for Countering Extremism (CCE)**

Currently, the Center for Countering Extremism is only located in Derbent, Dagestan's third largest city. To make the Center more effective, the Dagestani government needs to provide funding so the CCE can open additional locations in the country's two largest cities, Makhachkala and Khasavyurt. Since these two cities are located roughly in the center of Dagestan, and Derbent is located in the south, officials should also consider opening a fourth center in Kizlyar to provide easier access to civilians in the northern half of the country.

### **3. Promote reconciliation with the Salafi community**

The Sufi majority in Dagestan must reconcile with its Salafi minority. Reconciliation will require two major steps. First, the government must permanently delete the *profuchet*. It has already been ruled illegal by several courts. Yet, reports state that authorities continue to use the records despite having changed the name of the system to comply with local laws. Salafis will never trust the government if they are continuously harassed at border crossings and checkpoints. Second, Salafis must be allowed to openly practice their religion. The Dagestani government must reopen closed mosques and

release imprisoned imams. Punitive measures targeting the Salafi community only alienates its members, which in turn aids insurgent propaganda and recruitment efforts.

## CONCLUSION

The Chechen and Dagestani governments should be concerned about returning foreign IS terrorist fighters. These people voluntarily left their homes, traveled to a war zone, and worked with a terrorist organization. While the Islamic State has lost most of its territory in Syria and Iraq and its leader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi has been killed, it continues to inspire lone-wolf attacks and has numerous chapters and cells around the world. Its ideology remains dangerous and its adherents constitute a potential terrorist threat.

The return of these fighters present Chechnya and Dagestan with an opportunity to quell their own local insurgencies. It is imperative that foreign terrorist fighters return to opportunities for work, education, and deradicalization. Fighters who return to an unchanged homeland, where they are still faced with the same problems and conditions that helped drive them to join the Islamic State, could remain radicalized, join local insurgent groups, and continue their jihad. The Republics of Chechnya and Dagestan have an opportunity to enact policies that will not only address foreign terrorist fighters returning from Syria, but also mitigate their ongoing insurgencies.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Resolution 2178 (2014), adopted by the UN Security Council at its 7272nd meeting, on September 24, 2014, S/RES/2178 (2014), [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2178%20](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2178%20)
- 2 Hamed el-Said and Richard Barrett, *Enhancing the Understanding of the Foreign Terrorist Fighters Phenomenon in Syria* (United Nations, 2017), 7.
- 3 Marije Meines, Merel Molenkamp, Omar Ramadan and Magnus Ranstorp, *Response to Returnees: Foreign Terrorist Fighters and Their Families* (RAN Centre of Excellence, 2017), 5.
- 4 el-Said and Barrett, 7.
- 5 Ibid., 24-32.
- 6 Ibid., 33-41.
- 7 *Russian-Speaking Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria: Assessing the Threat From (and to) Russia and Central Asia* (Washington DC: Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2017), 12.
- 8 Neil Hauer, "Chechen and North Caucasian Militants in Syria," Atlantic Council, January 18, 2018 <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/syriasource/chechen-and-north-caucasian-militants-in-syria/>
- 9 Hauer, "Chechen and North Caucasian Militants in Syria."
- 10 Dasha Nicolson, "Foreign Fighters from the North Caucasus: Understanding the Islamic State Influence in the Region," *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 16, no. 4 (2017): 77.
- 11 *Russian-Speaking Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria*, 11.
- 12 Nicolson, "Foreign Fighters from the North Caucasus," 73-74.
- 13 Ibid., 227-228.; *The North Caucasus Insurgency and Syria, an Exported Jihad* (Brussels: International

- Crisis Group 2016), 16-17.
- 14 Adam Chandler, "What Is an Islamic Caliphate and Why Did ISIS Make One?" *The Atlantic*, June 30, 2014.
  - 15 Richard Barrett, *Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees* (New York: The Soufan Group, 2017), 7.
  - 16 el-Said and Barrett, *Foreign Terrorist Fighters Phenomenon in Syria*, 41-44.
  - 17 Barrett, *Beyond the Caliphate*, 18-19.
  - 18 Ibid., 19.
  - 19 el-Said and Barrett, *Foreign Terrorist Fighters Phenomenon in Syria*, 7.
  - 20 *Chechnya, the Inner Abroad*, (Brussels: The International Crisis Group, 2015), 28.
  - 21 Ibid., 9.
  - 22 Ibid.
  - 23 Anna Arutunyan, "ISIS Returnees Bring Both Hope and Fear to Chechnya," International Crisis Group, *Commentary*, March 26, 2018, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/chechnya-russia/isis-returnees-bring-both-hope-and-fear-chechnya#>
  - 24 "Dagestan's Abandoned Counter-Insurgency Experiment," International Crisis Group, *Commentary*, July 5, 2018, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/russianorth-caucasus/counter-insurgency-north-caucasus-i-dagestans-abandoned-experiment>
  - 25 Ibid.
  - 26 Ibid.
  - 27 Ibid.
  - 28 Ibid.
  - 29 *Chechnya, the Inner Abroad*, 10
  - 30 Ibid., 28.
  - 31 Ibid.
  - 32 Ibid.

# China's Military Employment of Artificial Intelligence

## and Its Security Implications

*Jiayu Zhang*

*Jiayu Zhang is a candidate in the Master of Arts Security Policy Studies program at the George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs. He received his undergraduate degree from the School of International Relations and Public Affairs at Fudan University. His research interests cover international security, nuclear strategy, military innovation, and the interaction between emerging technology and security. His recent research subjects include great powers' employment of private military contractors, AI's impact on military affairs, potential conflict in the Taiwan Strait, and overseas military bases in the modern era.*

### ABSTRACT

---

China's application of artificial intelligence (AI) technology has complicated and subtle implications for international and regional security. To take advantage of AI's structural and systematic advantages in technological innovation, China has launched a national campaign to allocate resources to AI development in both the public and private sectors. Other measures, including educational programs, "going out" strategy, and military-civil fusion, have also been implemented to bolster AI innovation. To prepare for "intelligentized" warfare in the future, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is capitalizing on AI technology to develop unmanned intelligent combat systems, enhance battlefield situational awareness, conduct multi-domain operations, and promote training programs. The PLA has previously implemented structural reform and adapted doctrine to ensure its employment of AI fits the requirements for future warfare. China's progress in AI and its military application may trigger regional competition for AI primacy or an AI arms race, posing an ambiguous effect on arms control concerning autonomous lethal weapon systems. PLA's efforts to enhance nuclear capabilities by leveraging AI will have both stabilizing and destabilizing influences on strategic stability and nuclear risk. Ultimately, the introduction of AI to modern battlefields may help China tip the military balance in the Western Pacific, but its potential to change the essence of armed conflict and conduct in war is limited.

---

## INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI), with its potential to improve the speed and accuracy of everything on the battlefield, is heating up as a key area of strategic competition and driving militaries around the world to accelerate research and development for this revolutionary technology.<sup>1</sup> Among them, China not only intends to seize the initiative to become the “global AI leader”, but also has unparalleled potential to capitalize on the application of AI to military affairs, which have complicated and subtle implications for international and regional security.<sup>2</sup>

The Chinese leadership intends to take advantage of AI to enhance its economic competitiveness and military capabilities. The New Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan lays out a comprehensive blueprint for the development and innovation of AI technology in both private and public sectors. The national strategy of military-civil fusion creates a favorable environment for the rapid transfer of progress from the private sector to the military context.<sup>3</sup> The latest defense white paper also highlights the importance of AI for the PLA by regarding “the integrated development of military intelligitization” as part of a characteristically Chinese way to strengthen the military.<sup>4</sup>

However, given the significant uncertainty about the pace and trajectory of AI innovation,<sup>5</sup> it is still hard to predict how AI might contribute to various kinds of military power, and to what extent. More importantly, the impact of any technology on military affairs depends principally on how people and organizations decide to use it.<sup>6</sup> Whether this intelligitized technology can be integrated into PLA’s organizational structure and combat doctrine will shape China’s military posture and security strategy on issues such as defending territorial claims in the South China Sea and unifying Taiwan by force if necessary. Since China’s rapid build-up of its conventional military capabilities and growing regional ambitions have already triggered the concerns of peripheral countries, the implication of China’s significant AI research and application in the defense field deserves more attention.

To explore these understudied questions, this paper focuses on how China’s development of AI technology and its military application of such technology will influence security and conflict in the region. The next section of this article examines China’s structural and systematic advantages as a totalistic party-state by briefly reviewing China’s current measures and policies, such as launching a nation-wide campaign, cultivating talent, and encouraging “going out” to promote AI innovation. The subsequent section discusses China’s efforts to apply such technological advances to the military field. AI has been used to develop unmanned combat systems, facilitate battlefield situational awareness and decision-making, conduct multi-domain operations, and promote training.

The last section discusses the implications of Chinese military's employment of AI for the balance of power, arms race, and strategic stability in East Asia.

## **CHINA'S NATIONAL AGENDA AND POLICIES FOR AI DEVELOPMENT**

The use of AI technology has become a national development strategy for China. China's holistic approach to acquiring AI technology includes: (1) Issuing a national-wide campaign to mobilize resources, (2) deploying educational and academic efforts to cultivate a talent pool, (3) promoting "going out" to acquire knowledge abroad, and (4) requiring technology transfers with foreign companies. Finally, China is harnessing its structural and systematic advantages as a one-party, totalistic country to focus on its scientific and technological development.

### **1. National Campaign for AI Research and Development**

On many occasions after his ascension to power, President Xi Jinping renewed urgency for demands that China master new technology,<sup>7</sup> arguing that "scientific and technological strength determines changes in the world balance of political and economic power, and determines the fate of every nation."<sup>8</sup> Among a variety of emerging technologies, Chinese leadership started to pay attention to AI and made it a national priority in 2015.<sup>9</sup> Within the past several years, multiple national science and technology strategies and plans have been issued, constituting a nation-wide campaign aimed at occupying the "high ground" of AI technology.<sup>10 11</sup> With the guidelines provided by such documents, both public and private sectors are mobilizing to participate in the AI campaign.

The governments on national, provincial, and municipal levels have increasing financial and policy support for state-owned laboratories.<sup>12</sup> Most of those labs are affiliated with China's leading universities such as Tsinghua University's State Key Laboratory of Intelligent Technology and Systems, as well as the Chinese Academy of Science's Key Laboratory of Intelligent Information Processing. Moreover, various AI professional organizations and think tanks, similar to the Chinese AI Association and AI Industry Alliance, have been established with governmental sponsorship to promote the domestic exchange of AI expertise.<sup>13</sup> Motivated by both economic incentives and political urgency, private enterprises in the AI field are engaging actively as well. As of 2018, there were 4,040 AI companies in China. Among them are China's three largest internet giants, Baidu, Alibaba, and Tencent, which have collectively invested a total of \$12.8 billion in the AI industry, surpassing the combination of the four leading U.S. firms.<sup>14</sup> Cooperation between public sectors and private companies is also encouraged. Under the leadership of Baidu, China's National

Engineering Laboratory of Deep Learning Technology was founded in 2017 to research machine-learning-based visual recognition, biometric identification, and human-computer interaction.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. Cultivating Talent Pools

To cultivate and recruit talent and expertise in AI, China has made various efforts in the educational realm. First, a structural transformation in China's higher educational system has paralleled the adaptation of the AI revolution in industrial sectors.<sup>16</sup> Already, 43 universities have dedicated new AI departments, with another 35 colleges receiving funds from the Ministry of Education in 2019 to offer AI as majors.<sup>17</sup> Academic conferences and seminars are held frequently to facilitate the diffusion and proliferation of AI know-how among Chinese academia. These efforts reflect a focus on taking advantage of China's sizable domestic human capital base to create a pipeline of talent for the future.<sup>18</sup>

Foreign material and human resources are being leveraged, as well. Thousands of foreign experts, typically university professors with specialties in different applied aspects of AI, are recruited through the "Recruitment Program of Global Experts" by Chinese institutions.<sup>19</sup> Partnerships with foreign universities and collaborative arrangements with foreign companies like the Fudan University-Google Technology Innovation Lab were formed. China was poised to "overtake the US in the most-cited 50% of papers" in 2019,<sup>20</sup> which displays the success of China's efforts to overtake the United States in AI research.

## 3. "Going Out" Strategy

In the process of building up indigenous capacity, China also continues to encourage its enterprises and students to pursue a "going out" strategy.<sup>21</sup> This approach includes overseas mergers and acquisitions, equity investments, venture capital, and the establishment of research and development centers abroad, as well as sponsorship of study abroad programs.<sup>22</sup>

Large investment consortia play a crucial role in funding Chinese and joint AI start-ups. According to CB Insights, China-based investors have engaged in tech investments amounting to \$19 billion in the United States, across 641 different deals, with particular focus on AI, robotics, and augmented or virtual reality since 2012.<sup>23</sup> China's AI companies are also encouraged to maintain overseas labs in order to gauge local markets and access foreign research talent. Baidu, for example, runs a Silicon Valley AI Lab in Sunnyvale, CA, while Sensetime has an AI-based health lab in New Jersey and collaborates with MIT on machine intelligence. Chinese official agencies, like the China

Scholarship Council, in addition to the private sector also provide fellowships to students who enroll in foreign universities to pursue AI-related disciplines.

#### **4. Technology Transfer**

Technology transfer from foreign entities has been an important factor contributing to China's technological advancement. The major targets for China to acquire technology transfer are foreign companies that desire access to the Chinese market. To get access to Chinese consumers, foreign firms are required to either share their technology and patents or establish joint ventures with Chinese companies or the government; both methods allow China to gain the know-how it wants. Although China continues to take advantage of technology transfer, the role of China's growing domestic innovation capability is reducing its reliance on this approach.

#### **5. Military-Civil Fusion**

Given the dual-use nature of AI technology and the leading role of the private sector in AI innovation, the capacity of the PLA to take advantage of these technological advancements for military purposes is critical for its ambition to become the "world-class force".<sup>24</sup> Through the national strategy of military-civil fusion, the PLA can rapidly leverage the latest advances in civilian technological fields. This strategic agenda is directed by the Central Commission for Integrated Military and Civilian Development, which is headed by Xi Jinping himself.<sup>25</sup>

Under this framework, mechanisms for communication and coordination among scientific research institutes, universities, enterprises, and military industry units to share AI innovation resources are established and normalized. New joint laboratories are built as collaborations between civilian institutes and the military establishment. North China University of Technology and equipment departments of PLA's army, navy, and rocket force founded the Military-Civil Fusion Intelligent Equipment Research Institute.<sup>26</sup> Tsinghua University established its Military-Civil Fusion National Defense Peak Technologies Laboratory. Meanwhile, a selection of the latest AI-enabled products from private enterprises has already been procured and is currently being used by the Chinese military. For instance, PLA's surveillance and image processing systems are reinforced by intelligent security monitors produced by Hikvision.<sup>27</sup>



## 6. China's Structural and Institutional Advantages

China's rapid rise and future trajectory in AI could be enabled by policies mentioned above, which stimulate the potential of China's structural and systemic advantages. On a structural level, the totalistic system increases the ruling regime's ability to exercise control and direct the socioeconomic field.<sup>28</sup> Combined with the powerful mobilization capacity of the CCP, a huge amount of material and human resources is allocated to AI-related projects. Public institutes and private companies are ordered to concentrate their efforts on AI. To exploit synergies of this dual-use technology, close collaboration between academics, industry, and the PLA enables a critical edge for implementing and operationalizing the latest advances.<sup>29</sup> From a demographic aspect, China's huge population provides it with advantages on two dimensions: human resources and data resources. First, reinforced by educational arrangements, a giant human capital pool is being generated for AI talent recruitment. Second, the availability of massive amounts of data, which is crucial for machine learning, means that China has control of more than 20 percent of strategic resources in the information era.<sup>30</sup>

## CHINA'S APPLICATION OF AI TECHNOLOGY TO MILITARY AFFAIRS

PLA strategists and academics have characterized current trends as the advent of a new military revolution, in which AI and related technologies are changing the metrics for military power. China's military application of AI includes, but is not limited to, developing unmanned intelligent combat systems, enhancing battlefield situational awareness and decision-making, conducting multi-domain offense and defense, and facilitating advanced training, simulation, and wargaming practices. More importantly, the PLA is undergoing organizational reform and doctrine adaptation to determine how to operate AI-enabled platforms and wage intelligentized warfare in an effective manner.

### 1. Unmanned Intelligent Combat Systems

Among the different military applications of AI, Beijing has placed the greatest emphasis on unmanned systems. The PLA is pursuing the development of intelligent unmanned vehicles, platforms, and weapons with the expectation that they will disrupt traditional ways to wage wars.<sup>31</sup> In recent years, many Chinese-designed unmanned vehicles and systems have been commissioned in the PLA. Multiple variants of the *Caihong* ("Rainbow," CH) family of high-altitude long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicles have been used for reconnaissance and strike missions. In October 2019, WZ-8, a high-altitude

super-speed stealth reconnaissance UAV, and Sharp Sword-11, a large stealth strike drone, was demonstrated during the military parade on National Day,<sup>32</sup> revealing PLA's rapid progress in developing intelligent UAVs. Moreover, an unmanned autonomous underwater vehicle, HSU-001, was also showcased in the parade.

In addition to designing high-performance unmanned systems, Chinese military strategists are exploring innovative ways to employ these weapons. Learning from the U.S. experience of deploying drones for air strike missions and without sufficient gunships, the PLA assigned UAVs to the company level of its ground forces to provide close air support. PLA scholars have also written on the role of unmanned systems in anti-submarine warfare, airborne operations, and amphibious landing missions.<sup>33 34 35</sup> The “swarming” concept has also been intensively studied to enable the collaborative operation of a large group of unmanned systems in a complicated electromagnetic environment.<sup>36</sup> Besides emulating the successful experience of advanced militaries, the PLA is also interested in pursuing anti-UAV countermeasures to offset the first-move advantage of other countries.<sup>37</sup>

The PLA may also incorporate AI to existing combat platforms, especially obsolete weapons, to build an “army of none”. Thousands of China's retired second- and third- generation jet fighters like the J-7 and the J-8 can be modified to build an unmanned air fleet by installing AI-enabled self-navigation technology and autonomous combat systems that automatically pursue, distinguish, and destroy enemy targets. Given the air combat capacity of the original platforms, employment of such unmanned intelligent systems will not only take advantage of swarm systems' low cost and overwhelming scale, but also be superior to swarms consisting of normal drones. This approach gives the Chinese military a huge asymmetric advantage with which the PLA can eliminate strategic targets while avoiding high personnel losses.<sup>38</sup>

## 2. Battlefield Situational Awareness and Decision-making

Reinforced by AI-enabled technology, speed and accuracy can be enhanced in battlefield reconnaissance, surveillance, and communication; electronic inference and radar deception; combat assessment; and fire guidance.<sup>39</sup> As a result of the improvement of real-time situational awareness and decision-making on the battlefield, PLA's three basic warfare elements—shooting, communication, and movement,—will be significantly strengthened.<sup>40</sup>

First, the accuracy and frequency of weapon systems' firing will be enhanced by advances in situational awareness capacity. Applied AI technology such as image and voice recognition can be used for target detection and acquisition. Hikvision's surveillance cameras, which are able to identify potential adversarial targets automatically, may be installed on aerial weapons. By developing

deep-learning methods, intelligent missiles and shells can be produced to identify targets and their weakness, evade interceptors and conduct end-phase maneuvering, which will bolster both the first-strike and retaliatory capacities of the PLA. More importantly, intensive sensors facilitated by machine learning technology will process the intelligence they capture at a flashing speed so that the time between identifying targets and attacking targets is radically reduced, increasing the rate of fire.<sup>41</sup> In other words, situational awareness capabilities strengthened by AI will not only accelerate the traditional OODA loop but also make a “storm of steel” fired by autonomous vehicles and intelligent weapons possible.

Second, installing AI systems will change the way PLA moves and maneuvers on the battlefield. In a world that is becoming one giant sensor, hiding and penetrating will be far more difficult.<sup>42</sup> In such conditions, AI technology will help identify the weaknesses of enemy defense lines and improve routine planning by enhancing situational awareness capacity. With the intelligent analysis of geographic terrain and enemies’ posture enabled by deep learning, PLA troops can determine the safest route to maneuver to the frontline and penetrate the opponent’s defenses. Logistical support departments can manage unmanned platforms to more efficiently distribute supplies and materials based on real-time intelligence.<sup>43 44</sup>

In terms of battlefield communication, AI technology is both an enabler and a beneficiary. On the one hand, intelligent distribution across the communication spectrum to maintain a complex electromagnetic environment secures the network connection among different combat branches. The development of intelligent electronic warfare equipment will help counter rival jamming and interference to communication.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, with the ultra-high-rate, ultra-large-capacity, and ultra-low-latency of next-generation technology like 5G, data and orders can be transferred stably and quickly between the cloud and connection terminals. Future intelligent systems based on 5G technology can more efficiently collect, transmit, and process massive battlefield data, providing real-time data analysis results for commanders.<sup>46</sup>

Last and most importantly, the processing application of AI’s super data fusion and intelligence analysis will help militaries more accurately and quickly interpret information,<sup>47</sup> which could enable the PLA to gain mastery of battlefield command and control (C2) and improve decision-making. In an era that is overloaded by the high volume of information, a new challenge facing the Chinese military is the effective processing of huge amounts of raw intelligence and the accurate interpretation of the real meaning behind information flows. Deep learning technology is likely to substantially increase the efficiency and accuracy of interpreting patterns in raw intelligence so that enemies’ intents and actions can be better understood. The introduction of machine learning algorithms to the analysis process for satellite imagery and

other sensors can enable a “prediction revolution” that could support PLA’s early warning capabilities.<sup>48</sup> For instance, AI start-up iFlytek’s voice recognition and synthesis module technology are useful for communication surveillance and radio sensing.

### 3. Multi-domain Offense and Defense

While the United States begins to incorporate the concept of multiple-domain operations to its AirSea Battle doctrine to counter China’s Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) capability in the Western Pacific,<sup>49</sup> China is also increasing its focus on cultivating versatile capacity in unconventional domains and strengthening cross-domain deterrence. With the reinforcement of AI, both offensive and defensive capabilities of the Chinese military on nuclear, cyber, and space domains will be consolidated and improved.

China regards nuclear capabilities as one of the pillars of great powers. Applied neural networks and machine learning can bolster the PLA’s offensive and defensive capabilities in the nuclear domain. According to SIPRI’s survey, China’s domestic and international cross-institute collaboration in the pursuit of the benefits of integrating neural networks with hypersonic glide vehicles has become increasingly common.<sup>50</sup> Such applications, including automatic target recognition, auto-piloting, missile fusion, and precision guidance for hypersonic platforms, will enhance the maneuverability and penetration capacity of nuclear missiles, thereby reshaping conventional and nuclear deterrence dynamics.<sup>51</sup> On the defensive side, the situational awareness capacity enhanced by AI technology can strengthen China’s nuclear retaliatory capabilities by improving early-warning and missile defense systems. Operating at machine speeds through the deployment of autonomous interception systems can protect nuclear arsenal and missile bases when facing saturation strikes.<sup>52</sup> Application of automation-enabled launch-on-warning to its missiles can strengthen the credibility of China’s retaliation and the principle of mutual vulnerability it seeks.<sup>53</sup>

The PLA seeks to leverage big data analytics, machine learning, and automation to enhance the defense of critical military and civilian networks and scale the effects of offensive cyber operations.<sup>54</sup> The victory of AlphaGo inspired Chinese strategists; since well-trained AI programs can innovate new tactics in go games, they should also be able to create new, previously unimaginable ways to conduct cyber-attacks. The offensive advantage in cyberspace stems from the limitation of human logic to detect systemic weakness. However, by utilizing technology such as pattern recognition and deep learning, AI can not only be helpful for detecting the vulnerability of enemies’ networks but can also assist the protection of friendly systems by detecting loopholes that need to be fixed. The PLA’s Strategic Support Forces’ (SSF) Information Engineering University

has developed methods to identify and mitigate Distributed Denial of Service attacks through pattern matching, statistical analysis, and machine learning. A prediction path for cybersecurity based on deep learning has been formulated by researchers from the National University of Defense Technology.<sup>55</sup> Further, the PLA can profile targets and customize operations to shape, guide, and control individuals' ideas and emotions based on intelligent analysis, which can be advantageous in psychological warfare.<sup>56</sup>

#### **4. Training, Simulation, and Wargaming**

The PLA will likely take advantage of AI to increase the sophistication of its simulations, war-gaming, and drills.<sup>57</sup> Due to the lack of opportunities for Chinese commanders and soldiers to gain actual combat experience, the PLA's new combat-oriented training places great emphasis on simulation and software-based wargaming. More importantly, the PLA is accustomed to investigating emerging concepts and testing new weapons through simulation. Therefore, the PLA has great incentive to integrate AI technology with its computerized wargames and military simulators to "enhance the level of realism and create an artificially intelligent 'Blue Force'".<sup>58</sup> In recent years, several wargaming contests involving human-machine confrontations have been held by the National Defense University's Joint Operation College and the National University of Defense Technology's Systemic Engineering Department.

#### **5. Organizational reform and doctrine transformation**

Emerging technologies only make military revolution and ascension of military capabilities possible. To realize their full potential, these technologies must be incorporated into new processes and executed through a new organizational structure. In the case of Chinese military, its organizational reform launched in 2015 and doctrine adaptation may ensure its employment of AI technology is fitting for the future of intelligentized war.

First, the PLA underwent a comprehensive reform of its force structure, which can reshape its capability to win intelligentized warfare. The most significant measure has been the establishment of its SSF. According to the Chinese Ministry of Defense, SSF "comprises supporting forces for battlefield environment, information communications, information security, and new technology testing."<sup>59</sup> In intelligentized warfare, the SSF would operate AI-enabled platforms to provide other branches of the Chinese military with sound situational awareness and support decision-making through rapid intelligence processing. As the new basic combat unit among PLA ground forces, integrated brigades distribute strategic support teams at the battalion level. These teams are responsible for operating UAVs and other intelligent systems to enhance

the intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and long-range strike capabilities of small units. Furthermore, the Chinese military also reorganized its affiliated research institutes and military universities and adjusted its recruitment policy to realize better management and allocation of human capital.

When it comes to combat doctrine, the adaptation is moderate. One observer argues that the PLA “could prove less averse to the prospect of taking humans out of the loop” because “Chinese discussions about keeping a human in the loop in technical writings remain limited to nonexistent.”<sup>60</sup> However, the PLA’s way of fighting is rooted deeply in a strong strategic culture arguing that human beings are the ultimate determination of war. Although new concepts like “intelligence dominance” and “algorithm-centric warfare” have appeared in official military writings recently, the PLA is still forming a coherent doctrine that mitigates the conflict between AI’s trend to keep humans out of the loop and its own military culture emphasizing the role of humans.<sup>61</sup> In fact, some patterns of AI-based combat align with Chinese approaches to war. For instance, swarm tactics, which use a large amount of low-cost unmanned systems to saturate enemies, are similar to the guerilla tactics that the Chinese troops used in WWII.

It should be noted China’s weaponization of AI is also occurring in the information and psychological domain. The PLA’s strategists have begun to discuss how to win on cognitive dimension and seize “metal/cognitive domination” (制脑权) in future warfare.<sup>62</sup> On the one hand, polymeric technology, which combines brain science, biological technology, and artificial intelligence, will not only improve soldiers’ cognitive ability but also create an effective brain-machine interface, which may make some sci-fi super soldiers possible. Additionally, advanced intelligent algorithms can be used to fight a war in the realm of propaganda. By promoting domestic cohesion through the control of public opinion and disruption of opponents’ efforts to influence the Chinese press, AI will engage this new dimension of the “people’s war” in the information era.

## **SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF CHINESE MILITARY’S EMPLOYMENT OF AI**

China’s development of AI and its application of such technologies to military affairs impacts on many regional and international issues. This article focuses on the Western Pacific, where most of China’s major security concerns and the potential flashpoints for future military confrontation are centered. For a region that is already tense and crowded, a regional competition for AI primacy may trigger an AI arms race and pose an ambiguous effect on arms control concerning autonomous lethal weapon systems. The PLA’s efforts to enhance nuclear capabilities through AI will have both stabilizing and

destabilizing influence on strategic stability. Ultimately, the introduction of AI to the modern battlefield may help China tip the military balance, but its potential to change the essence of armed conflict and the way in which war is waged is limited.

## 1. Arms Race and Arms Control

Some voices in China are calling upon the Chinese government to avoid an AI arms race. While it is hard to define whether the struggle for technological primacy fits the definition of an arms race, the competition among actors in the Western Pacific for advanced AI technology has already intensified. South Korea has allocated many resources to research AI-based command systems, aviation training systems, and object-tracking techniques.<sup>63</sup> Other efforts made by Seoul to militarize AI technology include works on the Exobrain and ADAMs projects for the potential enhancement of C4ISR, virtual combat exercises, and self-navigation algorithms.<sup>64</sup> Even though its general technological capabilities are nascent, North Korea engages in the competition by focusing on some aspects of AI that can be used to elevate its current military operations. It has been suggested that Kim Il Sung University and the Korea Computer Center have advanced the Ryongnamsan 5.1 speech-recognition systems, audio classification, and deep fakes to reinforce cyber aggressions.<sup>65</sup>

China's rapid progress in AI and its military application have encouraged such competition and may trigger a potential arms race in two ways. First, the PLA's increasing military power facilitated by its application of AI technology has already activated a security dilemma, especially concerning China's increasing assertiveness in territorial disputes and growing ambitions about the regional order. The PLA's employment of AI-enabled early-warning systems and unmanned intelligent combat vehicles will enhance China's awareness of Japanese and South Korean operations in disputed areas like the Senkaku Islands and enable a quick response capability. From the perspective of other countries in the region, China's willingness to escalate in such scenarios will increase because its AI technology would provide it with a decisive advantage in a conflict with limited costs, despite increasing the potential of accidental escalation.<sup>66</sup> Other countries' have begun to pursue more defense measures, a move that reflects concern about China's potential threat, including the development of weapon-grade AI technology. Such defensive measures suggest that tensions triggered by the security dilemma in the region will be more complicated and expand beyond an AI arms race. Nuclear proliferation, targeting civilian infrastructure that supports AI technology, and more cyber aggression may be seen in this context.

Second, China's success in influencing U.S. strategic calculation and military posture by military employment of AI may encourage other countries

to copy its success. Other countries who see themselves as adversaries of the United States may be motivated to increase AI investment and attempt to install related technology to their missiles to exercise coercion and threats. For U.S. allies like Japan, the introduction of AI in early-warning, situational awareness, and intelligence processing may not only help reduce reliance on U.S. extended deterrence, but also strengthen their ability to counter regional rivals like China and North Korea.

Thus, the proliferation of AI technology, especially those that can be weaponized, poses challenges to the arms control community in the region. Given the highly dual-use nature of AI, civilian AI technology cooperation between countries may contribute to the unintentional proliferation of destructive AI systems, a situation which is similar to the dual-use dilemma of nuclear cooperation.<sup>67</sup> On the practical level, weapon-, behavior-, or country-focused controls will face different problems ranging from how to define controlled weapons to how to verify the control measures.<sup>68</sup> On the political level, countries' attitudes toward AI arms control are ambiguous. In 2018, China demonstrated its "desire to negotiate and conclude" a new protocol for the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons to ban the use of autonomous lethal weapons systems.<sup>69</sup> However, the delegation stressed that the ban should only apply to the use of such weapons, and not to their development, revealing China's actual misgivings regarding arms control for autonomous systems.<sup>70</sup>

## 2. Strategic Stability and Nuclear Risk

Nuclear strategic stability is understood as "a state of affairs in which countries are confident that their adversaries would not be able to undermine their nuclear deterrence capability" using nuclear, conventional, cyber or other means.<sup>71</sup> Given the dynamics of nuclear posture of major powers in the region and the potential role of nuclear escalation in certain scenarios, AI-enabled improvement of the PLA's multi-domain operation capabilities has both destabilizing and stabilizing impacts on strategic stability.

China has long been concerned about false negatives from its early warning systems, which may result in failures to detect nuclear attacks.<sup>72</sup> To some extent, such concerns are rooted in China's assumptions about its own early warning deficiencies and its own inability to counter a stealthy and prompt precision strike from the United States.<sup>73</sup> Regarding China's employment of nuclear weapons, military-technology considerations stressing the plausible U.S. conventional military operation against Chinese nuclear capabilities are the reasons behind China's use of limited nuclear escalation.<sup>74</sup> As a result, if China gains greater situational awareness and can strengthen its nuclear retaliatory capabilities by applying AI technology to its C4ISR and early-warning systems, some of its insecurities about a "bolt-out-of-the-blue" strike



may be mitigated, which will stabilize the nuclear risk.<sup>75</sup>

Yet China's insecurities are not simply a question of technology. The key factors are China's perception of U.S. nuclear posture and its assumption of U.S. intent. In this sense, China's use of AI and autonomy for nuclear offense and defense could take on destabilizing qualities. For Beijing, the prospect of the United States resuming a forward-deployed, tactical nuclear posture exacerbates its sense of encirclement. The issuance of the 2018 U.S. Nuclear Posture Review worsens the context. China views the documents' focus on ballistic missile defense and conventional prompt global strike as preemptive and destabilizing.<sup>76</sup> Additionally, the proposal for the enlargement of the U.S. arsenal of low-yield submarine-launched ballistic and cruise missiles and the concept of using nuclear coercion to preemptively de-escalate a conventional conflict like Taiwan scenario further elicit Chinese concerns over U.S. intent. AI and autonomous technology offer Beijing the potential to respond to such a posture. China could deploy swarms to track and intercept U.S. dual-capable platforms. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, an escalatory scenario could develop. While the PLA's deployment of advanced AI-enabled early warning systems and automation-enabled launch-on-fire missiles may mitigate China's fear of false negatives, it may intensify U.S. concerns about false positives, such as a nuclear war caused by accidental fire or false detection.

### 3. Military Balance and Future Warfare

AI is helpful for enhancing battlefield situational awareness, especially reconnaissance, surveillance, and target acquisition (RSTA) technology;<sup>77</sup> a key element for the PLA's A2/AD capabilities. China's military application of AI technology will not only reinforce the RSTA component of its A2/AD system but also add a new dimension to the implementation of this strategy.

According to Biddle and Oelrich, military advantages provided by A2/AD are only strong over controlled landmasses and weaken over greater distances due to the change of "RSTA's effectiveness with the complexity of the background against which it must detect targets."<sup>78</sup> For instance, the effectiveness and detection range of radar, which is "the most robust solution to the demands of sensing mobile targets over wide areas,"<sup>79</sup> is limited by multiple elements ranging from Earth's curvature to its defenders' survivability. Mobile sensors like early-warning aircraft and seaborne radars are almost exposed to enemies' fire because of the low-complexity of their background. While such RSTA systems' effectiveness decreases when far away from landmasses and makes them vulnerable to enemies' attacks, the capabilities of A2/AD's fire solutions, like long-range missiles, will be dramatically weakened. Nevertheless, AI technology offers methods to solve these problems. First, rapid data processing reduces the time needed for radars to maintain operating status.

Vulnerable sensors can be shut down and concealed before enemy firepower approaches. Second, fixed high-power radars are no longer the only solution for long-range RSTA. Swarms of intelligent UAVs and UUVs can be sent to open airspace and sea to conduct reconnaissance missions. Every vehicle in such a system is an intelligence-gathering and analysis hub, which means collection and processing can be finished on the same end. This unmanned tactic is superior to the traditional OODA-style way of fighting in terms of low cost and high efficiency. Furthermore, unmanned intelligent combat systems like modified unmanned J-8 can replace long-range missiles strike to be the main strike choice. Combined with other technological progress, like a new aircraft carrier that uses electromagnetic launch systems to allow quick delivery of UAV fleets, the PLA's A2/AD capabilities will be significantly strengthened and might ultimately help China realize its ambition for regional "command of the commons".<sup>80</sup>

This trend of increasing Chinese military power resulted from the application of AI to the national defense field; however, it will not change the essence of armed conflict and the methods of waging war. AI itself is an enabler, like a combustion engine and electricity, as opposed to a weapon.<sup>81</sup> The function of AI in military affairs is to enhance the capacity of existing systems and platforms in terms of speed and efficiency, rather than "turning a stone to a gold". AI can speed up war, but it cannot change the essence of war.<sup>82</sup> As a result, the nature and performance of original weapon systems still matter. More importantly, wide deployment of AI-based systems still faces some serious challenges. First and foremost, a huge volume of high-quality data is required to train AI algorithms and enable machine learning. On the one hand, war-related data is sensitive and not easy to access. On the other hand, it is very difficult to code some elements of warfare into machine-readable quantitative data. Second, when AI algorithms run at flash speeds, it is extremely challenging for other military hardware to keep up with them. To make sure those hardware can keep pace with AI programs, stable ultra-speed communication and comprehensive data-link networks are indispensable. The PLA still needs to enhance the interconnectedness among its units and organs, develop next-generation communications technology, and establish reliable and secure data links. These requirements echo China's prioritization of 5G, block chain, and quantum computing. Furthermore, radical advance and improvement in basic physics and machinery engineering should be achieved to optimize the performance of original hardware. Third, scientists still find it challenging to understand the behavior of AI, creating a risk of unreliability.<sup>83</sup> Armed forces like the PLA, which take such issues very seriously, will be very cautious in the deployment and employment of AI-based systems if they cannot ensure their battlefield reliability and political loyalty.<sup>84</sup>

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Michael C. Horowitz, "The Promise and Peril of Military Application of Artificial Intelligence," *Bulletin of Atomic Scientist*, April 23, 2018: <https://thebulletin.org/2018/04/the-promise-and-peril-of-military-applications-of-artificial-intelligence/>
- 2 Chinese State Council, *New Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan*, Order No. 35, July 2017.
- 3 Elsa B. Kania, "Battlefield Singularity: Artificial Intelligence, Military Revolution, and China's Future Military Power," *Center for a New American Security*, November 28, 2017.
- 4 "China's National Defense in the New Era," The State Council Information Office of PRC, June 2019: [http://eng.mod.gov.cn/publications/2019-07/24/content\\_4846452.htm](http://eng.mod.gov.cn/publications/2019-07/24/content_4846452.htm) .
- 5 Michael C. Horowitz, "The Promise and Peril of Military Application of Artificial Intelligence," *Bulletin of Atomic Scientist*, April 23, 2018: <https://thebulletin.org/2018/04/the-promise-and-peril-of-military-applications-of-artificial-intelligence/>
- 6 Andrew F. Krepinevich, "Cavalry to Computer: The Pattern of Military Revolutions," *The National Interest*, no. 37 (October 1, 1994): 30–42.
- 7 "Collection of Xi Jinping's argument on Technological Innovation since the 18th National Party Congress," *S&T Daily*, October 18, 2017: <http://news.sina.com.cn/o/2017-10-18/doc-ifymviyp2121332.shtml>
- 8 Xi Jinping, "Speech at the meeting of members of national academies of scientists and engineers," *Xinhua News*, May 28, 2018: [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/leaders/2018-05/28/c\\_1122901308.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/leaders/2018-05/28/c_1122901308.htm)
- 9 "Notice of the State Council on Printing and Distributing 'Made in China 2025,'" *Ministry of Industry and Information Technology*, May 19, 2015.
- 10 "Internet+ Artificial Intelligence Three-Year Action Implementation Plan Issued," *Xinhua News*, 26 May 26 2016
- 11 "The State Council's Notice Regarding the 13th Five-Year National Science and Technology Innovation Plan", Chinese State Council, August 8, 2016. Chinese State Council, *New Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan*, Order No. 35, July 2017.
- 12 Wm Hannas and Huey-meei Chang, "China's Access to Foreign AI Technology: An Assessment," *Center for Security of Emerging Technology*, September 2019, p15.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p16.
- 14 Hasan Chowdhury, "China's tech giants spending more on AI than Silicon Valley," *The Telegraph*, October 8, 2018.
- 15 Meng Jing, "China's First 'Deep Learning Lab' Intensifies Challenge to U.S. in Artificial Intelligence Race," *South China Morning Post*, February 21, 2017.
- 16 [http://www.edu.cn/rd/gao\\_xiao\\_cheng\\_guo/gao\\_xiao\\_zi\\_xun/201904/t20190429\\_1656772.shtml](http://www.edu.cn/rd/gao_xiao_cheng_guo/gao_xiao_zi_xun/201904/t20190429_1656772.shtml)
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 Elsa B. Kania, "Battlefield Singularity: Artificial Intelligence, Military Revolution, and China's Future Military Power," *Center for a New American Security*, November 2017, p11.
- 19 Wm Hannas and Huey-meei Chang, "China's Access to Foreign AI Technology: An Assessment," *Center for Security of Emerging Technology*, September 2019, p12.
- 20 Will Knight, "China May Overtake the U.S. with the Best AI Research in Just Two Years," *MIT Technology Review*, March 13, 2019: <https://www.technologyreview.com/s/613117/china-may-overtake-the-us-with-the-best-ai-research-in-just-two-years/>
- 21 "State Council Notice on the Issuance of the New Generation AI Development Plan," August 20, 2017.
- 22 Michael Horowitz, Elsa Kania, and Gregory Allen, "Strategic Competition in an Era of Artificial Intelligence," *Center for a New American Security*, July 25, 2018.

- 23 “From China With Love: AI, Robotics, AR/VR Are Hot Areas For Chinese Investment In US,” *CB Insights*, August 1, 2017: <https://www.cbinsights.com/research/chinese-investment-us-tech-expert-research/>
- 24 Xi Jinping, “Report of the 19th National Congress of Communist Party of China,” *Xinhua News*, October 18, 2017: [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/interface/flipboard/1142846/2017-11-06/cd\\_34188086.html](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/interface/flipboard/1142846/2017-11-06/cd_34188086.html)
- 25 “XI Jinping Presides Over the First Plenary Session of the Central Military-Civil Fusion Development Committee,” *Xinhua News*, June 20, 2017: [http://www.xinhuanet.com//politics/2017-06/20/c\\_1121179676.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com//politics/2017-06/20/c_1121179676.htm)
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Hikvision, “The Application of Video in Actual Combat Training”, *Beijing Military Observer*: [http://www1.hikvision.com/cn/news\\_det\\_86\\_i221.html](http://www1.hikvision.com/cn/news_det_86_i221.html)
- 28 Tsou Tang, *Chinese Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Hongkong: Oxford University Press, 1994): p56.
- 29 Elsa B. Kania, “Battlefield Singularity: Artificial Intelligence, Military Revolution, and China’s Future Military Power,” *Center for a New American Security*, November 2017, p 6.
- 30 “The New Racetrack for Artificial Intelligence: China-U.S. Competition,” *CCID*, May 2017.
- 31 Xiao Tianliang, “Adapting to the Tide of the Military Revolution and Seize the Initiative in Reform,” *PLA Daily*, January 5, 2016.
- 32 “China exhibits advanced drones, unmanned underwater vehicles in military parade,” *Xinhua News*, October 1, 2019: [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-10/01/c\\_138439078\\_3.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-10/01/c_138439078_3.htm)
- 33 Li Wenzhe, Song Jiaping, and Liu Linyu, “Analysis of the Military requirement and Operational Mode of the ACTUV”, *Defense Technology Review*, Vol.39, No.4, August 2018, p 69-71.
- 34 Li Fyiliang, Hu Rong, Han Kang, and Sun Haoxiang, “Thoughts on the Application of UAV Swarm in the Airborne Operation”, *Defense Technology Review*, Vol.40, No.1, Feb 2019, p 31-33.
- 35 Mao Yunjie, Li Yunguo, and Wu Linbo, “Use of UAV to Help Fight the Modern United Landing”, *Defense Technology Review*, Vol.39, No.5, October 2018, p 104-107.
- 36 Peter Warren, *Wired for War: The Robotics Revolution and Conflict in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010), 230.
- 37 Gao Bo, Zhang Naqian, and Fan Xu, “Analysis on the development and Application of Anti-UAV electronic warfare,” *Defense Technology Review*, Defense Technology Review, Vol.40, No.1, February 2019, p 35-39.
- 38 Elsa B. Kania, “Battlefield Singularity: Artificial Intelligence, Military Revolution, and China’s Future Military Power,” *Center for a New American Security*, November 2017, p 23.
- 39 Lora Saalman, “Exploring Artificial Intelligence and Unmanned Platforms in China,” in Lore Saalman, ed., *The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Strategic Stability and Nuclear Risk, Volume II* (Stockholm: SIPRI, 2019), p 45.
- 40 Brose, Christian. “The New Revolution in Military Affairs.” *Foreign Affairs* 98, no. 3 (May 1, 2019): p 124.
- 41 Ibid., p 126.
- 42 Christian Brose, “The New Revolution in Military Affairs.” *Foreign Affairs* 98, no. 3 (May 1, 2019): p124.
- 43 Ye Chengcheng, and Wang Feng, “Research on the Construction of Intelligent Military Logistics System”, *Defense Technology Review*, Defense Technology Review, Vol.40, No.5, October 2019, p40-46
- 44 Li Shaobin, Jiang Dali, Fu Gaoyang, Xu Lai, “Review and Prospect of Research on UAV Delivery of Battlefield Material”, *Defense Technology Review*, Defense Technology Review, Vol.40, No.3, June 2019, p98-104.
- 45 Gu Kang, Li Yaming, Liu Ping, “Research on the Development of Intelligent Electronic Countermeasures Equipment,” *Defense Technology Review*, Vol.39, No.2, April 2018, p78-81.
- 46 Zhang Qingliang and Zhang Guoning, “5G Prompts the Acceleration of Intelligentized Operation,” *China National Defense Report*, March 12, 2019.

- 47 Michael C. Horowitz, "The Promise and Peril of Military Application of Artificial Intelligence," *Bulletin of Atomic Scientist*, April 23, 2018: <https://thebulletin.org/2018/04/the-promise-and-peril-of-military-applications-of-artificial-intelligence/>
- 48 Elsa B. Kania, "Battlefield Singularity: Artificial Intelligence, Military Revolution, and China's Future Military Power," *Center for a New American Security*, November 2017, p23.
- 49 Stephen Biddle and Ivan Oelrich, "Future Warfare in the Western Pacific: Chinese Anti-access/Area Denial, U.S. AirSea Battle, and Command of the Commons in East Asia," *International Security* 41, no. 1 (2016): 7–48.
- 50 Lora Saalman, "Integration of Neural Networks into Hypersonic Glide Vehicles," in Lore Saalman, ed., *The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Strategic Stability and Nuclear Risk, Volume II* (Stockholm: SIPRI, 2019), p24.
- 51 *Ibid.*, p25.
- 52 Michael C. Horowitz, "The Promise and Peril of Military Application of Artificial Intelligence," *Bulletin of Atomic Scientist*, April 23, 2018: <https://thebulletin.org/2018/04/the-promise-and-peril-of-military-applications-of-artificial-intelligence/>
- 53 Lora Saalman, "Exploring Artificial Intelligence and Unmanned Platforms in China," in Lore Saalman, ed., *The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Strategic Stability and Nuclear Risk, Volume II* (Stockholm: SIPRI, 2019), p 45.
- 54 Cunningham, Fiona S, and M. Taylor Fravel. "Assuring Assured Retaliation: China's Nuclear Posture and U.S.-China Strategic Stability." *International Security* 40, no. 2 (2015): 7–50.
- 55 Elsa B. Kania, "Battlefield Singularity: Artificial Intelligence, Military Revolution, and China's Future Military Power," *Center for a New American Security*, November 2017, p27.
- 56 Zhang Wang, "A Study of the Prediction Path of Cybersecurity Based on Deep Learning," *Defense Technology Review*, Defense Technology Review, Vol.39, No.1, February 2018, p34-39.
- 57 Liu Quanzhan and Li Bo, "Big Data: The Magic Weapon for Victory in Informatized Operation," *PLA Daily*, November 15, 2015;
- 58 Elsa B. Kania, "Battlefield Singularity: Artificial Intelligence, Military Revolution, and China's Future Military Power," *Center for a New American Security*, November 2017, p28.
- 59 Guo Ruobing and Si Guangya, "Facing New Challenges to Military Command in the Era of Intelligentization", *China Military Science*, July 2016.
- 60 "China's National Defense in the New Era", *The State Council Information Office of PRC*, June 2019.
- 61 Elsa B. Kania, "Battlefield Singularity: Artificial Intelligence, Military Revolution, and China's Future Military Power," *Center for a New American Security*, November 2017, p 16.
- 62 Lora Saalman, "Exploring Artificial Intelligence and Unmanned Platforms in China," in Lore Saalman, ed., *The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Strategic Stability and Nuclear Risk, Volume II* (Stockholm: SIPRI, 2019), p 47.
- 63 Yin Junsong, Li Minghai, Li Shijiang, and Gao Kai, "Facing the Challenges of the Intelligentization of War Actively", *PLA Daily*, February 6, 2020: [http://www.81.cn/jfjbmapp/content/2020-02/06/content\\_253352.htm](http://www.81.cn/jfjbmapp/content/2020-02/06/content_253352.htm)
- 64 Kania, Elsa. "Minds at War: China's Pursuit of Military Advantage through Cognitive Science and Biotechnology." *PRISM*, Vol.8, No.3 (2019): p86.
- 65 Hwang Ji-Hwan, "Application of Machine Learning in North Korea and South Korea," in Lore Saalman, ed., *The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Strategic Stability and Nuclear Risk, Volume II* (Stockholm: SIPRI, 2019), p29.
- 66 Su Fei, "Military Developments in Artificial Intelligence and Their Impact on the Korea Peninsula," in Lore Saalman, ed., *The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Strategic Stability and Nuclear Risk, Volume II* (Stockholm: SIPRI, 2019), p34.
- 67 Lore Saalman, ed., *The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Strategic Stability and Nuclear Risk, Volume II* (Stockholm: SIPRI, 2019), p8.

- 68 Jiang Tianjiao, “The Impact of Military Artificial Intelligence on Warfare,” in Lore Saalman, ed., *The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Strategic Stability and Nuclear Risk, Volume II* (Stockholm: SIPRI, 2019), p51.
- 69 Fuhrmann, Matthew. “Spreading Temptation: Proliferation and Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation Agreements.” *International Security* 34, no. 1 (July 2009): 7–41.
- 70 Nishida Michiru, “Arms Control and Developments in Machine Learning and Autonomy,” in Lore Saalman, ed., *The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Strategic Stability and Nuclear Risk, Volume II* (Stockholm: SIPRI, 2019), p98.
- 71 “State of AI: Artificial Intelligence, the Military, and Increasingly Autonomous Weapons”, PAX, April 2019.
- 72 Lora Saalman, “Exploring Artificial Intelligence and Unmanned Platforms in China,” in Lore Saalman, ed., *The Impact of Artificial Intelligence and Nuclear Risk, Volume II* (Stockholm: SIPRI, 2019), p45.
- 73 Pavel Podvig, “The Myth of Strategic Stability,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 31 October, 2012: <https://thebulletin.org/2012/10/the-myth-of-strategic-stability/>
- 74 Lora Saalman, “Fear of false negatives: AI and China’s nuclear posture,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 24 April, 2018: <https://thebulletin.org/2018/04/fear-of-false-negatives-ai-and-chinas-nuclear-posture/>
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 Talmadge, Caitlin, “Would China Go Nuclear? Assessing the Risk of Chinese Nuclear Escalation in a Conventional War with the United States,” *International Security* 41, no. 4 (2017): p51.
- 77 Lora Saalman, “Fear of false negatives: AI and China’s nuclear posture,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 24 April, 2018: <https://thebulletin.org/2018/04/fear-of-false-negatives-ai-and-chinas-nuclear-posture/>
- 79 “Air-Sea Battle: Service Collaboration to Address Anti-Access & Area Denial Challenges” *Department of Defense*, 2013.
- 80 Stephen Biddle and Ivan Oelrich, “Future Warfare in the Western Pacific: Chinese Anti-access/Area Denial, U.S. Air-Sea Battle, and Command of the Commons in East Asia,” *International Security* 41, no. 1 (2016): p12.
- 81 Ibid., 15
- 82 Barry R. Posen, “Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony,” *International Security*, 28, no. 1 (July 2003): p5.
- 83 Michael C. Horowitz, “Artificial Intelligence, International Competition, and the Balance of Power,” *Texas National Security Review*, May 2018, p41.
- 84 Margarita Konaev, “With AI, We Will See Faster Fights, But Longer Wars,” *War on the Rocks*, October 29, 2019: <https://warontherocks.com/2019/10/with-ai-well-see-faster-fights-but-longer-wars/>
- 85 Paul Sharre, “Killer Apps: The Real Dangers of an AI Arms Race,” *Foreign Affairs* 98, no. 3 (May 1, 2019): 135–144.
- 86 Wang Zhaobing and Chang Sheng, “Shaping the political attitudes of Military Application of Artificial Intelligence,” *Study Times*, November 14, 2018.

# Implications for NATO:

## Latvia and the Russian Hybrid Warfare Threat

*Alisa Tsaturov*

*Alisa Tsaturov is a Masters' candidate at The George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs with a concentration in Security Studies and Europe and Eurasia. She currently works at the U.S. Department of State in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs as a Program Analyst. She also taught English overseas as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Eastern Latvia and is a fluent Russian speaker.*

### ABSTRACT

---

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance currently faces not only a conventional threat from Russia, but also a more insidious threat—that of hybrid warfare. In the past several years there has been a noticeable increase in the range and intensity of Russian hybrid warfare attacks. Efforts of the United States, NATO, and individual countries have been insufficient in recognizing and combating this multifaceted issue thus far. The Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are particularly at risk due to their proximity to Russia and their shared history. Latvia is more susceptible to Russian hybrid operations, since it contains the highest population of Russian speakers and ethnic Russians out of the three Baltic States. The potential of a traditional Russian military threat to the Baltics and to NATO is a fact that is known and well documented: the United States, NATO, and the Baltics must be prepared to prevent not only the likelihood of conventional attacks, but all potential forms of Russian aggression, including non-violent subversion efforts.

---

The NATO alliance faces not only a conventional threat from Russia, but also one that is more insidious in nature—hybrid warfare. In the past several years, there has been a noticeable increase in the range and intensity of Russian hybrid warfare attacks, but the efforts of the United States, NATO, and individual countries have been insufficient in recognizing and combating this multifaceted issue thus far. The Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are particularly at risk due to their geographic and historical proximity to Russia. This paper outlines nonviolent Russian hybrid operations carried out in Latvia, the country that contains the highest population of Russian speakers and ethnic Russians of the three Baltic States.<sup>1</sup> The potential of a

traditional Russian military threat to NATO and the Baltics is known and well documented. However, the United States, NATO, and the Baltics must be prepared to prevent possible conventional attacks as well as all forms of potential Russian aggression, including non-violent subversion efforts. Since the Russo-Georgian War in 2008, as well as after the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and subsequent War in the Donbas, the term "hybrid warfare" has attracted interest from Western scholars and strategists. James Wither uses a definition found in the 2015 edition of *Military Balance*, which defines hybrid warfare as:

*"The use of military and non-military tools in an integrated campaign, designed to achieve surprise, seize the initiative and gain psychological as well as physical advantages utilizing diplomatic means; sophisticated and rapid information, electronic and cyber operations; covert and occasionally overt military and intelligence action; and economic pressure."*<sup>2</sup>

Hybrid warfare involves the blending of traditional tactics with non-conventional techniques, the blurring of conflict between war and peace, as well as attempts to influence the domestic politics of target countries through political subversion. Hybrid warfare presents a unique danger in the modern day because it is waged in an increasingly globalized context and often weaponizes information to sow confusion and disorder through technological means.

According to Franklin Kramer, a distinguished fellow and board member at the Atlantic Council and former Assistant Secretary of Defense, and Lauren Speranza, Assistant Director of the Transatlantic Security Initiative at the Atlantic Council's Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security, Russian hybrid threats can be divided into four key categories: low-level use of force, cyber-attacks, economic and political subversion, and information warfare. Russian hybrid operations are frequently carried out by non-traditional participants, who are drawn from "a bewildering array of 'political entrepreneurs' hoping that their success will win them the Kremlin's favor: diplomats and spies, criminals and think tankers, oligarchs and journalists."<sup>3</sup> Politically, the goal is to exploit existing weaknesses in society, sow confusion, and spread demoralization in order, "for Moscow to exert predominant influence over the foreign and security policies of immediate neighbors so that they will either remain neutral or support Russia's international agenda and not challenge the legitimacy of the Putinist system."<sup>4</sup> It is important to add that Russian operations may at times be disjointed, opportunistic, and even at odds with one another.

In order to address the Russian hybrid challenge it is crucial to understand the Russian political landscape, as well as the worldview of President Vladimir



Putin and the Russian government. Under the rule of President Putin, Russia has slid towards authoritarian kleptocracy. Corruption pervades Russian government and economic institutions, where elites secure their hold on power by economically robbing public resources.<sup>5</sup> Putin has consolidated control through a power-vertical system that has led to the removal of most forms of political dissent. Using this system, the Kremlin selects local governments itself while harassing, targeting, or penalizing opposition.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, freedom of the press has been significantly reduced and stifled, with independent news outlets shut down or brought under the control of the state.

Mixed with political challenges are: Putin's deep-seated mistrust toward the West, a concerted effort to avoid color revolutions, and a conviction that the fall of the Soviet Union was one of the greatest geopolitical tragedies of the 20th century. From the Kremlin's perspective, the West "gained the upper hand in the 1990s, both militarily through NATO's eastward expansion, and in propaganda terms by portraying Western democracy as the only attractive form of government."<sup>7</sup> In the eyes of Putin and his government, Russia must therefore constantly defend itself against Western-supported regime change. Putin's philosophy is marked by a dizzying "blend of Russian statism, great power chauvinism, pan-Slavism, panOrthodoxy, multi-ethnic Eurasianism, Russian nationalism... social conservatism, anti-liberalism, anti-Americanism, and anti-Westernism" which ultimately aims to restore Russia to its former glory by fundamentally restructuring the existing international order with Russia as a major center of power.<sup>8</sup>

Even though the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are NATO members, there is growing concern that these countries may be the targets of ongoing Russian hybrid warfare attacks, constituting a direct threat to NATO. They are geographically near to Russia, and are composed of significant Russian-speaking minorities.<sup>9</sup> This is true more so in Latvia than the other two Baltic states. Russians living in Latvia reside mostly in the capital of Riga and make up approximately half of the population of the eastern region of Latgale, which borders Russia and Belarus,<sup>10</sup> and is the least economically developed region in Latvia. The country as a whole has a population of less than two million people, and over one-third of Latvians speak Russian as their native language.<sup>11</sup> This, combined with Latvia's small military and distance from Western Europe (politically and geographically), present challenges.<sup>12</sup> As the middle Baltic country, Latvia is of strategic importance for Russia: if Russia was to reassert dominance in Latvia, this would effectively isolate Estonia and align Kaliningrad closer with the Russian mainland, dealing a significant blow to the NATO alliance.

The Baltic countries spent the majority of the twentieth century occupied by imperial powers including the Soviet Union. After gaining independence in 1991 from the Soviet Union, Latvia began the process of re-building a

robust national identity, adding to the ethnic tensions. Therefore, according to Corey Collier, “Latvians tend to view each other as either pro-Russian (with all the communist baggage that comes with it) or as pro-Western (which to ethnic Russians means either sympathetic to Nazism or NATO aggression).”<sup>13</sup> After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Latvia and Estonia adopted a policy that stated that all individuals who could not trace their ancestry to Latvia or Estonia prior to 1940 were required to apply for citizenship. The naturalization exam included a compulsory language requirement, which meant that Russians who did not speak Latvian were disqualified. Those who were disqualified were often Russian citizens or stateless individuals.<sup>14</sup> While some Russians have integrated well into Latvian communities, some enclaves remain and consist mainly of older Russians who resist assimilation and “may be susceptible to manipulation by Moscow’s agitprop (political propaganda) offensives.”<sup>15</sup>

Russia has moved to exploit the divisions existing in Latvian society through a number of different tactics including but not limited to: diplomatic pressure, psychological operations, incitement of the Russian population, and information operations.<sup>16</sup> For example, when the Latvian government rejected efforts—that had been supported by the Kremlin—to establish Russian as an official language in Latvia, the Russian government seized this opportunity to promote the narrative of the oppression of Russian minority communities in former Soviet states and to present Putin as the protector of Russians in the near abroad. Another tactic included the use of “passportization,” through which Russia granted “ethnic Russians—even third-generation Latvian-born ethnic Russians—[the ability to] acquire Russian citizenship, Russian passports, and retire on a Russian pension years earlier than Latvian citizens.”<sup>17</sup>

Additionally, there is some concern that if Moscow wanted to retaliate against NATO and the United States in the Baltics, the Kremlin could foment a locally organized separatist movement: a potential candidate being the Latgalian city of Daugavpils, with a majority Russian population. Such a scenario remains unlikely but possible, as many Russians living in Latgale would not be open to intervention by Moscow but a small population would be supportive. If armed, pro-Russian separatists could create major problems for Latvia, particularly as the media could blow such a revolt out of proportion.<sup>18</sup> In such a situation, Russian actions would be opportunistic in nature, with the Kremlin attempting to capitalize on the pre-existing societal divisions in Latvia.

Currently the Kremlin, with support from local pro-Russia activists in Latvia, has tried to keep tensions brewing by supporting organizations and NGOs sympathetic to the Russian cause. Bugajski and Assenova reveal that a study conducted by *Re:Baltica* showed that there are over 40 organizations throughout the Baltics which seek to, “influence political discussions and push Moscow’s political line.”<sup>19</sup> One such example is Latvian Human Rights

Committee, an organization that advocates for the rights of non-Latvian citizens and has suspected links with Moscow.

Furthermore, Russia maintains ties to ethnic Russians living in countries of the former Soviet Union through its, "Compatriot Policy, [which] funds pro-Russia organizations in the Baltics, supports educational exchanges, and seeks to protect the interests of Russians abroad."<sup>20</sup> While Russia claims that the Compatriot Policy and its corresponding entity Rosstrudnichestvo are legitimate culture-based institutions, the Baltic countries argue that Russia is trying to hamper the integration process and, "undermine... Latvia's sovereignty and security, including through the promotion of alternative views of the Soviet Union's occupation of the Baltics and by convincing the population that the Baltic governments are fascist."<sup>21</sup> Russia has also resorted to diplomatic pressure and psychological tactics by raising questions about the sovereignty and legitimacy of the Baltic States: some members of the Duma have brought up the, "legality of the break-up of the USSR and the independence of the Baltic states and other former Soviet republics."<sup>22</sup> Some Russian officials, "have attacked the Preamble to the Latvian Constitution... claiming that it gives a privileged position to the titular nation over ethnic minorities and will facilitate further inter-ethnic splits."<sup>23</sup>

The split between the Russian and Latvian media spaces is a long-term issue that has plagued Latvia since independence. Russian speakers prefer to watch Russian shows due to higher production and more relevant plots, and therefore Russian speakers exist in a "separate informational space" from the Latvian population.<sup>24</sup> As noted by Bugajski and Assenova, "Russian state TV exerts influence over the older generation, while the youth is reached mostly through the Internet."<sup>25</sup> Russian propaganda, which is controlled and funded by the state, has a "tremendous influence on Russian speakers in the Baltics."<sup>26</sup> Such a potential leverage point allows Russia more influence than the West or Latvia itself, as it pits state-sponsored disinformation against free media.<sup>27</sup>

The NATO alliance must be prepared to defend against a conventional Russian attack, and must also do everything in its power to neutralize and defend against nonviolent Russian hybrid threats. Additionally, it is crucial to understand that although some of the moves made by Moscow may appear insignificant or ineffective at this moment in time, the strategy of "salami tactics" proves otherwise. Using this technique, an adversary—in this case Russia—works to gain control of a political landscape "piece-by-piece," so that the victim does not realize until it is too late. There are steps that NATO, Latvia, and other Baltic countries can take on several fronts in order to strengthen their position and counter Russian hybrid operations.

On a regional and national level, Latvia needs to begin bridging the Latvian-Russian ethnic divide and healing social divisions. Currently, "Latvia lacks a common forum for inter-ethnic reconciliation, and there is little

dialogue in the two communities regarding Latvia's occupation under... Sovietism."<sup>28</sup> The creation of such a forum, perhaps with the help of local civil society, would be an important stride in the right direction. The change towards increased integration must be consistent and gradual, because "there is a danger in moving too quickly, because ethnic Russians gaining citizenship [and] immediately transitioning to voting constituents... could empower pro-Russian political parties."<sup>29</sup>

The Latvian government must also address the legacy of Communism and devote more attention to the development of the eastern Latgale region, where "a lack of modernisation... [and] severe and long-lasting socio-economic backwardness has remained a continuing source for political disaffection placing a strain on state loyalty."<sup>30</sup> Next, the government should push for more transparency regarding Russian investment in Latvia and seek to limit Russian financial and political activities in Latvia, including the funding of pro-Russian NGOs.

In the realm of informational warfare, Latvia and the Baltics must use their advantage of being open and democratic societies, in the sense that all citizens in these countries have access to a wide range of media sources, unlike Russian citizens living in Russia. Sandra Murinska suggests that the "most effective way to reduce the influence of Russian media is to strengthen Latvia's media space."<sup>31</sup> The funding and resources devoted to fighting Russian disinformation must be increased, both locally and nationally. In a coordinated effort NATO, the United States, and Latvia should aim to counteract Russian sources of information and enhance the resilience of the population by working to balance out the flows of media and information.

One way to do so would be to support private efforts of civil society and journalists in creating engaging media content, both on TV and on the Internet, which would ultimately encourage Russian speakers from turning to Russian news sources. It would also be important to collect information on the media consumption habits of citizens living in the region of Latgale, and then to produce media that counters Russian propaganda, relays local news, and provides coverage of major global events, with Russian speakers in that region as the target audience.

Some key structures that address these issues are already in place, namely the NATO Stratcom Center of Excellence in Riga and on the civil society level, the Baltic Centre for Media Excellence. The work of these organizations is essential, and the Latvian government, the United States, and NATO must provide support for such endeavors. Kramer and Speranza write that "creating a fund at...the NATO level that is focused on supporting such private sector and civil society efforts could have multiplier effects and could be very worthwhile in responding to Russian propaganda."<sup>32</sup>

The NATO alliance, in a joint effort with the United States, Latvia, and

other Baltic states must take action to prepare for and safeguard against a wide range of Russian hybrid operations, from political and economic subversion to information warfare. Such an approach will require increasing regional knowledge as well as local, supranational, and international cooperation. Hybrid warfare seeks to target existing weaknesses in international organizations, government institutions, and society as a whole; the alliance must cultivate resilience of local populations by ensuring access to balanced news sources in the face of such threats, and understand that Russia will exploit known vulnerabilities if given the chance. Ultimately, the NATO alliance must recognize that hybrid warfare operations are a reality of 21st century warfare and implement policies that will ensure the continued peace and security of its member nations now and in the future.

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 Andrew Radin, *Hybrid Warfare in the Baltics: Threats and Potential Responses*, (RAND Corporation: Santa Monica, California, 2017).
- 2 James K. Wither, "Making Sense of Hybrid Warfare," *Connections: The Quarterly Journal*, 15, no. 2 (2016): 73-87.
- 3 Mark Galeotti, "I'm Sorry for Creating the 'Gerasimov Doctrine'," *Foreign Policy*, March 5, 2018. (Accessed March 1, 2019). <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/05/im-sorry-for-creating-the-gerasimov-doctrine/>
- 4 Janusz Bugajski and Margarita Assenova, *Eurasian Disunion: Russia's Vulnerable Flanks* (Washington, DC: The Jamestown Foundation, 2016), 8.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Bugajski and Assenova, *Eurasian Disunion*, 5.
- 7 Kramer and Speranza "Meeting the Russian Hybrid Challenge," 4.
- 8 Bugajski and Assenova, *Eurasian Disunion*, 9.
- 9 Ibid., 69.
- 10 Belarus is a notable strategic ally of Russia
- 11 Andris Spruds, Anda Rožukalne, Klavs Sedlenieks, Martins Daugulis, et al., "Internet Trolling as a Hybrid Warfare Tool: The Case of Latvia," *NATO STRATCOM Centre of Intelligence*, Accessed March 1, 2019.
- 12 Corey Collier, "Latvia in the Crosshairs: Russian Information Warfare and Countermeasures," in *Project 1721*, ed. Douglas Mastriano, *The United States Army War College* (2017).
- 13 Collier, "Latvia in the Crosshairs."
- 14 Radin, *Hybrid Warfare in the Baltics*, 18.
- 15 Bugajski and Assenova, *Eurasian Disunion*, 70.
- 16 Bugajski and Assenova, *Eurasian Disunion*, 17-30.
- 17 Collier, "Latvia in the Crosshairs," 49.
- 18 Bugajski and Assenova, *Eurasian Disunion*, 84.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Radin, *Hybrid Warfare in the Baltics*, 28.

- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Bugajski and Assenova, *Eurasian Disunion*, 84.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Bugajski and Assenova, *Eurasian Disunion*, 85.
- 26 Radin, *Hybrid Warfare in the Baltics*, 18.
- 27 Wither, "Making Sense of Hybrid Warfare," 73-87.
- 28 Bugajski and Assenova, *Eurasian Disunion*, 103.
- 29 Collier, "Latvia in the Crosshairs," 49.
- 30 Geoffrey Pridham, "Latgale and Latvia's Post-Soviet Democracy: The Territorial Dimension of Regime Consolidation," *East European Politics*, 34, no. 2 (2018): 194-216.
- 31 Sandra Murinska, Olena Aleksandrova, and Roman Dodonov, "Information Warfare: Future Challenges of Latvia and Ukraine." *Cxið*, 5 (2018): 66-72.
- 32 Kramer and Speranza, "Meeting the Russian Hybrid Challenge," 1-29.

# A Talk with Tish: Leading with Integrity

By Jacqueline K. Schultz

*Interview Conducted on 10 April 2020*

*Letitia "Tish" A. Long is the Chairman of the Intelligence and National Security Alliance (INSA), a non-profit trade association whose mission is to provide a "nonpartisan forum for collaboration among the public, private, and academic sectors of the intelligence and national security communities." Letitia Long served as the fifth Director of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA), and was the first woman to lead a major U.S. intelligence agency. She began her career in Naval Intelligence and then proceeded to serve as the Deputy Director of Naval Intelligence, the first Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence Policy, Planning and Resources, the first Chief Information Officer at the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), and the Deputy Director of the DIA before leading NGA.*

---

*"Leadership is about building teams. Teams are formed from relationships and relationships are built on trust." – Letitia A. Long*

## BACKGROUND

What prompted your decision to join the Navy and initially made you interested in the intelligence community (IC)?

For clarification, I was not in the Navy, I served as a civilian employee for the Department of the Navy. I attended Virginia Tech to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering. I needed to pay for my education, so I participated in the Cooperative Education Program. This is a five-year program where you spend your first and fifth years studying full time and the middle years alternating semesters going to school full time and working full time. It is a great way to gain practical experience.

I grew up in a family committed to public service. Both of my parents and three of my siblings worked at the National Security Agency. After graduating I spent six years working at the David Taylor Naval Ship Research and Development Center as a program manager developing Acoustic Intelligence (ACINT) systems for submarines. This is where I learned about the importance of building teams.

I then spent the next six years working for Naval Intelligence and even managed some of the programs I had worked on at David Taylor. This work was highly classified. As a result, I had the opportunity to work on a program from end to end. What I mean by that is we put the program together, justified and defended it on the Hill, received the appropriation, developed and installed the equipment, worked with the customer and received and analyzed the data. It's unusual to work the whole life cycle of a program from one job and I was very fortunate to be able to do that.

## **CAREER IN PUBLIC SERVICE**

**Your career has been defined by firsts: as the first Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence, the first Chief Information Officer at the DIA, and the first woman to lead a major U.S. intelligence agency. How have you charted your own path when there was not a clear precedent?**

Let me start at the beginning. I was one of eight children (with five brothers) and having seven siblings taught me a lot about teamwork. It also taught me to speak up. My parents never made a distinction between what the girls could do versus our brothers. Therefore, I didn't think twice about going into engineering. I loved math and science and it was where the jobs were. However, it was not where the women were. Nor were they at David Taylor Research Center. I was the only woman in my division of about 75 people. That said, I was accepted – as I was at Virginia Tech. I don't recall having any issues – even working on submarines in the 1980s.

I learned the importance of teams in achieving success and that teams are built on relationships. I worked hard, built a solid reputation, built a network - and called upon it when I needed to. My network consisted of my peers and teammates, and just as importantly, my mentors. I had several mentors from early in my career and added to that set of mentors over the years. I still reach out to some of them today.

I also learned to take risks. I took risks when applying to jobs. Each successive job was just a little bit out of my comfort zone. This undoubtedly helped me in



my selection to Senior Executive in Naval Intelligence when I was just 34 years old – the first woman to be promoted to senior executive in Naval Intelligence. I spent four months in that job and then went to DIA. I spent 18 months at DIA and then went to the Central Intelligence Agency for three years. Then I went back to Naval Intelligence as Deputy Director (the first woman) and then to the Office of the Secretary of Defense. The risk was not only the increased responsibility, it was also the fact that I had to resign from each position and then reapply elsewhere. It's easier and much more common to move around today than it was back then.

**I understand that you were serving as the Deputy Director of Naval Intelligence on 9/11. Are you willing to describe what it is like to lead during a crisis?**

On the day of the attacks, the Director of Naval Intelligence, RADM Rick Porterfield was scheduled to testify on Capitol Hill. Therefore, I conducted the morning meeting that day, from the operations center in the Pentagon, which consists of an intelligence briefing on overnight developments of interest to the Navy. Sixteen minutes into the meeting, the first plane hit the North Tower and we turned on CNN to watch the coverage. A few minutes later we resumed our meeting – remember we all thought it was a small plane off course that had hit the tower. When we received notice that the second plane hit the South Tower, we turned the news back on. I will never forget that one of the senior Navy Captains in the room looked at me, leaned over, and said “We are under attack by Al Qaeda”.

After a few minutes, I left the briefing center to see what information the Chief of Naval Operations required. He was not in his office, so I returned to mine. About 20 minutes later, the third plane hit the Pentagon. We evacuated. I tried to go back to the operations center but could not get there because the plane had flown into the exact area where we had just been. We lost eight magnificent Naval Intelligence personnel that day.

Our priority the rest of that day was to account for everyone. We mustered in the South Parking Lot and I sent everyone home except for our Executive Officer. We eventually ended up in the Marine Corps Intelligence Headquarters in the Navy Annex. We did not even have a recall roster with us. I called my husband and he faxed us one. RADM Porterfield walked back from Capitol Hill and joined us. By midnight, we were able to locate all but seven of our folks. (The eighth would not be identified until some weeks later as a Naval Intelligence reservist who had been in the ops center in his civilian capacity.)

After midnight, I visited the spouse, with a chaplain, of one of our unaccounted-

for personnel. The spouse was magnificently brave. It was the hardest thing I had ever done before, or since, then. What was it like to lead during that time? I believe that RADM Porterfield and I showed a lot of compassion and a quiet determination to re-constitute what we had lost – our watch – and pivot Naval Intelligence to support the Global War on Terrorism. We attended a lot of funerals in the following weeks. 9/11 was a shared experience that forged bonds that remain today.

**How did the attacks impact mission mentality?**

Many people rededicated themselves to the mission after the attacks. There was an increased sense of urgency. The 9/11 Commission drove the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (IRTPA) which resulted in the creation of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), the National Counterterrorism Center, greatly increased information sharing and Joint Duty Assignments. 9/11 was really the event that put the Intelligence Community (IC) on the path of increased collaboration by pointing out three flaws: a lack of an information-sharing system, laws that prevented information-sharing between law enforcement and the intelligence community, and a culture of not sharing information. The IRTPA sought to overcome that.

**The government is often criticized for putting many agencies in silos or making inter-agency cooperation difficult. What is an example of a time you collaborated with another agency or initiated a partnership that led to a successful outcome?**

The operation to take down Osama bin Laden (UBL) is a great example of IC collaboration at its finest. I had been the Director of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) less than a month when several NGA analysts discovered a compound they believed to be where bin Laden resided. The IC had been searching for UBL for over a decade. NGA, working with NSA and CIA, searched an area based on a tip-off and came up with several likely compounds – eventually honing in on the one that the operations team would successfully raid.

## **POST-GOVERNMENT SERVICE**

**What do you miss most about public service in the government and now as the Chair of INSA's Board of Directors, why do you believe in the importance of public-private partnerships?**

I miss the mission and the people. I stay in touch with the people. The

Intelligence and National Security Alliance (INSA) provides one way for me to stay connected with the mission. INSA brings the government together with the private sector. The government cannot meet mission needs alone. INSA provides a platform which enables the public sector to outline their priorities and needs and enables a critical conversation between the two entities.

**What emerging trend/technology do you foresee as the next critical threat to U.S. national security and how can the IC today best counter it?**

Information and data assurance. The sheer volume of information available to an analyst today, from so many new sources, is simply overwhelming. Artificial intelligence is an emerging technology already being employed in the IC. Used properly, it is an opportunity to help the analyst sift through the information to find patterns and discern what is of most importance.

A threat related to the volume of information is disinformation and misinformation. How does the analyst know the efficacy of the data? How can the IC be assured it is reporting the truth? Disinformation campaigns are being waged by both nation states and non-nation states. Whether one is trying to influence our elections or sow discord over race relations or even misinform citizens about the coronavirus, these campaigns tug at the very fabric of our society. The IC needs to address this head on - call it out when it is identified and call it out publicly.

## **PERSPECTIVE FOR STUDENTS**

**What are the top leadership traits that students should cultivate?**

Integrity is the foundation for everything we do and, at the end of the day, everything we have. Any subsequent leadership traits build upon integrity. The three leadership traits that reinforce integrity are reputation, self-awareness and courage. Guard your reputation; it is your currency. Self-awareness involves knowing who you are – knowing your strengths and weaknesses.

Accentuate your strengths and work on your weaknesses. You need trusted advisors to tell you the truth. (The more senior you are in your career; the more people will try and flatter you rather than tell you the truth.) Finally, you need courage; courage to make the hard decisions, courage to speak truth to power, and courage to stand up for your folks when things don't go exactly as planned.

**What role have mentors played in your career?**

Mentors have played a huge role in my career. They have been sounding boards, rendered much needed advice, and opened doors for me. I have had and continue to have many mentors. Everyone should cultivate multiple mentors. Mentors should be different than you. They should be different in background and experience. If they were just like you, it would be as if you were taking advice from yourself. Sometimes you want advice that gives you the immediate reaction of “I would never do that.” It makes you think outside your comfort zone – which means you are growing. I still rely on my mentors today. We are never too old or too wise to need advice.

**You’ve worked in high positions in a heavily male-dominated sector. What advice do you have for young women looking to be heard when their voices are so often discounted?**

We used to say it was enough to have a seat at the table. We now know it is vital to not only have a seat at the table, everyone also needs a voice at the table. A recent BYU study shows that there are still biases and cultural norms that prevent women from being heard. One way to be heard is to have a majority of women in the room. That is often not feasible based on our numbers. What you can do is to have an ally in the room. A woman – or even better, a man – who will repeat and emphasize your good points. For all the men reading this, you can have such a profound impact when you take on the ally role. I commend the BYU study for all to read.

**Looking back, what has been the most rewarding part of your career?**

The most rewarding part of my career has been seeing those I have mentored rise up in their career and be successful and happy.