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CHINA'S MILITARY OPERATIONS OTHER THAN WAR

THE UK EXPERIENCE AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE WEST

MIWA HIRONO AND MANSHU XU

Although political friction and ideological differences between China and the West can hamper co-operation on missions known as 'Military Operations Other than War', the UK and China have achieved a certain level of success in this regard, particularly in relation to UN peacekeeping and counter-piracy operations. In this article, Miwa Hirono and Manshu Xu argue that the key has been to use multilateral platforms to frame bilateral collaboration, thereby diminishing Chinese perceptions of the associated political risks. Thus it is useful for Western militaries to exploit multilateralism to make military co-operation more attractive to China.

China and the West face a number of common security challenges in the twenty-first century. These include intra-state conflicts in Africa, terrorist attacks around the world, large-scale natural disasters and the (now-diminishing) threat of piracy in the Gulf of Aden. Meeting these challenges requires in-depth international co-operation and co-ordination involving civilian, military and even paramilitary resources. Many armed forces, including those of the US, UK and China, have engaged in 'Military Operations other than War' (MOOTW) – in other words, 'the use of military capabilities across the range of military operations short of war', for example, peacekeeping, disaster relief and counter-piracy operations.¹ In a globalised world, MOOTW are inherently multilateral. However, military co-operation between China and the West is often limited by political divergence and different ideological stances on issues of international security.

Sino-US relations in particular make such co-operation difficult.

Despite tireless assurances about their respective peaceful intentions, the US and China experience continuing friction over a variety of issues, ranging from the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) military build-up to currency exchange rates. In particular, the United States' announcement in 2011 of arms sales to Taiwan resulted in the cancellation of a number of US-China military exercises.² Kurt Campbell and Richard Weitz argued in 2005 that the many deep-rooted sources of tension between the two 'suggest the need for modest expectations about near-term progress both in military ties and broader relations'.³ This remains the case today, even after the Obama administration emphasised the importance of a 'deeper and more effective partnership' with China in the US National Security Strategy published in 2010.⁴

In contrast, Sino-UK relations are not characterised by such friction. There has, in fact, been a certain level of success in UK-Chinese military co-operation on MOOTW, particularly in relation to UN peacekeeping and counter-piracy

operations in the Gulf of Aden. The key to this success lies in the fact that their bilateral co-operation has been framed using multilateral platforms, helping to ease the political risk China perceives to be associated with this collaboration, including that of revealing its real military capability to the world. China is willing to join others in military activity so long as its co-operation helps to further advance its national interests and to project an image of itself as a responsible state. By focusing on illustrative examples of relatively successful UK-Chinese collaboration on MOOTW, this article explores the implications of such activities for a wider discussion of how Sino-Western co-operation can be expanded. Indeed, the West should exploit multilateralism to make military co-operation more attractive to China.

Opportunities and Challenges in UK-Chinese Military Co-operation

Both Chinese and UK defence policies are conducive to international military co-operation, suggesting that the two countries recognise those security

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The UK's then-Foreign Secretary David Miliband during a visit to a peacekeeping-force training centre in Langfang, Heibei Province, China, March 2010. *Courtesy of Feng Li/Getty Images.*

challenges requiring a multilateral military response as matters of national importance. China's latest defence White Paper, published in April 2013, advocates the establishment of military-to-military confidence-building mechanisms, and emphasises the Chinese leadership's focus on 'the new security concepts featuring mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination', and on international co-operation in the form of 'UN peacekeeping missions, international counter-terrorism cooperation, international merchant shipping protection and disaster relief operations'.⁵

Participation in international MOOTW also features prominently in UK foreign- and defence-policy frameworks. The UK's most recent defence White Papers discuss how to address its security challenges in a changing international strategic context.⁶ The ongoing transition from a decade of combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan to a post-ISAF period means that the UK now needs to consider new forms of international military engagement and contribution, for example, through UN peacekeeping.⁷

Strengthening mutual trust and confidence is important to the PLA and the UK armed forces, particularly because it would better enable the latter to understand China's strategy and the PLA's future direction. China's defence spending has increased – often by double-digit percentages – since the late 1990s.⁸ This tends to raise some concerns among UK officials and scholars about Chinese intentions regarding future global politics.⁹ The participation of China's military forces in international MOOTW provides an ideal opportunity for it to ease such concerns and project a non-threatening image as a 'responsible state'.¹⁰

Despite the existing favourable policy environment, political tensions hamper deeper co-operation between the UK and China to an extent. The first of these relates to fundamental ideological differences between the two, especially regarding the way in which they understand the concept of sovereignty and their international obligations. Differences arise on the question of how far the concept of sovereignty extends with regards to humanitarian

catastrophe in conflict areas and whether the international community should or should not use military force in conflict areas to protect civilians. China subscribes to a rigid interpretation of sovereignty, in which state authority is understood as 'the ultimate authority for dealing with all domestic and foreign affairs faced by the nation state'.¹¹ While some research suggests that China's interpretation of sovereignty has become more flexible in recent years, it remains extremely cautious about an elastic interpretation of sovereignty that could lead to military intervention without local or state consent.¹² The UK, on the other hand, has conducted major military interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya since 2001, prioritising other political and humanitarian considerations over the principle of sovereignty. This ideological difference prompted China to be either unsupportive or very critical of the use of force in all of the above-mentioned interventions. Greater military co-operation between China and the UK – similar to that which the latter has developed with the US and EU member states, for example – has been difficult in

the face of such fundamental ideological differences.

The second tension lies in the two countries' ambivalent bilateral relations, particularly due to their potential effect on their international positions *vis-à-vis* other key actors. From the UK government's perspective, co-operation with China cannot be promoted at the expense of its relationships with other actors of strategic importance, including the US, the EU, NATO and India. The UK needs to address any concerns those actors might have about closer British relations with China, making it essential that the UK communicates its intentions clearly and perhaps takes an incremental approach.¹³ From China's perspective, too, the kind of co-operation it can have with the UK is restricted to activities that do not jeopardise the country's 'independent' foreign policy. Under no circumstances would China work under the command and control of other states, meaning that its UN peacekeeping and counter-piracy operations must be conducted under a UN mandate. This is one of the reasons why it was difficult for China to agree to the implementation of an integrated transit corridor, formed by the warships of different contributing nations, to counter piracy in the Indian Ocean, for example.

The third tension is related to a widespread view among Western analysts that the Chinese military is not interested in deepening international military co-operation.¹⁴ A number of UK policy-makers suggested that it is difficult to negotiate such programmes with China because there is often a long wait for a response, reportedly due in part to its complex, bureaucratic decision-making system.¹⁵ More importantly, this may well be the result of the PLA's reluctance to reveal any gaps in military capability.¹⁶ From the point of view of the PLA, however, the perceived risk in discussing its capabilities in detail no longer prevents it from participating in international military missions, to which it has an increasingly open and positive attitude.¹⁷

These tensions will be difficult to resolve in the foreseeable future. Therefore, although it is important to recognise the clear differences between

the two countries, focusing on what is common to both is likely to be more fruitful than remaining trapped in a *cul-de-sac* of stagnant debate over fundamental ideological and political differences, and speculation about whether China is genuinely interested in military co-operation. The key is to build on shared interests.

UK–Chinese Military Co-operation on UN Peacekeeping Operations

UN peacekeeping operations provide opportunities for the two countries to co-operate. Indeed, China's increasing participation in these operations is rooted in its desire to maintain regional stability, an essential element of the country's 'going out' strategy. The People's Republic of China (PRC) is also keen to project an image of responsible statehood¹⁸ – which the UK has encouraged it to substantiate through the assumption of greater international responsibility.

China and the UK have complementary strengths in peacekeeping operations. As the largest contributor of manpower among the five permanent Security Council members,¹⁹ China has deployed more than 10,000 soldiers and officers from the PLA and Public Armed Police to more than twenty missions since 1988. As of October 2013, the PRC was contributing 1,919 military and police personnel.²⁰ Furthermore, a number of policy-makers and analysts observe that China tries to offer the highest possible level of expertise when contributing to such missions.²¹ For example, the UN Under-Secretary General for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) Hervé Ladsous commented that 'Chinese peacekeepers are very professional, extremely well-trained and very committed to doing the job'.²² These high standards were also evident in China's contribution to peacekeeping in Liberia when one of the authors visited the country in December 2010, with the quality of the engineering work undertaken praised by a wide range of UN staff and local officials.

In contrast, the UK's level of contribution to UN peacekeeping during the last decade has been modest at best, mainly due to its involvement in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. As of

October 2013, the UK was contributing 284 troops and police officers to UN peacekeeping operations.²³ However, the British financial contribution to UN peacekeeping is the third largest (at 8.15 per cent of the total), after the US and Japan. China's contribution is ranked seventh at 3.93 per cent of the total for 2013–15.²⁴ The UK also possesses, and therefore can contribute, specialist knowledge regarding peace enforcement and rapid force deployment, because of its wide-ranging experience in interventions within and outside the UN framework.

Such complementarity has led China and the UK to work together on UN peacekeeping operations since 2000. That year, China's Ministry of Public Security (MPS) established the China Peacekeeping CivPol Training Center (CPCTC) in Langfang, south of Beijing, and the UK provided the centre with some technical and equipment assistance.²⁵ China's participation in the UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) created the first opportunity for direct UK co-operation with the PLA in the context of peacekeeping operations.²⁶ While this was not part of a formalised programme, China and the UK actively exchanged information before the former deployed its troops for the first time to UN operations authorised under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Chapter VII allows UN forces to use 'all necessary means' or take 'necessary action' not only for self defence, but also in ensuring the protection of civilians against imminent physical harm. Understanding the specific nature of this operation was therefore essential to China's successful deployment.

Indeed, Sino–UK military co-operation on peacekeeping has continued intermittently since 2002, to develop Chinese peacekeepers' understanding of policy issues and practical skills.²⁷ For example, to further advance its operational standard, China needed to improve its peacekeepers' English-language skills. The UK–China 'peacekeeping English project', which ran from 2007 to 2009, was aimed at senior police officers at the CPCTC with the purpose of building English-

language teaching capacity among Chinese personnel deployed as UN peacekeepers.²⁸ A similar project was implemented from 2009 to 2011 at the PLA's Peacekeeping Center in Beijing's Huairou District, established in June 2009. Furthermore, the UK's Foreign Office and the Department for International Development (DfID), the CPCTC, and Ghana's Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre undertook a trilateral police-training project from 2009 to 2011. UK police trainers from the National Policing Improvement Agency delivered UN police-development courses in Beijing and Accra, with the aim of preparing Chinese and African peacekeeping police to compete for senior positions at the DPKO in New York or in mission fields.²⁹

UK–Chinese military co-operation on peacekeeping demonstrates that the PRC has the capacity and the willingness to co-operate with the West. This positive interaction has comprised a series of isolated events that has continued since 2000, developing from one-off donations and informal exchanges of information to formal training programmes. The challenges of deploying high-quality peacekeepers and obtaining senior positions at the DPKO have encouraged China to work more with the UK. It is worth noting, however, that this has been politically costly for China. The PLA and MPS are particularly fearful about revealing to the world the limitations of China's capabilities. Initiating a new co-operation programme in response to evolving global security challenges is therefore more stressful for Chinese policy-makers than might be imagined.³⁰ With China emerging from a long history of international isolation, individual senior PLA or police officers, fearful of committing a political error, need to exercise caution and prudence when taking up new ideas for collaboration.³¹

Such caution notwithstanding, the need to learn about new security and operational environments derives from the changing nature of China's responsibilities in multilateral operations on the ground. This includes moving from simply 'mimicking' other peacekeepers in so-called traditional peacekeeping activity authorised under Chapter VI of the UN

Charter, to having to deal with imminent security threats from local militias and improving operational standards in non-traditional peacekeeping authorised under Chapter VII.³² The key to China's policy shift towards co-operation with the UK therefore lies in the need to improve the quality of its operations and information, which derives from China's strategy of increased multilateral engagement.

UK–Chinese Military Co-operation on Counter-Piracy Operations

Piracy in the Gulf of Aden constitutes another security threat affecting both China and the UK. Maintaining the safety of vessels in this region is of vital importance to the two countries' trade: 8 per cent of China's crude-oil and liquefied-natural-gas imports come through the Gulf of Aden,³³ while 15 per cent of the UK's natural-gas imports is also transported through this region.³⁴

In what was the People's Liberation Army Navy's (PLAN) first operation outside of Chinese waters, in December 2008 China sent a small fleet of three ships – two warships and one support ship with a total crew of over 800 – as well as two helicopters to the Gulf of Aden in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions. The mission was to protect Chinese ships and crews, as well as ships carrying humanitarian aid for international organisations. To date, the PLAN has sent fifteen such deployments on rotation (the most recent in November 2013) and has escorted more than 5,200 ships.³⁵ UK counter-piracy operation efforts, meanwhile, are multilateral, forming part of three international missions: NATO's Operation *Ocean Shield*, the US-led Combined Task Force 151 (CTF-151), and Operation *Atalanta*, led by the EU. Together, these missions protect the length of 480 nautical miles of the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC), which shipping vessels are encouraged to use when crossing the Gulf of Aden. Therefore, any co-operation with the UK needs to go through NATO, the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) or the EU.

China and the UK have conducted escort missions separately since the former began its missions in the region

in 2008. The PLAN's escort route is 5 nautical miles north of the IRTC, running parallel to it. Russia, India, Japan and Malaysia also protect their own escort routes independently, but China's task force is the largest of these 'independent deployers'.³⁶ The reason China maintains a separate transit corridor from the EU, NATO and CMF derives from its 'independent' foreign policy, which postulates that the country's armed forces should not operate under any other states' command and control. This also explains why China proposed the concept of the zoned escort mission in November 2011, dividing responsibility for small sections of the current IRTC between the various navies present in the region.³⁷ However, this proposal seems to have faded, as it has been reported that 'China is not promoting zoned escorts in SHADE', the Shared Awareness and Deconfliction forum.³⁸ So far, therefore, the PLAN has not contributed to the IRTC because there remain questions about whose leadership it would be expected to serve under; what process it should follow in making prompt decisions in an emergency, such as an attack by pirates or a hostage situation; and the authority with which China could command warships from other countries if it only holds the chairmanship of the mission in rotation.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that they maintain separate transit corridors, China and the EU, CMF and NATO do co-operate on counter-piracy operations. For example, since 2011 Sino–European collaboration has been essential to escorting World Food Programme vessels,³⁹ with China escorting the vessels and the EU assisting it in identifying the recipients of the cargo, to avoid the food being handed to terrorists.⁴⁰ In addition, China and the UK have co-operated in a number of international fora to tackle the issue at the policy level. In January 2009, a contact group was set up by UN Security Council Resolution 1851 (2008), which brought together nearly seventy countries, several international organisations and industry groups with an interest in combating piracy.⁴¹ The International Contact Group consists of four working groups, the first of which is tasked with promoting operational

co-ordination between navies, information sharing and regional capacity building. Chaired by the UK and including China among its members,⁴² the group has:⁴³

agreed on a number of concrete steps that could be taken to mitigate threats such as extending the use of industry Best Management Practices, increasing the use of military Vessel Protection Detachments for vulnerable shipping, increasing the number of military assets available for the operations, and possibly increasing land-based options in the region to support the on-going counter-piracy operations.

Since March 2009, China has also participated as an active partner in SHADE, in which the various militaries 'deconflict' their operations or, in other words, bring assets to the table 'to improve co-ordination and minimize duplication between the various counter-piracy operations'.⁴⁴ SHADE convenes every three months and is attended by twenty-seven countries, including China, India and Japan, regional organisations such as the EU, NATO and CMF, law-enforcement agencies and shipping-industry representatives.⁴⁵ According to Captain David Reindorp, head of the Defence Crisis Management Centre of the UK Ministry of Defence, co-ordination through SHADE has been 'very effective'. He continued: 'It is probably the best example of maritime security co-operation that we have ever seen'.⁴⁶

China's presence in these fora represents a significant policy shift. Sharing information about military assets is regarded by the PLA as a highly delicate matter, not just because this might expose weaknesses in its force-projection capability, as noted earlier, but also because it might reveal too much about the way in which it operates.⁴⁷ However, when co-operation is based on multilateral platforms such as the International Contact Group and SHADE, China is willing to share information and assets even though this entails political risk. It is important to note, however, that China cannot take too prominent a role in global

security co-operation as yet, because of the sense of the threat from China that other powers might feel. This point was most vividly revealed in the PLAN's bid for the SHADE co-chairmanship. The PLAN had expressed an interest in leading SHADE since November 2009, but the proposal did not come to fruition because of opposition from India at a SHADE meeting in June 2010.⁴⁸ Arguably, India was wary of an enhanced Chinese presence in SHADE in particular, and the Indian Ocean in general.⁴⁹

In sum, both China and the UK have utilised such multilateral frameworks as the UN, SHADE and the International Contact Group as the main platforms for military co-operation on peacekeeping and counter-piracy. By couching co-operation in terms of multilateral frameworks, the UK has exploited China's wish to contribute to international operations at a high standard and has eased Chinese concerns over the related political risks of doing so. Multilateral co-operation not only helps China to project the image of a responsible state, but also improves the quality and quantity of information available to China about new operational environments – which is vital to addressing security challenges in the professional manner in which the PRC wishes to portray its work.⁵⁰ The use of multilateral platforms – and thus of institutionalised co-operation – has also helped individual Chinese military officers whose military careers would be at risk should their co-operation with Western counterparts be seen as acting on their own initiative.

Implications for the West

The question, then, is what these examples of UK–Chinese military co-operation tell us about the future direction of co-operation with China with the West more broadly. Austerity and the need for greater burden-sharing with rising powers are not particular to the UK: the same logic also applies to the US and other European states, which may well be increasingly compelled to pursue a strategy of 'leading from behind' due to fiscal restraints. Furthermore, most Western states share the UK's fundamental ideological differences and ambivalent relations with China, and are

similarly faced with the PLA's apparent lack of interest in military co-operation. In seeking greater military co-operation with China, they must recognise that the key to success in this regard lies in devising creative programmes that allow all sides to avoid, or at least assuage, political tensions.

The best way to achieve this is through the exploitation of multilateral platforms. A top-down bilateral approach – agreement-in-principle followed by practical co-operation – will never be able to bridge the divergent approaches pursued by China and Western states in addressing security challenges. What is needed is a bottom-up multilateral approach, in the form of creative co-operation programmes making use of multilateral channels that narrow the political divide in the long run. By using multilateral frameworks to address common security challenges, such co-operation programmes help to build and enhance strategic trust among practitioners in China and the West. This will in turn lead to the institutionalisation of such programmes, potentially serving as the foundation of even greater co-operation between China and the West.

One may question how such a bottom-up approach could have much of an impact on the Chinese and the PLA's decision-making processes, when the country is apparently built on exceptionally hierarchical systems and cultures. However, this common perception is slowly changing as China experiences the pluralisation of its policy decision-making processes. As Linda Jakobson and Dean Knox note: 'Foreigners can no longer solely deal with one decision maker and must take into account multiple agencies that have a stake or say in any given decision'.⁵¹ Today, it has become essential to deepen policy discussions with a wide range of Chinese actors, including not only the Communist Party, government agencies and the PLA, but also research organisations and the media.⁵²

A similar approach to military co-operation will help China and the West to avoid being trapped in unproductive debate over fundamental ideological and political differences. For example,

with US–Chinese military co-operation diminished following the former’s sale of arms to Taiwan in 2011, it is clear that the two countries now need to take a bottom-up approach to co-operation, embedded in practical, multilateral activity rather than symbolic, bilateral efforts. Focusing on practical objectives rather than principles would make it more difficult for tension over Taiwan to impact upon US–Chinese co-operation.

As a matter of fact, China and the US already co-operate in this way – through SHADE, the International Contact Group and the multilateral *AMAN* exercises (initiated and organised by Pakistan) – despite the US announcement of arms sales to Taiwan.⁵³ The two countries also conducted their first joint counter-piracy exercise in September 2012, postponed by the Chinese government the previous year.⁵⁴ Co-operation in counter-piracy operations can be further strengthened by, for example, the sharing of scarce force enablers,⁵⁵ such as tankers and medical ships, between China and NATO and CMF (given that the US is a leading actor in these frameworks). Such burden-sharing is essential not only within these frameworks but also with other states, such as China, that are undertaking independent missions. For instance, the Chinese naval hospital ship *Peace Ark* set sail to the Gulf of Aden on its first overseas medical mission in September 2011. The ship’s crew provided medical treatment not only to Chinese soldiers and officers but also to people in Djibouti, Kenya, Tanzania, the Seychelles and Bangladesh when it called at ports in these countries.⁵⁶ With medical assistance offered on seventeen separate occasions, in July 2013, to military personnel from Pakistan, Turkey, the Netherlands and Saudi Arabia – all of whom were working for the US-led CTF-151⁵⁷ – it would be worth investigating whether such services could be extended to NATO and CMF forces more widely. China is also considering establishing a counter-piracy base in the Seychelles, where the US already has a small drone base for use in counter-piracy operations.⁵⁸ This may provide greater opportunities for asset sharing, so long as such co-operation is undertaken under the auspices of multilateral frameworks. Moreover,

increasing the number of exchanges between PLAN and Western officers and conducting joint escort exercises with other fleets – not just that of the US – would not only improve the efficiency of international counter-piracy operations but would also build confidence and trust between international naval forces. Thus there are many ways in which working together as part of multilateral frameworks, for pragmatic rather than symbolic purposes, would help the US to strengthen bilateral relations with China, and build military-to-military confidence.

UN peacekeeping also offers important opportunities for developing a bottom-up, multilateral approach to military co-operation. US and European armed forces can help the PLA to better understand what the minimum use of force means in practice – critical for those peacekeepers working under a UN mandate that authorises the use of ‘all necessary means’. Currently, China tends to contribute force enablers, such as engineers and medical and transportation units. However, in January 2012, it dispatched combat forces for the first time, in the form of a small infantry platoon to provide force protection to a larger group of PLA engineers and medical personnel deployed to South Sudan.⁵⁹ For similar force-protection purposes, in June 2013 China also stated that it would dispatch what it calls ‘security forces’ to the UN peacekeeping operation in Mali.⁶⁰ The threat levels in current African peacekeeping theatres make it likely that similar force-protection deployments will be needed in future.

This recent development – the deployment of Chinese infantry forces – provides Western governments and NGOs with more opportunities to engage with China by meeting its need to learn about the different security and operational environments in which its infantry will work. Indeed, Chinese peacekeepers have stated that the PRC needs to develop a more in-depth understanding of the consequences of providing infantry to fulfil such tasks in order to better prepare for doing so again in the future.⁶¹

Western governments, including those of the US and UK, as well as think-tanks and NGOs, have long recommended that China take a more active role in

peacekeeping by contributing infantry units. These Western actors can support China by engaging in a joint study of the rules of engagement in complex and dangerous peacekeeping environments, particularly under the auspices of the UN. During interviews undertaken for this article, one question raised by China’s Peacekeeping Office was when UN peacekeepers should strike pre-emptively, for instance, in the face of imminent threat to civilian lives.⁶² A joint study should take into account the ongoing dialogue taking place at the UN Secretariat regarding the emerging challenges faced by peacekeeping forces today,⁶³ including ‘what robust UN peacekeeping means in practice’.⁶⁴ As the UN’s 2010 ‘New Horizon’ progress report claims, ‘Lack of shared understanding among Member States on the scope and function of robust peacekeeping has prevented a full examination of its operational implications for missions, other partners and local populations’.⁶⁵ Co-operation between China and the West would support the international dialogue through which shared understanding can be generated.

Conclusion

This article has examined how the UK and China have expanded military co-operation with each other since the beginning of the 2000s, and explored the implications of such expansion for Sino–Western military co-operation in the future. Despite political tensions between China and the West, Sino–Western military co-operation is made possible and, indeed, could be expanded through multilateral frameworks. Multilateralism provides incentives for China to expand its co-operation with the West, because the PRC inevitably needs to improve its MOOTW-related capabilities and the quality and quantity of information available to it about new operational environments. The experience of multilateral and institutionalised co-operation also helps to ease the perceptions of associated political risk widely held by many individual Chinese military officers.

If China can gain from co-operating with the West, it is also important to understand what the West can gain in

return. In terms of sharing best practice in relation to MOOTW, it is possible that the Chinese will learn a great deal without adding much to these international deployments. Indeed, while the Chinese are eager to learn from the West, there is not much discussion among policy-makers and academics as to how the West can learn from the Chinese experience of peacekeeping and counter-piracy operations.

Nonetheless, the West gains significant – if possibly indirect and long-term – benefits from co-operating with the Chinese. Mutual trust and confidence between the PLA and its Western counterparts must be built through investment in military co-operation programmes in the years ahead. From the policy-maker's perspective, the establishment of collegial contacts and such entities as epistemic communities of Chinese and Western security experts, focused on military co-operation, could have a significant impact on the policy-

making process on both sides. The formation of such communities – that are engaged 'in articulating the cause and effect relationships of complex problems, helping states identify their interests, framing the issues for collective debate, proposing specific policies, and identifying salient points for negotiation'⁶⁶ – takes time. Thus it is essential that Western policy-makers plant the seeds of future epistemic communities, comprised of Chinese and Western specialists in MOOTW, as China rises. ■

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