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SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES IN A PEACETIME  
ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY WITH THE  
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE  
Strategy

by

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES IN A PEACETIME ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY WITH THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, by Major Thomas A. Seagrist, 124 pages.

The US government currently espouses a strategy of peacetime engagement with the PRC. Both nations declare that peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region are in their national interest. Developing areas where the PRC can play a constructive, responsible role in Asia-Pacific development is a major objective of USPACOM's China engagement program.

Special Operations Forces (SOF) have often been in the vanguard of US peacetime military engagement programs. The characteristics, capabilities, and missions of SOF have proven effective in peacetime engagement. Military-to-military contact between SOF and the militaries of Thailand and the Philippines has assisted in preparing those nations for leading roles in the UN mission in East Timor.

This study examines the feasibility, acceptability, and suitability of a SOF engagement program with the PRC. Application of the "FAS test" is often used to determine the soundness of proposed courses of action and may also provide insight into how a SOF engagement program with China can be implemented.

Global economics is pushing the US and PRC closer together. Common problems and interests are emerging within the region. There may be opportunities for the PLA and US forces to work together, for the common interest of both nations.

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The best thing that ever happened to me was watching my daughter Krystal, who would never walk, talk or grow up, teach me about the meaning of courage. Her constant, seven-year battle for life was, and still is, the most important lesson I have ever learned. I miss her still.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACRI	African Crisis Response Initiative
AFSOF	Air Force Special Operations Forces
AOR	Area of Responsibility
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ARSOF	Army Special Operations Forces
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AT	Antiterrorism
CA	Civil Affairs
CBT	Combating Terrorism
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CD	Counterdrug Activities
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CM	Countermining Activities
CP	Counterproliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction
CPR	Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation
CSAR	Combat Search and Rescue
CT	Counterterrorism
DA	Direct Action
DEA	Drug Enforcement Agency
FAS	Feasibility, Acceptability, and Suitability

FHA	Foreign Humanitarian Assistance
FID	Foreign Internal Defense
FMOE	Foreign Military Officer Education Program
FMS	Foreign Military Sales Program
FNLA	National Front for the Liberation of Angola
FPDA	Five Powers Defense Agreement
IFOR	Implementation Force--Lead NATO force in Bosnia-Herzegovina
IMET	International Military Education and Training Program
INSS	Institute for National Strategic Studies
IO	Information Operations
JCET	Joint Combined Exchange Training
KEDO	Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization
LCE	Liaison Coordination Element
MFN	Most-Favored Nation Trading Status
MMCA	Military Maritime Consultative Agreement
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
MTT	Mobile Training Team
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NAVSO	Naval Special Operations Forces
NDU	National Defense University
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NMS	National Military Strategy
NSS	National Security Strategy

PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLAN	People's Liberation Army (Navy)
PRC	People's Republic of China
PSYOP	Psychological Operations
ROC	Republic of China
ROK	Republic of Korea (South Korea)
SA	Security Assistance
SBU	Special Boat Unit
SDV	SEAL Delivery Vehicle
SEAL	Sea-Air-Land
SF	Special Forces
SFOR	Stabilization Force--Follow on NATO force in Bosnia-Herzegovina
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SR	Special Reconnaissance
UN	United Nations
UNITA	Total Independence for Angola
US	United States of America
USCINCPAC	United States Commander-in-Chief Pacific
USDAO	United States Defense Attaché Office
USPACOM	United States Pacific Command
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republic
UW	Unconventional Warfare
VFA	Visiting Forces Agreement

WMD      Weapons of Mass Destruction

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Peace, war, or cold war between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the United States (US) may well be determined within the next decade. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union the strategic cooperation that existed for nearly twenty years between the PRC and the US, to thwart Soviet expansionism, deteriorated. Increasing Chinese economic power has diminished the importance of Maoist thought and doctrine within the PRC, replacing it with Chinese nationalism (Joffe 1997, 149-150). A more troubling result of the expanding Chinese economy has been the significant improvements within its military forces, indicating a possible shift toward a power projection capability (Garver 1997, 7-8). Perhaps most troubling of all, at least in the halls of the US Congress and within segments of the American media, is the reaction to rhetoric coming from Beijing that describes the US as a world hegemonic power. *China's National Defense in 2000*, published by the Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China and commonly referred to as China's defense white paper, states:

There is a serious disequilibrium in the relative strength of countries. No fundamental change has been made in the old, unfair and irrational international political and economic order. Hegemonism and power politics still exist and are developing further in the international political, economic and security spheres. Certain big powers [presumably referring to the US] are pursuing 'neo-interventionism,' 'neo-gunboat policy' and neo-economic colonialism, which are seriously damaging the sovereignty, independence and developmental interests of many countries, and threatening world peace and security. (China 2000a, 1-2)

As the above statement implies, some members of the PRC leadership view American interests in Asia, and throughout the world, as an attempt to undermine the growth and self-determination of smaller, less powerful countries, including China.

American interests in Asia are plainly stated in the *National Security Strategy (NSS)* of 1999, published in December 1999 by the Clinton Administration. The “vital interests” listed in this document include “the physical security of our territory and that of our allies, the safety of our citizens, [and] the economic well-being of our society.” The “important interests” include “regions in which we have a sizable economic stake or commitment to allies, protecting the global environment from severe harm, and crises with a potential to generate substantial and highly destabilizing refugee flows.” The “humanitarian interests” include “responding to natural and manmade disasters; promoting human rights and seeking to halt gross violations of those rights; supporting democratization” (*NSS* 1999, 1-2). Several of these stated interests, most prominently the commitment to allies in the region and the promotion of human rights, along with a sizable and highly capable US military presence in Asia, are cause for great concern amongst some in the PRC leadership. A fear that the US is attempting to contain China and interfere in its sovereignty is, perhaps, responsible for the hegemony rhetoric found in the Chinese defense white paper.

Both Chinese concerns about US hegemonism and US concerns about increasing Chinese strength and rhetoric have led to mounting tension. This tension was most recently witnessed in the Taiwan Straits standoff in 1996 and the 1999 disruption of military contacts due to the accidental bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade,

Yugoslavia, by US war planes. These increased tensions have given rise to speculation that the US and the PRC are currently on a course for conflict or cold war.

However, both nations publicly declare that peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region are in their national interest. In an address to the Chinese National Defense University in July of 2000, US Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen stated, “The United States seeks to be actively engaged in world events and world affairs, working with nations in every region to promote peace and stability and to advance the cause of personal economic freedom and security” (Cohen 2000a). A 1997 address by Lieutenant General Li Jijun, Vice President of the Academy of Military Science of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) at the US Army War College sounded very similar. “What China desires most is a peaceful and stable international environment in which it can focus on economic development and the improvement of its people’s life” (Li Jijun 1997, 6). It would appear that both nations, in the pursuit of economic well-being, recognize the value of a peaceful and stable Asia-Pacific region.

With regards to their bilateral relationship, both the US and the PRC have taken steps to increase transparency and work together toward their stated goals of peace and stability. A stated goal of US security strategy is “a stable, open, prosperous People’s Republic of China (PRC) that respects international norms and assumes its responsibilities for building a more peaceful world” (NSS 1999, 36). Economic consultations, like those conducted in November of 1999 in Beijing, geared toward setting the stage for China’s entry in to the World Trade Organization (Hirsh 1999, 54), lend themselves to decreasing tensions between the PRC and the US. Further decreasing tensions was the PRC’s “pledge” in November 2000 “not to help Pakistan, Iran and

others build nuclear-capable missiles” (*Associated Press* [Yahoo News], 30 November 2000). Additionally, both nations participate in the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Regional Forum (ARF) and other multilateral confidence building measures (ASEAN Regional Forum 2001). Actions like these extend the perception that US-PRC relations are on track toward peaceful coexistence, or potentially, cooperation.

Military-to-military exchanges between the US military and the PLA, although interrupted periodically throughout the 1990s, have provided significant opportunities to increase transparency between the largest military in the world and the most powerful military in the world. Official speaking engagements, like the aforementioned speeches by Secretary Cohen and Lieutenant General Li Jijun, as well as discussions on maritime safety (*News Release 07-00* [USPACOM Public Affairs], 3 June 2000) and visits by military delegations (*Washington Times* [Washington, D.C.], 25 August 2000) offer time for dialogue between military leaders. While some contend that military exchanges between the US and the PRC undermine US national security (*Washington Times* [Washington, D.C.], 25 August 2000), others put forward that “the United States has a strategic window of opportunity in which to engage China and shape Asia’s future.” (Anderson 1999, 4).

Despite misgivings from the inside and outside of government, the US currently espouses engagement with nations around the globe (including the PRC) as a means to advance its national security interests and shape the international environment.

The United States seeks to shape the international environment through a variety of means, including diplomacy, economic cooperation, international assistance, arms control and nonproliferation, and health initiatives. These activities enhance US security by promoting regional security; enhancing economic progress; supporting military activities, international law enforcement cooperation, and

environmental efforts; and preventing, reducing or deterring the diverse threats we face today. These measures adapt and strengthen alliances and friendships, maintain US influence in key regions, and encourage adherence to international norms. (NSS 1999, 5)

Continuing, the NSS states,

Through overseas presence and peacetime engagement activities such as defense cooperation, security assistance, and training and exercises with allies and friends, our Armed Forces help to deter aggression and coercion, build coalitions, promote regional stability and serve as role models for militaries in emerging democracies. With countries that are neither staunch friends nor known foes, military cooperation can serve as a *positive means* [emphasis mine] of building security relationships today that will contribute to improved relations tomorrow. (NSS 1999, 11)

Indeed, the US *National Military Strategy* (NMS) of 1997 lists “shaping the international environment” (NMS 1997,2) as one of its three pillars. The US Army’s FY01 Posture Statement holds that the Army is “the principal military-to-military engagement tool for influencing the policies and actions of other nations” (US Department of the Army 2000, xi).

Taking his cue from “President Clinton’s vision of a new Pacific community [that] links security interests with economic growth and our commitment to democracy and human rights” (NSS 1999, 34), Admiral Dennis C. Blair, Commander of US Pacific Command (USPACOM), talked extensively about his regional military engagement programs and “security communities” in his statement to the House Armed Services Committee on 15 March 2000.

The character of US military engagement will be a significant determinant in the future security situation in the Asia-Pacific region. Current circumstances provide both the opportunity and the necessity to develop more mature security arrangements among the nations of the region. Regional engagement is a process to achieve national objectives, not an end in itself. Our program improves the ability of regional partners to defend themselves, strengthens security alliances and partnerships, increases regional readiness for combined operations, promotes

access for American forces to facilities in the region, deters potential aggressors, and promotes security arrangements better suited to the challenges of the 21st century. (US Congress, House 2000)

Admiral Blair listed “the key components” of his engagement program as Regional Exercises; Foreign Military Officer Education (FMOE); International Military Education and Training (IMET); Security Communities; East Timor Operations; and China.

Speaking on security communities he states:

My vision of the way ahead for military cooperation in the Asia Pacific is the promotion of a concept that I call security communities--groups of nations that have dependable expectations of peaceful change. They genuinely do not plan or intend to fight one another. They are willing to put their collective efforts into resolving regional points of friction; contribute armed forces and other aid to peacekeeping and humanitarian operations to support diplomatic solutions; and plan, train, and exercise their armed forces together for these operations. Security communities may be treaty alliance signatories, participants in a non-military organization such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, or groups of nations joined by geographic considerations or common concerns. They are committed to policy coordination, including combined military cooperation on specific regional security issues, to advance peaceful development over time without major conflict. (US Congress, House 2000)

Continuing in his remarks, Admiral Blair acknowledged that China has important interests throughout Asia and stated that his major China engagement objective was “develop[ing] areas where it [China] can play a constructive, responsible role in promoting security and peaceful development in the region” (US Congress, House 2000).

Given that military engagement is a significant way in which the US shapes the international environment in order to promote its national security aims, the scope of this thesis investigates the use of Special Operations Forces (SOF) as a means of military engagement with the People’s Liberation Army of China. Specifically, the intent is to determine whether SOF, as an engagement tool with China, is in the interest of the US. Can SOF, through bilateral or multilateral engagement, contribute to establishing the kind

of relationship that Admiral Blair deems necessary in an Asia-Pacific security community? Can SOF “develop areas” where the PRC can constructively and responsibly participate in regional security? Past and present contingency operations around the globe illustrate that, given SOF engagement programs, allies, friends, and even former adversaries can work together militarily toward regional stability. However, given the current political, economic, social, and military climate of the US-PRC relationship, can SOF “serve as [the] positive means” mentioned in *NSS 1999* for building a US-PRC security relationship that promotes regional stability?

SOF have often been in the vanguard of US programs of engagement. When the interests of the US warrants, SOF have conducted a variety of missions in the interest of peace and stability. In July of 1997 teams from the 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) were dispatched to Uganda and Senegal to train the militaries of those nations in peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance for potential use on the African continent (Shelton 1997, 80). In Asia, Special Operations Forces have long participated in bilateral training programs such as Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) and Counterdrug training with nations like Thailand, South Korea, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and many more. Recent initiatives in the USPACOM exercise program indicate that long enduring bilateral military exercises, such as Exercise COBRA GOLD in the Kingdom of Thailand, in which SOF play an annual role, are becoming multilateral exercises (Blair 2000, 1). In an unclassified message from the US Defense Attaché’s Office in Beijing dated 30 October 2000, the “PLA asked if they would be invited to observe COBRA GOLD” (USDAO Beijing China 2000). If this request is approved, then US SOF contact with the PLA may become a reality. But is this in the interest of the United States?

## Definitions

Ends. According to LTC (retired) Ted Davis, USA, in his article, “A Brief Introduction to Concepts and Approaches in the Study of Strategy” used by the US Army Command and General Staff College, ends are defined as equal to a nation’s purpose, interests, and objectives (Davis 2000, L1-A-3). For example, the opening of the 1999 *NSS* uses words from the preamble to the Constitution to state the core purpose of the United States:

*. . . provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, . . . (NSS 1999, 1)*

The preceding pages included excerpts from *NSS* 1999 that highlight some of the interests of the US. Like the *NSS*, LTC Davis identifies the relationship between national interests and vital interests. “Vital interests” are related to the “basic survival of the nation state--its territory, its people, and its sovereignty” whereas “national interests” are the “core fundamental interests that underlie [a nation state’s] behavior” (Davis 2000, L1-A-4). The author goes on to explain the relationship of objectives to interest as “theoretically subordinate. . . . National objectives are activities and outcomes a nation should pursue to promote, protect, or attain its interests. Objectives tend to be more tangible than interests because they describe activities and conditions” (Davis 2000, L1-A-6).

Ways. In the above-mentioned article, ways are said to equate to “policies and commitments” (Davis 2000, L1-A-3). Policy is expressed as “a pattern or patterns of actions designed to attain specific objectives” while “commitments are expressions of a nation’s intention to use its instruments of national power.” Commitments “sharpen the

focus. They bring a nation closer to the physical execution of national security policy and they clarify policy through action” (Davis 2000, L1-A-7).

Means. In the context of a national security strategy, means are viewed as “programs” or available resources (Davis 2000, L1-A-3). “A program is tangible proof of a commitment and allocates resources in support of objectives, policies, and commitments. A program usually indicates the precise amount of resources to be used and the timeframe during which the program will be in operation” (Davis 2000, L1-A-7).

Sovereignty. “Sovereignty refers to the ability of a country to exercise preeminent control over the people and the policies within its territorial boundaries” (Davis 2000, L1-A-1). “In international politics this means that no authority is higher than a state’s national government” (Davis 2000, L1-A-3).

Bilateral Engagement. Engagement between two sides, factions, parties.

Multilateral engagement. Engagement involving multiple sides, factions, parties.

Special Operations Forces (SOF). SOF are military forces trained and equipped for special missions of a strategic, operational, and tactical nature. “Special operations forces in the US defense structure include US Army Special Forces, Psychological Operations and Civil Affairs units, plus US Army Rangers and specialized helicopter units. US Navy SOF include Navy Sea-Air-Land (SEAL teams), Special Boat Units, and SEAL Delivery Vehicle (SDV) Teams. US Air Force SOF include dedicated special operations squadrons with specialized airlift, gunships and helicopters (Winfield 1999, 2). US Air Force SOF also include the designated Foreign Internal Defense Squadron (SOF Reference Manual 1998, 5-49).

### Limitations

Recognizing that the US policy of engagement towards China extends to all facets of national power (diplomatic, economic, information, and military) this research only explores the use of SOF as a military means of engagement to assist in the accomplishment of USPACOM's objective with regards to the People's Republic of China and the ultimate US national goal in Asia. It does not intend to imply that all other programs of engagement are irrelevant to the accomplishment of the objective and goal. Additionally, this thesis only considers events that occurred through March 2001. This research will also remain in the unclassified realm.

### Delimitations

This research does not attempt to determine the "righteousness" of the US policy of engagement with China. However, because domestic politics of both the US and the PRC are integral to exploring the acceptability of SOF engagement with China, it is necessary to examine the extent to which domestic issues can influence and be influenced by such a program.

### Background

Formal diplomatic relations between the US and the PRC have by now extended over three decades and have involved all four elements of national power: Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economic. Major improvements as well as huge setbacks have made the relationship interesting throughout its history. Starting with limited Warsaw diplomatic contacts that occurred prior to 1969 (Tyler 1999, 55), the two sides built a relationship that became one leg of a "strategic triangle" that eventually played a part in the downfall of a common foe, the Soviet Union. As the Cold War ended, the strategic

situation in Asia changed so that the US-PRC relationship, geared towards containing the Soviets, lost its purpose and the leaders of both countries allowed events to draw them apart once again. Prior to reviewing the history of the US-PRC relationship, it is necessary to briefly explain US historic interests in the region and the strategic triangle.

### The Strategic Triangle

The strategic triangle, consisting of the Soviet Union, the United States, and the People's Republic of China, provided a way for the US to pursue two main objectives with regard to East Asia. First, to ensure "that no single nation or coalition of nations . . . control[led] the resources and people of [East Asia]." Secondly, to aid in the containment of Soviet power (Jordan 1999, 361). The 1968 Soviet suppression of Czechoslovakia, along with numerous Sino-Soviet border disputes created much consternation in Beijing that the Soviet Union was trying to dominate China and the rest of the communist world (Tyler 1999, 42). The Soviets were equally fearful of a nuclear armed and unpredictable PRC (Tyler 1999, 58). The strategic triangle formed by the three superpowers influencing East Asia, from the US perspective, appeared as an optimum way to accomplish US goals in Asia. As history has shown, this relationship worked to Chinese benefit as well.

### Building the Strategic Triangle: 1969-1979

In 1969 US President Nixon was looking for a way out of the Vietnam conflict. The deteriorating relationship between the USSR and the PRC came to a head that same year when People's Liberation Army (PLA) forces clashed with Soviet Army border forces along the Ussuri River, 250 miles north of Vladivostok. (Tyler 1999, 47). Seizing upon the growing ideological and political gap between the two communist giants, Nixon endeavored to establish secret negotiations in order to explore ways the US and PRC

might assist each other in the international arena. Aided by the resumption of limited diplomatic contacts in Warsaw in January and February of 1970, Nixon's National Security Advisor, Dr. Henry Kissinger, began the thaw of US-PRC relations with secret talks in China from 9 to 11 July 1971. These talks led to the public meetings between Mao Zedong and President Nixon in 1972 that would announce the arrival of a new security paradigm, the strategic triangle, onto the world stage.

Beijing's distrust of Moscow was the principal reason for Chinese acceptance of dialogue with the US. The USSR's "Brezhnev Doctrine," claimed the right of the Soviet Union to use force in order to keep other Communist countries loyal to the Soviet bloc. As demonstrated by the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, the Brezhnev Doctrine caused the Chinese communist leadership considerable fear (Ross 1995, 24). The aforementioned Sino-Soviet border confrontation became the Chinese incentive for future PRC cooperation with the United States.

Nixon and Kissinger also viewed a strategic partnership with China as an opportunity to staunch Soviet expansionism. "The whole China operation . . . was about the *Russian Game*--using the thaw with China to shake up the Russians." (Tyler 1999, 92). It appeared to Nixon and Kissinger that US-PRC cooperation vis-à-vis the Soviets would seriously tip the strategic scales against the USSR, providing negotiating leverage that favored the US. However, a major obstacle, namely the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan, a long time US ally and the PRC's civil war foe, has continually caused difficulties in the US-PRC relationship. The PRC has consistently voiced its concern over US ties to Taiwan and the three US-PRC joint communiqués from 1972 to 1982 have addressed this point.

The February 1972 meeting between Mao Zedong and President Nixon produced the first such communiqué and formally established negotiations between the two governments as a prelude to normalization of relations. In the document the US formally stated that there is “one China” and that “Taiwan is part of China” (Ross 1995, 268). Although Nixon never gained Chinese assistance in ending the war in Vietnam and the PRC did not achieve its goal of severing US ties to the ROC, both nations managed to put their differences aside, albeit temporarily, and concentrate on their common concerns. During their talks, Nixon said, and Mao presumably realized, that “most nations would approve of this meeting, but the Soviets disapprove.” Nixon went on to add, “We can find common ground, despite our differences, to build a world structure in which both can be safe to develop in our own ways on our own roads” (Tyler 1999, 132). The immediate impact of the Nixon-Mao talks became the US-PRC strategic partnership aimed at deterring Soviet aggression. In this way, both nations were successful in causing the Soviet Union to rethink its global strategy. But normalization was not yet complete. That would be left to Presidents Ford and Carter and Deng Xiaoping.

Following President Nixon’s early departure from office in 1974, President Ford, with Kissinger now as the Secretary of State, continued to strengthen the US-PRC strategic partnership. Despite the continuation of the Taiwan problem, the Ford administration’s negotiations began the process of establishing US-PRC covert military cooperation. The Angolan civil war provided the opportunity to test the resolve of both nations presumed commitment to containment of the Soviet Union.

The Angolan civil war pitted the Soviet-Cuba backed Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) against the PRC backed National Front for the Liberation

of Angola (FNLA) and the South Africa-US backed Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). In May of 1974 the PRC had 100 military advisers north of Angola, in Zaire, training FNLA fighters (Tyler 1999, 204). South of Angola, South Africa and the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) were providing aid to UNITA (Tyler 1999, 218). During his 1975 visit to China, Ford discussed with Mao the possibilities of cooperation to defeat Soviet designs in Africa. The frank discussions between the leaders produced a trust that appeared to open the door to US-PRC military cooperation (Tyler 1999, 218). This venture was killed, however, when CIA efforts in Angola were leaked to the press and the US Congress cut off the money (Tyler 1999, 219). The Ford presidency ended shortly thereafter and the US-PRC ties, with its possibilities and problems, fell to President Carter.

The Carter administration had two significant things going for it with regards to its PRC policy and normalization of relations. The first was that Carter's Democratic Party did not share the sentimental ties with the ROC that the Nixon-Ford Republicans had. The second was that Mao, after a long illness, had died on 9 September 1975. Following a very shaky post Mao period, which included the arrest and trial of Mao's wife and other hard liners known as the Gang of Four, Deng Xiaoping emerged as the new leader of the PRC. Deng wanted foremost to rebuild the lagging Chinese economy and thought he could use the US national security needs and the strategic triangle to do it. Both the PRC and the US would capitalize on these new circumstances.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's National Security Advisor, strongly favored the strategic triangle created by the Nixon and Ford administrations. He also supported US military cooperation with China "as a way to further contain the Soviet

threat” (Tyler 1999, 233). Armed with enthusiastic advice from Brzezinski, Carter pushed forward with the normalization process and on 1 January 1979, the US established formal ties with the PRC and broke formal ties with the ROC. To the pleasure of the PRC, the US would no longer have any official ties to the Taiwan government. However, much to their displeasure, last minute wrangling over US arms sales to Taiwan resulted in the US retaining the right to sell arms to Taiwan (Tyler 1999, 269). These arms sales, and the Taiwan Relations Act, passed by the US Congress in April 1979, continue to cause friction in US-PRC relations today. But in 1979 the future of US-PRC relations looked bright.

Normalization of relations made it easier for China and the US to cooperate on matters of strategic importance and both sides took solid steps. On his first state visit to the US Deng made his anti-Soviet intentions quite clear to his American hosts. He explained to Carter, with Brzezinski and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance in attendance, his plans to thwart Soviet expansionism in Southeast Asia by teaching Vietnam a lesson (Tyler 1999, 276). The American leadership reciprocated this sharing of information and suggested cooperation along China’s northern border. Brzezinski explained that America’s loss of influence in Iran had caused America to lose a prime “listening post” to listen for Soviet nuclear testing and that this situation could be reversed if Deng was willing to cooperate on a “joint listening base in China’s Far West” (Tyler 1999, 278). Deng’s reaction was just as Brzezinski had hoped.

By December of 1979 the CIA “Chestnut program” had started training Chinese military intelligence technicians to use the US made intercept equipment. This was followed by the establishment of joint monitoring stations in China’s Xinjiang Province,

opposite Soviet Kazakhstan. The stations were perfectly situated to “monitor military communications from central Asia to the Far East, as well as air traffic, radar signals from Soviet air defenses, and KGB communications; they could also detect any change in the alert status of Soviet nuclear forces” (Tyler 1999, 284). In addition to stronger military ties, this arrangement opened the door for technology transfers that Deng needed to speed up his reform of the Chinese economy.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 provided more opportunities for US-PRC cooperation. The Chinese agreed to sell weapons to the CIA-led coalition working with the Afghan freedom fighters (Tyler 1999, 285). It appeared that the US and the PRC were beginning to have confidence in the bilateral relationship. To describe the US-PRC leg of the strategic triangle by the end of 1979 as strategic military cooperation against the Soviet Union would not be far off the mark.

#### Exploiting the Strategic Triangle: 1980-1989

Whether dealing with staunch allies or loose coalitions, strategic partnerships are often characterized by some “give and take.” The relations between Great Britain and the United States during World War II offer a good example of this. The alliance between the two nations was undoubtedly strong as both sought to defeat Germany. However, their proposed methods of accomplishing this combined task could be differentiated by their differing national experiences and domestic political situations. The British sought to defeat Germany by the indirect approach of encircling it and wearing it down. The Americans wanted a strong buildup in the British Isles, followed by decisive action on the European continent. The Americans used the British reliance on American resources to influence British strategic planning, thus gaining their acceptance of strong landings in

France. The British used American public pressure for action and upcoming US Congressional elections to pressure the American leadership into accepting their plan of action in the Mediterranean (Howard 1995, 495). Both Great Britain and the US exploited their dependence on one another in their joint endeavor to gain acquiescence to their independent strategic designs. The US-PRC relationship was certainly not free from this type of strategic exploitation.

The Taiwan problem, which had never really dropped off the radar screen of US-PRC relationship building, came back with a vengeance following the election of Ronald Reagan to the presidency of the United States in 1980. Although Reagan and Deng shared mutual anti-Soviet beliefs and could have continued the mutual confidence building between the US and the PRC, arms sales to Taiwan, the problem left over from Carter's normalization, continued to cloud the future of US-PRC relations.

Reagan was impressed by both the Chestnut program and Chinese cooperation with the CIA in Afghanistan (Tyler 1999, 297). But his domestic political situation committed him to Taiwan. Much of Reagan's election campaign support came from the most conservative members of the Republican Party, and they had chastised Carter's normalization of relations with China during the campaign as a sell out toward the US allies on Taiwan (Tyler 1999, 290). Although Reagan and his advisors recognized the need for continued US-PRC cooperation against the Soviets, they also needed to increase Taiwanese defense preparedness with continued arms sales in an effort to assuage the political concerns of the far right wing of the Republican Party.

The Chinese leadership used this apparent dichotomy to gain additional concessions with regards to US Taiwan policy. In response to continued arms sales to

Taiwan the PRC suspended military cooperation (Ross 1995, 184). In so doing, Chinese negotiators were able to exploit the US primary desire of containing the Soviet Union and extract diplomatic concessions with regard to Taiwan. Tensions caused by Taiwan once again eased following the issuance of the US-PRC joint communiqué on 17 August 1982 that stated:

The United States government states that it does not seek to carry out a long-term policy of arms sales to Taiwan, that its arms sales to Taiwan will not exceed, either in qualitative or quantitative terms, the level of those supplied in recent years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and China, and that intends to reduce gradually its sales of arms to Taiwan, leading over a period of time to final resolution. (Tyler 1999, 326)

The Chinese had successfully exploited the American situation, but it is important to note that the US also gained concessions during these negotiations. The PRC gave its strongest commitment to date on the Taiwan issue by stating, “that China had a fundamental policy of peaceful unification” (Ross 1995, 197).

Exploitation of the relationship by the US centered on China’s economic situation and proliferation of nuclear weapons. Deng’s efforts to modernize China’s economy provided the US this opportunity. “By the mid-1980s, China and the United States had established a broader agenda of routine business. Hundreds of American corporations opened representative offices in Beijing. [Then Secretary of State] Shultz spent the balance of his term in office working to upgrade China’s status as a trade partner and opening the gates for a broad spectrum of technology sales” (Tyler 1999, 333). In order to move his economic reforms forward, Deng needed increased technology transfers from the US. During Reagan’s 1984 trip to China, the two nations signed an agreement that “boost[ed] the fortunes of American corporate giants such as Westinghouse and General

Electric and the American nuclear industry in general, while also drawing China into its first international commitment to halt the spread of nuclear weapons technology” (Tyler 1999, 335). By using China’s need for economic development the US leadership was able to increase business ties between the two countries while gaining Chinese acceptance of non-proliferation initiatives that China had previously viewed as “a superpower plot to maintain a nuclear monopoly” (Tyler 1999, 335).

Like other international relationships, US-PRC ties are prone to manipulation by those involved. During the 1980s, the relationship became mature enough that diplomats and politicians on both sides learned to use each other toward their nations independent gain. Although the relationship certainly was more complicated than a simple strategic partnership against a common foe, the overall purpose of the relationship, from the US perspective, that of deterring Soviet Union and weakening Soviet influence in Asia, remained solid. The US, in addition to other weapons and technology, sold two-dozen Blackhawk helicopters to China in July 1984 (Tyler 1999, 336). In 1986, three US naval vessels visited Qingdao harbor and military exchanges in the fields of logistics, management, maintenance, and medicine took place. High-level exchanges between Chinese and American defense departments also occurred (Ross 1995, 237). The US-PRC leg of the strategic triangle remained in place and was putting pressure on the Soviet Union.

#### Destroying Cooperation: Tiananmen Square

Of the last six presidents of the United States, George Bush, perhaps had the best opportunity to pursue long-lasting, cooperative relations with the PRC. Bush had been involved with the US-PRC process since serving as the chief of the Beijing liaison office

under the Ford administration. After a decade of dealing personally with Deng Xiaoping and other Chinese leaders (Tyler 1999, 368), Bush believed he had a “special relationship” with China (Bush 1999, 405). Even as the Soviet Union was collapsing and the old strategic triangle no longer seemed viable, the potential remained for the US-PRC relationship to move toward a new, more cooperative level during the Bush administration. Unfortunately, the Chinese leaderships’ inept handling of the Tiananmen Square debacle of May-June 1989, and the US popular reaction to it, would crush this opportunity.

The growing democracy movement in China burst onto the world stage in May 1989. News anchor, Dan Rather, of CBS, reported: “What a place, what a time, what a story. It’s Friday morning here and this is Tiananmen Square. Today, it’s the people’s square, all right. More than a million Chinese demanding democracy and freedom, and proclaiming a new revolution” (Tyler 1999, 350). The events that followed a few weeks later would shape the nature of US-PRC relations for all of Bush’s time in office and American public opinion for years after that. Many Americans today equate China with the pictures of tanks and troops suppressing liberty and crushing lives that appeared on TV sets and magazine covers worldwide on 4 June 1989.

The 19 June 1989 edition of *Newsweek* magazine reported in an article titled “Reign of Terror” the number of student deaths at between 500-700 and acknowledged some reports of upwards of 7,000 deaths. The same article put the official PRC government count at 23 deaths (Watson 1989, 18). Regardless of what the true numbers were, the perception of the American public was that the Beijing government was criminal and could no longer be dealt with.

Bush, however, did not want to see the US-PRC advances of the past two and half decades destroyed (Watson 1989,16), but in response to the domestic pressure he immediately “suspended all military sales to China and all visits between American and Chinese military officials” (Bush 1999, 435). Trying to salvage what he could, Bush sent a personal letter to Deng on June 20th urging him to not let the relationship suffer further setbacks. He told Deng, “Any clemency that could be shown the student demonstrators would be applauded worldwide” (Bush 1999, 431). Unfortunately, Deng fell back on hard-line communist dogma in dealing with those who had spoken out against the Party. In response, Bush reluctantly put economic sanctions into effect (Tyler 1999, 362).

Despite Bush’s best efforts, and the trust and friendship he had cultivated with Deng, the US-PRC relationship was virtually derailed. Popular forces in America within both political parties grabbed hold of China’s human rights record and began to press hard for reforms. As with the Taiwan issue, the PRC answer to US pressure always that it was a Chinese sovereignty issue and the world and the US had no right to interfere. The human rights issue would plague the relationship for many years to come.

#### Ambiguity: 1992-1996

The demise of the Soviet Union in 1991 left the US-PRC relationship without a common bond. As has been shown, the US-PRC relationship from 1972 to 1991 was based on the containment of perceived Soviet expansionism. Without a common threat (and American and international reaction to the Tiananmen Square debacle), the relationship suffered from a lack of direction. Leaders and strategists on both sides hoped that economic interdependence would replace the Soviet threat as the linch-pin holding the relationship together. However, strong differences that had been previously put aside

for the sake of countering the USSR reemerged and proved harder to ignore. This caused the period of 1992 to 1996 to become one of mixed messages, missed signals, and misunderstandings.

The belief that economic interdependency would replace the Soviet threat as a guiding similarity between the US and PRC, was not unfounded. Both sides professed that economic prosperity was in their national interest and that peace and stability within the region was the key to that interest. The 1994 US *National Security Strategy (NSS)* listed “open[ing] foreign markets and spur[ring] global economic growth” as one of “three central components” to the strategy of engagement and enlargement (*NSS* 1994, 2). During his 1992 “southern tour,” Deng Xiaoping “advocated faster growth, more openness, and more rapid movement toward markets” (Lieberthal 1995, 319). “To get rich is glorious” (Irwin 1999, 60) were the words Deng used to re-invigorate the slumping, post Tiananmen Square, economy. In addition to words, actions also caused this perception to take root.

China’s economic reforms began in 1978 when Deng Xiaoping recognized that China had fallen hopelessly behind the rest of the world. Deng’s “Four Modernizations” program was designed to slowly reform his nation’s economy and to open that economy to the world. The post-Tiananmen crackdown on economic reforms did cause a temporary slow-down, but the program eventually led to a 1996 economic growth rate of 9.7 percent and showed potential to grow at a rate “of 6-9 percent per annum” (Leeb 1999). At this rate China was on track to rival the US as a trading nation by the year 2020 (Clinton 1997, 483).

Inflation, resulting from rapid growth that occurred in the wake of Deng's "southern tour," was brought under control by the new Chinese Communist Party General Secretary, Jiang Zemin, with much help from vice premier Zhu Rongji. "Zhu became an instant hero" in international economic circles (Tyler 1999, 395) by reining in the poor loan practices of the Chinese Central Bank. Through Jiang's leadership and Zhu's economic savvy, China only lacked one thing before it could burst onto the stage of world economic superstardom, solid trade relations with the US. European and Asian countries had noticed the market potential in China and had taken steps to strengthen trade ties with the PRC (Tyler 1999, 394). It was the perception that China was back on track with its economic reforms and that this signaled potential for social and political reform as well that influenced many Americans to believe economics and trade would become the new link between the US and PRC. Unfortunately for China, President Bill Clinton had linked US trade with China to the human rights issue (Tyler 1999, 393).

Despite President Clinton's hard stance on human rights early in his first term of office, the PRC leadership also had good reason to assume that economic prosperity was the focal point of the US strategy and of President Bill Clinton. During his bid for the presidency, Clinton garnered significant support from the human rights special interest groups (Tyler 1999, 378). He went as far as to refer to the PRC leadership as the "tyrants of Beijing" (Garver 1997, 37). Once elected, the administration took on an activist nature towards China and the human rights issue and no efforts were initiated to move relations forward (Tyler 1999, 391). But in 1994 President Clinton acquiesced to American business leaders in the interest of creating more American manufacturing jobs and delinked the human rights issue from "Most-Favored Nation" (MFN) trading status with

China (Garver 1997, 37). This “flip-flop” sent a message that was most likely interpreted by PRC strategic thinkers as indication that President Clinton was more interested in US economic prosperity than human rights in China.

Because economics appeared to be important enough to cause Clinton to reverse his previous strong stance on human rights, it is conceivable that the PRC leadership believed they possessed a degree of leverage over the US when dealing with policy differences. The most significant policy difference in the US-PRC relationship from its very beginning was Taiwan. The ambiguous US-PRC relationship of the 90s that resulted in mixed messages, missed signal, and misunderstandings eventually played out during the 1996 Taiwan Straits confrontation.

The Taiwan issue, as the key bilateral issue confounding US-PRC relations, was further complicated in the 1990s by the domestic political situation of both the US and the PRC. In the PRC, Jiang Zemin, slowly emerging as the leader of China in the 90s, had domestic political troubles stemming from a conservative block within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). To become the successor of the aging Deng Xiaoping, Jiang needed to build a coalition within the CCP. This required delicate politics in order to balance the desires of the younger, reform minded Chinese politicians with the older, conservative generation that believed in central economic planning. “Lacking the authority deriving from participation in epic, state-forging struggles,” Jiang politically needed support from both sides (Garver 1997, 47). In addition to their economic beliefs, the conservative faction of the CCP also believed that the US harbored “unstated” hegemonistic designs on Asia and as undermining Chinese authority over Taiwan (Garver 1997, 6). President Bush’s 1992 sale of F-16 high performance fighter aircraft to

Taiwan and President Clinton's signing of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act for 1994 and 1995, which allowed the US to sell defensive weapons to Taiwan, were viewed in Beijing as a total disregard of the US-PRC joint communiqué of 1982 (Garver 1997, 38-39). These actions, along with President Clinton's decision allowing the Taiwanese President, Lee Teng-hui, to visit the US on a "personal visit," provided the conservative wing of the CCP with evidence to support their thesis. If Jiang was to assuage the conservatives he had to stand up to the US on the Taiwan issue.

Like Jiang, President Clinton also faced domestic political challenges. A Republican led Congress was thoroughly engaged in partisan politics with President Clinton's Democratic administration. "The Republicans [in Congress] . . . equated statesmanship with embarrassing the President" (Gaddis 2000, 123). But it was not just Republican pressure that caused Clinton's China policies to be incongruent. "The massacres [in Tiananmen Square in 1989] . . . galvanized a coalition of China critics in both political parties on issues that include[d] human rights, religious freedom, weapons proliferation as well as China's trade surplus with the United States" (Tyler 1999, 386). Further complicating the Clinton administration's China policies was its tendency to allow domestic considerations to steer foreign policy (Tyler 1999, 391). "Most Clinton foreign policy initiatives responded to agendas others had set . . . the pattern was one of disconnected rather interconnected actions" (Gaddis 2000, 119).

In March of 1996, the United States and the People's Republic of China almost went to war over Taiwan. Assuming the US would not intervene with more than symbolic gestures (Garver 1997, 111), the PRC, in an effort to "intimidate voters" in the first ever-Taiwanese presidential elections (Garver 1997, 3), staged military exercises in

the Taiwan Straits area. The first exercise ran from 8 to 15 March and consisted of four missile launches into designated target areas off the northeast and southwest coasts of Taiwan. The northeast target area was a scant twenty-two miles from the shores of Taiwan (Garver 1997, 100). The second round of exercises consisted of “live-fire exercises by air, land , and naval forces over nine days between 12 and 20 March in a large diamond-shaped area of seventeen thousand square kilometers off the coast of southern Fujian [province]” (Garver 1997, 102). The third exercise, designed to simulate the seizure of a hostile-held island, was scheduled for 18 to 25 March. However, bad weather caused most of it to be cancelled. The planned target area was Haitian Island at the northern end of the Taiwan Straits (Garver 1997, 105).

To demonstrate its resolve, the US responded by sending two carrier battle groups of the US Seventh Fleet (Tyler 1999, 34). This put US-PRC tensions at a height not experienced since prior to rapprochement in 1972. In addition to putting Chinese and US military forces in close proximity to one another where an accident could possibly spark an all out war, the actions of both sides opened the flood gates of verbal warnings and responses that further fanned the flames. The US accused the PRC of being “reckless,” while the Chinese sent messages that it “would not shrink from war with the United States” (Garver 1997, 109).

Despite the possibilities of accidents and the rhetoric, the two sides did act with restraint. The US naval force stayed out of the Taiwan Straits and the PLA forces made no overt moves that would signal hostile intentions against US warships. As tensions eased with the end of the exercises and the passing of the Taiwan elections, both sides wanted their relationship to return to a more normal footing.

## Engagement: 1997-2000

The USS Chancellorsville, a guided-missile cruiser, belonging to the US Seventh Fleet, recently paid a visit to the Chinese port city of Qingdao (*Reuters* [Qingdao], 3 Aug 2000). The Chinese Navy, referred to as the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) reciprocated the gesture with a visit of two ships to the US Navy facilities in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii and Everett, Washington (*American Forces Press Service* [Beijing], 13 July 2000). These visits represent the continued efforts of both nations to move forward with the relations established nearly three decades ago. Both nations have stated a desire to conduct visits such as these and other military-to-military contacts in order to reduce tension and foster peace and stability in the region.

From the time of the 1996 Taiwan Straits crisis through the 2000 US presidential elections, US-PRC military engagement primarily consisted of high-level official visits, participation in regional consultative talks and forums, ship visits, and educational exchanges. In December of 1997, then commander of USPACOM, Admiral Joseph Prueher, visited China and delivered remarks to the PLA's National Defense University. The US Secretary of Defense, William Cohen, returned to the PLA NDU in July of 2000. The PLA sent high-ranking personnel to attend the 1999 Pacific Area Special Operations Conference (PASOC 99), held in Honolulu, Hawaii. The event was attended by high-ranking military personnel from twenty-two countries and focused on emerging trends in the region as well as future special operations exchange training and exercises in support of USPACOM's peacetime engagement strategy (Winfield 1999, 2). In June of 2000 USPACOM hosted the second session of the Military Maritime Consultative Agreement (MMCA) that had been established in 1998 to "strengthen maritime safety between the

armed services of the two nations.” A previous session had been held in Qingdao (*News Release 07-00* [USPACOM Public Affairs], 3 June 2000). Exchanges like these were part of the ongoing effort to increase transparency, ease tensions, and ensure that the PRC leadership did not misinterpret US policies in Asia as an attempt to contain China.

Economic engagement continued as well. Economics was the main topic at an October 1997 presidential summit between Jiang Zemin and Bill Clinton. Trade talks continued through 1998 and 1999 and on October 10, 2000, President Clinton signed a bill that permanently awarded “most-favored nation” trading status to the PRC. With this, it appeared that the PRC might gain entry into the World Trade Organization.

The 1999 accidental bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade during the US led air war to punish Serbian atrocities in Kosovo temporarily soured US-PRC military exchanges, but as President George W. Bush entered office in January 2001, military engagement appeared strong. Both countries plan to continue high-level defense department visits, humanitarian medical exchanges, National Defense University regional studies seminars, military academy cadet exchanges, ship visits, and much more, contingent on the approval of the new administration (USDAO Beijing China 2000). These recent developments, coupled with the checkered past of US-PRC relations, leave many wondering what will be the next step.

### Importance

The stakes are high in Asia, economically, politically, and militarily. Globalization has inextricably linked the economies of Asian countries to one another and to the economy of the United States. The PRC possesses the largest military in the world and is in the process of restructuring and modernizing (US Congress 2000). The

US, with the strongest military in the world, maintains a strong presence in the Asia-Pacific region. The rhetoric from Beijing refers to Washington's "hegemonic" designs in Asia and worldwide (Liu Huaqiu 1997, 463). Washington is frequently quick to point out Beijing's disregard for human rights (Clinton 1997, 484-485). Peace and stability, however, are not a forlorn hope. Despite the sizable militaries of many other Asian nations and the many potential flashpoints threatening peace and stability, the US-PRC relationship "holds the key to the future of the Asia-Pacific's security architecture" (Job 2000). The importance of US-PRC relations in the 21st Century is tied to the continued peace and prosperity of both countries. Indeed, all of Asia, and perhaps the whole world, may benefit from an economically prosperous Asia.

Over the past fifty years, despite the Cold War, several Asian nations have become considerably stronger economically. Long standing bilateral security agreements between the US and many Asian nations provided those nations the freedom to focus their efforts on building strong economies without spending the enormous amounts of capital that it takes to build extraordinary militaries. But as the US enters the 21st Century, reliance on bilateralism is shifting toward multilateralism.

One author points out that maintaining certain bilateral security relationships while developing new and stronger multilateral security relationships will create "a more stable and effective Asia-Pacific security architecture" (Job 2000). This is consistent with Admiral Blair's vision of "security communities" mentioned previously in this chapter.

The US military has long recognized its important role in shaping the international environment. The *National Military Strategy* of 1997 refers to shaping

activities used to promote peace and stability worldwide. These shaping activities include international exercises, information sharing, military-to-military contact, defense cooperation activities, the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program, and IMET. All of these programs are meant to build trust among nations and foster long-term professional military relationships that enhance US security (*NMS 1997, 2*).

The outgoing Clinton administration saw a clear and important role for the military in engagement activities and it is likely the George W. Bush administration will as well. Determining the best means to pursue military transparency and confidence building with China, while maintaining key bilateral military relationships and building new multi-lateral military cooperation is important to national security. The history of US-PRC relations points toward building close, personal, trusting relationships as a means improving mutual understanding. The proclivity of the US to use its military as ambassadors of good will and the past use of SOF as the vanguard would indicate that SOF may have an important role to play in an engagement program with the PRC.

#### Assumptions

In order to explore the possibilities of SOF involvement in future military engagement between the US and the PRC it is necessary to assume that engagement will remain an instrument in the United States national security strategy.

#### Research Methodology

Keeping in mind that USPACOM's China engagement objective is to "develop areas where [China] can play a constructive, responsible role in promoting security and peaceful development in the region . . ." (US Congress, House 2000), this research aims to determine whether a SOF engagement program with the PRC is in the interest of the

US. The FAS test will be applied in order to determine the feasibility, acceptability, and suitability of the proposal. *Evaluating National Security Strategy and National Military Strategy*, an article used by the US Army Command and General Staff College for instructional purposes, provides guidance on the use of the FAS criteria.

Feasibility. “A military objective is feasible if it has a reasonable chance of success. Feasibility is an assessment of the strategic concept (ways) given the resources (means)” (Davis 2000, L1-E-1). By using both primary and secondary sources to determine SOF characteristics, capabilities, and past engagement methods in and outside of Asia, Chapter 3 examines whether SOF are a feasible means of engagement.

Acceptability. “Acceptability is determined by comparing the resources required (means) and the benefits to be achieved (ends)” (Davis 2000, L1-E-1). Chapter 4 begins by identifying issues of common concern between the US and the PRC in order to determine whether SOF engagement can contribute to achieving USCINCPAC’s China objective. Additionally, Chapter 4 compares the potential benefits of SOF engagement with both the political concerns of the United States and the People’s Republic of China. Any engagement program with the PRC inherently involves a measure of profit-and-loss. The identification of threats to shared national interests provides the measure of profit, while an examination of political concerns considers the potential loss.

Suitability. “A military objective is suitable if, when achieved, it leads to the desired political or national security objective” (Davis 2000, L1-E-1). Since the US national interest in Asia is peace and stability, and USPACOM’s China engagement objective is to “develop areas where [China] can play a constructive, responsible role” (US Congress, House 2000) in Asian security, which implies Chinese participation in an Asian “security

community,” then a SOF engagement program must aid in the accomplishment of these goals. Chapter 5 first examines the effect that a SOF engagement program with China would have on US relations with its Asian allies and friends. Secondly, it discusses whether or not a SOF engagement program enhances USPACOM’s overall engagement program with China, ultimately leading to a China that participates constructively in the maintenance of Asian peace and stability. A SOF engagement program with China will be deemed suitable if it does not upset US Asian allies and lends itself to accomplishing USPACOM’s objectives.

The focus of this thesis is to determine whether or not SOF engagement with China is in the interest of the United States. Application of the FAS test to this proposal can establish first, whether SOF engagement positively impacts on USPACOM’s China engagement objective and secondly, contributes to achieving the US’s desired end state of a China that is a reliable contributor to peace and stability throughout Asia.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

It is exceedingly difficult for Americans to ascertain the true intentions of the Beijing government. As can often be seen in newspapers around the country, Americans frequently disagree with one another as to the direction China is headed and more importantly, what should the US policies, with regards to China, be and accomplish. Within the academic community debates rage as to the direction of US-China policy. In the media opinions abound that flavor public sentiment and reaction to existing US-China relations. Many Americans declare that China is the “last” great enemy of America. Bill Gertz, a reporter for *The Washington Times* and author of *The China Threat: How the People’s Republic Targets America*, calls China “the most serious national security threat the United States faces at present and . . . [for] the foreseeable future” (Gertz 2000, 199). Americans that share Gertz’s opinion find it easy to believe that China would want to spy on the US nuclear laboratory at Los Alamos, New Mexico, invade Taiwan to avoid losing face in the international arena, and use its new found economic prosperity to build a “force projection” military with which it could then threaten its neighbors and aggressively compete with the US for regional and world influence.

Other Americans are less suspecting. They believe the Chinese world view as presented by PLA Lieutenant General Li Jijun in a speech given at the US Army War College on 15 July 1997: “What China desires most is a peaceful and stable environment in which to focus on economic development and the improvement of its people’s life” (Li Jijun 1997, 6). To answer the many critics of China’s record on human rights abuses,

Tom Bethel, writing in the Hoover Digest, explains that democracy, as a form of government, tends to follow economic success. He points out that several of the European democracies that exist today were not democracies when they went through the industrial revolution and became economic powers (Bethel 1998, 5).

A third perspective appears to take a moderate, middle-of-the-road, viewpoint. In the final report presented at the National Defense University's *Pacific Symposium 2000*, entitled "Asian Perspectives on the Challenges of China," most participants agreed that China "should be integrated fully into the political and economic life of the region" (Pacific Symposium 2000). But Asian leaders have good memories. They remember China as a regional hegemonic power of the distant past (Storey 2000) and do not look forward to a return to vassal or tributary status. For this reason they are generally enthusiastic about the continuance of a strong US military presence throughout Asia while encouraging policies of engaging rather than containing China.

President Clinton's *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, December 1999 (NSS 1999), and *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, July 1994 (NSS 1994), referred to engagement as the cornerstone of US strategy worldwide. Both documents emphasized engagement as the way in which the US will strive to attain its goals in Asia. Specifically, with regards to the PRC, both documents pressed home the belief that through engagement, China can develop into a country that "respects international norms and assumes its responsibilities for building a more peaceful world" (NSS 1999, 36). These strategies recognize the important role the US military plays in enhancing peace and stability through strong "overseas presence and peacetime engagement" (NSS 1999, 11) with activities like "permanently stationed

forces, deployments and combined exercises, port calls and other force visits, as well as military-to-military contacts” (NSS 1994, 8). The Clinton administration firmly believed that “military cooperation can serve as a positive means of building security relationships today that will contribute to improved relations tomorrow” (NSS 1999, 11). An essential task in achieving the goal of peace and stability throughout Asia is enhanced military cooperation and active engagement with friends, allies, and former foes. This message is clearly sent in both national security strategies and understood by the US Armed Forces.

The *National Military Strategy (NMS)* of 1997 fully supported the President’s security strategy and recognized engagement as an imperative for the future. Stressing the military’s primary role of preparing for, deterring, and, if necessary, fighting and winning wars, the *NMS* appreciates the vital role the military plays in shaping the international environment (*NMS* 1997, 7). The *NMS* identified the challenges and the dangers America faces in the future, like the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and the spread of terrorism, while addressing peace and stability as its number one objective. Engagement, while not the military’s top priority, is still viewed by the nation’s military leaders as “a strategic function” that shapes regional environments, demonstrates commitment, enhances international cooperation, and increases transparency (*NMS* 1997, 7). With regards to Asia and China, the specific military means by which to obtain those objectives are currently the responsibility of Admiral Dennis C. Blair and the US Pacific Command.

In his *FY 2001 Posture Statement to the House Armed Services Committee*, Admiral Blair pointed out major recent events and analysis that clearly indicate the need for engagement in enhancing the security environment of Asia. Acknowledging China’s

accelerated pace of military modernization, he nonetheless pointed out that this modernization would not “decisively alter” the Taiwan Straits security situation (US Congress, House 2000). Admiral Blair further stated that “the character of US military engagement” is “a significant determinant” to the future of the Asia-Pacific security environment (US Congress, House 2000). Admiral Blair emphasized the low point of US-PRC relations after the US accidental bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade during the air war over the former Yugoslavia, as all the more reason to “develop more mature security arrangements” with China’s neighbors and to encourage Chinese participation in these arrangements (US Congress, House 2000). The Admiral noted that military engagement is only one of a number of engagement activities that works toward the national objectives, but highlighted USPACOM’s engagement programs as crucial for promoting and strengthening security alliances, partnerships, and “regional readiness for combined operations” (US Congress, House 2000). He accentuated how the IMET program has educated several top Asian military leaders in US military schools, implying that their past American experience and their current positions within their nation’s hierarchy bodes well for US interests in the region (US Congress, House 2000). For this reason he strongly argued for the continuance and expansion of this and other engagement programs.

The trademark of Admiral Blair’s vision of the future is the development of “security communities” that he views as key to peace and stability and the preparation of the US and its regional partners “to handle [a] regional crisis” (US Congress, House 2000). He highlighted the coalition effort in East Timor as a demonstration of “the potential of security communities” and told how this experience has increased the interest

of Asian nations in conducting more military planning and exercises in preparation for contingencies of a like nature (US Congress, House 2000).

Finally, it is possible to infer from the Admiral's statement that he believes the PRC, due to its geographical location, size of its military, and its increasing economic success will play a determining role in either promoting or disrupting regional harmony. Hence, he stated that a major USPACOM objective is to engage China in order to encourage that country to undertake a responsible regional role (US Congress, House 2000). Given Admiral Blair's emphasis on establishing security communities as the way to move forward, it is logical to conclude that he believes a responsible China would participate in an Asian security community and, when necessary, endeavor to resolve "regional points of friction [and] contribute armed forces and other aid to peacekeeping and humanitarian operations" (US Congress, House 2000). This further implies that China would need to conduct joint and combined planning, training, and exercising of their armed forces along side the militaries of other Asian security community nations, including the United States.

Two articles from the academic community, available on the Institute of National Strategic Studies web page, strongly support Admiral Blair's views on the value of multilateral security communities in ensuring Asian-Pacific security. "Bilateralism and Multilateralism: Achieving the Right Balance in Security Relations" by Brian L. Job and "Military-to-Military Cooperation: Pacific Community Issues" by Ramesh Thakur each provide an analysis on the use of the military instrument in stabilizing the Asian-Pacific region. Mr. Job and Mr. Thakur advocate using peacetime military engagement in an effort to develop trust and confidence between nations in the region. Both recognize the

pivotal role the US military forward presence plays in shoring up regional stability and the value of bilateral and multilateral relationships toward that same end. Mr. Job states that the US-PRC “dyad holds the key to the future of the Asia-Pacific security architecture” (Job 2000). While acknowledging the growing importance of China in achieving regional stability, both authors believe that multilateral organizations, programs, and symposiums, like the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), represent significant progress as a stabilizing influence in the region. Mr. Thakur, however, concludes his analysis with caution, providing several “obstacles” that could impede progress in the multilateral arena. His obstacles include: “the size, diversity, and differing historical experiences in the area;” “the great diversity . . . within the military sector of societies [within the region];” “different conceptions of peace and security and different approaches to conflict resolution;” and the disparity of defense budgets within the countries of the region (Thakur 2000). Most significantly, Mr. Thakur draws attention to China’s past reluctance to become involved in multilateral forums. Despite these obstacles, he highlights the value military “workshops, conferences, and the extensive network of joint exercises and personnel exchanges” have on the process of attaining “a stable regional security environment” (Thakur 2000).

Two other academic writings shed specific light on US-PRC relations. Both papers, researched and written by professional US Army officers, are found on the USAF Institute for National Security Studies web page. “The Chinese People’s Liberation Army: ‘Short Arms and Slow Legs,’” by Colonel Russell D. Howard, speaks primarily to the recent perceived rise in military power of the PLA and thus, the intent of the PRC to use its military instrument. By examining the Chinese government’s defense expenditures

since the end of the Cold War and the new Chinese military doctrine of “Limited war under high-technological conditions,” Colonel Howard concludes that: “The PLA’s arms may get longer, and its legs faster, but it will take a long, long time before China’s military rivals the world’s only superpower’s” (Howard 1999). Colonel Howard, however, does not believe that the US should turn a blind eye to these changes. Rather, he informs his readers that China has indeed raised its level of spending on military modernization and its new doctrine appears to reflect a desire to expand influence in the region. But he does caution military analysts about reading too much into these changes. An overestimation of China’s military capability, especially with regards to force projection, can only cause US strategists to fear a China of the future instead of working with the realities of today (Howard 1999). Slipping back toward the cold war is not in the interest of either the US or the PRC.

The companion paper to Colonel Howard’s writing is Colonel Walter Neal Anderson’s *Overcoming Uncertainty: US-China Strategic Relations in the 21st Century*. While respecting the clouds of “mutual uncertainty” (Anderson 1999) that hang over US-PRC relations, Colonel Anderson’s research seeks to identify ways in which the US can fill the “strategic window of opportunity” (Anderson 1999) it currently possesses with regard to engagement with China. Colonel Anderson explores all of the instruments of national power in his work, but focuses primarily on the potential for meaningful military engagement and its importance toward regional stability.

Colonel Anderson points out several areas where the US and China have shared national interests despite some significantly different national goals. Prominent in his assessment of shared national interest are regional peace and stability, continued

economic growth, security concerns in the natural resource rich Central Asian states, maintenance of peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, and control of the spread of extremist Islamic terrorism (Anderson 1999). Other issues of common concern, that Colonel Anderson admits still require much oversight, are freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, US-Japan-China relations, arms control and disarmament, and the South Asia conflicts between India and Pakistan. It appears that the US and the PRC are not lacking in shared national interests.

The most significant impediment to US-PRC cooperation on these issues, according to Colonel Anderson, is, what he calls, the “clash of national values.” The stated US national interests of supporting democratization and promoting human rights worldwide clashes directly with Chinese national interest of ensuring its sovereignty with regards to “political rights, domestic stability, and economic development” (Anderson 1999). Additionally, he points out Chinese “unwillingness to renounce the use of force against Taiwan” (Anderson 1999) in achieving the long stated national goal of reunifying Taiwan with the mainland. This clash of values, coupled with the growing fear by many in the US of China’s military modernization, led to what Colonel Anderson describes as “mutual fear and uncertainty about the true, long-term intentions” (Anderson 1999) by both sides.

Colonel Anderson is in agreement with Colonel Howard that the US should not overestimate Chinese military capabilities nor should the US lose its vigilance. However, as Colonel Anderson believes, the current balance of power in Asia grants the US a unique “window of opportunity” to maintain its vigilance while accepting some risk to fully explore means of engagement with China that will decrease the shared uncertainty

and possibly provide for mutual cooperation toward common regional interests (Anderson 1999).

Toward this end Colonel Anderson recommends that US engagement with the PRC shift from “hedging” to “vigilant engagement” (Anderson 1999). He describes vigilant engagement as a “more proactive posture” and while he admits that more proactive engagement assumes a measure of risk, he believes that the US is uniquely positioned at the close of the twentieth century to assume that risk in its security relationship with China (Anderson 1999). A forward leaning engagement policy “would convey clearly to the PLA, without arrogance, that American engagement flows from a position of strength, is professional, and is uncompromising of its objective. Most important, it would contribute to a strategic shift from deterrence to reassurance” (Anderson 1999).

US SOF may provide a means of engagement that addresses many of Colonel Anderson’s “shared interests” while reassuring both sides of each others declared intent to seek peace and stability. A myriad of resources are available that explore the use of SOF as a means to reassure allies, friends, and former adversaries to the intentions of the American policy of engagement. Several professional military publications feature articles that extol the virtues of SOF and provide recent examples of SOF in an engagement role.

The US military produces numerous manuals that prescribe the capabilities, limitations, missions, and doctrine for the employment of its forces. The Special Operations community is no exception. The *Special Operations Forces Reference Manual*, published by the United States Special Operations Command in January 1998,

identifies the Special Operations forces available to the US for a wide variety of tasks. Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF), Navy Special Operations Forces (NAVSOF), and Air Force Special Operations Forces (AFSOF) provide specially trained and equipped military units and personnel capable of conducting peacetime engagement functions. Within the Army, Special Forces (SF) Groups, Civil Affairs (CA) units, and Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) units are uniquely prepared for engagement missions. The Navy provides Sea-Air-Land Teams (SEALS) and Special Boat Units that can also conduct engagement tasks of a maritime, coastal, and riverine nature. The Air Force provides a wide variety of specially trained aircrews and ground support personnel for its special operations air platforms. Additionally, the Air Force maintains a Foreign Internal Defense (FID) squadron that specifically prepares to assist foreign militaries in training, managing, and maintaining aircraft and airfields.

Several doctrinal manuals governing the employment of SOF are also available. Joint Publication 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*, published 17 April 1998, although not specific to engagement, describes how the US military intends to employ its special operations forces. JP 3-05 lists nine principal special operations missions and seven collateral activities, many of which have aspects that apply to peacetime engagement activities. The nine principal SOF missions are: Direct Action (DA), Special Reconnaissance (SR), Foreign Internal Defense (FID), Unconventional Warfare (UW), Psychological Operations (PSYOPS), Civil Affairs (CA), Combating Terrorism (CBT), Information Operations (IO), and Counterproliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (CP). The seven collateral activities include: Coalition Support, Combat Search and Rescue, Counterdrug Activities, Countermine Activities, Foreign Humanitarian

Assistance, Security Assistance, and Special Activities. Of particular interest to the topic of peacetime engagement, JP 3-05 points out that, upon request, SOF can provide support to US ambassadors and embassy country teams (JP 3-05 1998, III-5). Additional doctrinal manuals, like FM 100-25, *Doctrine for Army Special Operations Forces*, August 1999 and FM 31-20, *Doctrine for Army Special Forces Operations*, December 1998, provide specifics for the use of Army SOF.

Several professional military journals and magazines offer current thoughts, past examples, and future ideas for the use of SOF in their traditional roles as well as its role in peacetime engagement activities. Most notable is *Special Warfare*, published quarterly by the United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The journal's "mission is to promote the professional development of special operations forces by providing a forum for the examination of established doctrine and new ideas" (Steelman 2000, 1). Other sources include *Military Review*, produced by the Army Command and General Staff College; *National Defense*; *The Armed Forces Journal International*; and *Joint Forces Quarterly*.

Many articles appearing in the above sources pronounce SOF as the force of choice for peacetime engagement, due in no small part to language and cultural training, regional orientation, and a recruitment and selection process that targets mature, dedicated, creative, adaptive, self-reliant military professionals. In "The Strategic Employment of Special Operations Forces," by General Carl W. Stiner, US Army, that appeared in the June 1991 addition of *Military Review*, SOF are hailed as "particularly adept at . . . tasks that require cultural familiarity, linguistic skills, and a long-term commitment" (Stiner 1991, 6). Likewise, General Henry H. Shelton's "Special Ops

Crafting Strategy for Varied, Future Challenges,” in the February 1997 issue of *National Defense*, points toward “regional orientation” as a strength that has contributed to the increased deployment of SOF in the post-Cold War security strategy (Shelton 1997, 24). As Glenn W. Goodman’s article entitled “Warrior Diplomats--Not Political Warriors,” in the February 1995 *Armed Forces Journal International* states, SOF personnel are highly “attuned to both the foreign and domestic political ramifications of their actions,” making them well suited for engagement activities (Goodman 1995, 42). General Peter J. Schoomaker, in “US Special Operations Forces: The Way Ahead,” *Special Warfare*, winter 1998, proclaims “proactive peacetime engagement not only allows SOF to help host nations meet their legitimate defense needs, but also to encourage regional cooperation, to maintain US access, and to visibly demonstrate the role of a professional military in a democratic society” (Schoomaker 1998, 5). An exceptionally informative article appearing in the fall 1998 *Special Warfare*, entitled “Regional Engagement: An ARSOF Approach to Future Theater Operations,” by Major General Kenneth R. Bowra and Colonel William H. Harris Jr., links the National Security Strategy of engagement to the capabilities of SOF. Echoing other writers, they cite comments by Defense Secretary Cohen “that SOF are the forces of choice in situations requiring regional orientation and cultural and political sensitivity” (Bowra 1998, 14).

Past and current SOF activities with regard to engagement are also found throughout other professional military publications. Lieutenant Colonel Susan Schenk, US Army Reserve, reports in the December 1991 issue of *The Officer* on CA units participating in Operation SEA ANGEL to relieve suffering in Bangladesh after a natural disaster. US Army Reserve CA units, assisting a US Marine air-ground task force and

forces from several other nations helped reestablish the government infrastructure to speed national recovery from a devastating typhoon (Schenk 1991, 13). *Special Warfare* featured two articles in the summer of 1998 on SOF support to the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI), a multinational effort to create an all African nation military response capability to cope with natural and man-made disasters. “The African Crisis Response Initiative: America’s Engagement for Peace in Africa,” by Ambassador Marshall F. McCallie, explains how the project supports US national interests and the use of SOF as the means to the end. Colonel David E. McCracken’s article, “ACRI: Establishing a New African Paradigm,” presents the details of the 3rd Special Forces Group and the 5th Special Forces Group activities that brought the program to fruition.

Additional articles from *Special Warfare* review and highlight SOF involvement in humanitarian demining throughout the world. “SOF Initiatives in Demining: The Bosnian Entity Army Training Centers,” by Captain Brian S. Petit, spring 1999, provides details on the 10th Special Forces Group’s endeavor in a “train the trainer” program to ensure that Bosnians take an active, professional role in demining their country following the civil war there. In the same issue, Captain Chadwick W. Storlie reports on the effectiveness of SOF Liaison Coordination Elements in his article “The Liaison Coordination Element: Force Multiplier for Coalition Operations.” Captain Storlie’s experiences working with Romanian and Hungarian Engineer Battalions and a Russian Airborne Brigade on duty in Bosnia-Herzegovina indicate that SOF can work along side former adversaries, providing a valuable link for those units to American and NATO units during peace support operations. Although the US-Russian political situation is still complicated by issues like National Missile Defense and NATO expansion and could still

be characterized as “uncertain,” Captain Storlie’s article reveals how the US military effectively employed SOF to work alongside Russian troops toward the accomplishment of interests shared by both nations.

The common thread throughout the literature on SOF and engagement activities is that SOF are uniquely qualified within the military service for the strategy of engagement. Most authors on the subject recognize that SOF are only one means for conducting engagement and that interagency as well as interservice coordination is an absolute imperative. Without a cooperative strategy that incorporates all of the elements of national power, engagement becomes ineffective in reaching the national end state. The capabilities of SOF, as articulated in the volumes of available literature, significantly enhance engagement strategy. Charles C. Faulkner III sums this up nicely in his “ARSOF War Game IV: Assessing ARSOF’s Contribution to Regional Engagement,” appearing in *Special Warfare* spring 2000, “ARSOF War Game IV revalidated the observations made during ARSOF War Game III: Namely, that forward-deployed engagement forces provide the theater commander in chief with the capability to strategically shape the operational environment” (Faulkner 2000, 20). The *US Special Operations Forces Posture Statement 2000*, published by the US Special Operations Command, equates forward deployed SOF to “global scouts” that, due to their “ubiquitous presence,” unique training, and high degree of professionalism, can provide theater commanders and the national command authority with vital information with regard to the international environment (SOF Posture Statement 2000, 6). In an unpredictable world consisting of numerous asymmetric, transnational threats, global scouts could provide advanced warning of the subtle international changes that are often the prelude to crisis.

The US and the PRC have many mutual interests in Asia. A variety of sources substantiate this point. *China's National Defense in 2000*, the PRC's defense white paper published by the Information Office of the People's Republic of China on 16 October 2000 states, "China steadfastly follows an independent foreign policy of peace and is committed to a new world of peace, stability, prosperity and development" (China 2000a, 1). While it is true that this document initially emphasized Chinese issues concerning Taiwan and opposition to "neo-interventionism" (China 2000a, 2), implying a divergent path with US policies, latter segments of the paper address areas of shared interests with the US. Chinese concerns for the spread of extremist terrorism, illicit narcotics, environmental and natural disasters, and problems that result in refugee crises (China 2000a, 13-16), are of equal concern to the US. Admitting that their country is vulnerable to natural disasters, the paper tells how they use their military, much the same way the US does, to alleviate the effects of floods, droughts and storms (China 2000a, 13). In the areas of international security cooperation and regional security cooperation, the PRC is relatively active in pursuing and participating in military exchanges in order to build "mutual trust, friendship and cooperation with armed forces of other countries" (China 2000a, 14) for the betterment of regional and world peace. Emphasizing Chinese participation in ARF, the document indicates that the PRC appears to be interested in continued multilateral engagement for military cooperation in peacekeeping, maritime search and rescue, military medicine, and disaster relief (China 2000a, 15). The PRC's participation in UN peacekeeping activities, while considerably smaller than the US and other more developed countries, is still impressive, and the paper professes that they intend to continue to do their part for the UN (China 2000a, 17). A comparison of the

PRC defense white paper with the US national security strategy suggests that the two countries have many national interests in common.

Some may question the validity of using a political document, such as China's National Defense white paper, as an expression of genuine Chinese objectives and policies. But other sources, from both inside and outside the PRC government, mention interests and problems similar to those contained in the white paper. Lieutenant General Li Jijun's speech to the US Army War College, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, acknowledged that military-to-military relations are a means to peace and stability and expressed the view that military exchanges are mutually beneficial to the US and China (Li Jijun 1997, 8). He also highlighted Chinese participation in UN peacekeeping missions and stated that "the promotion of development [is a] responsibility to be shared by all nations" (Li Jijun 1997, 8).

In "China and the 21st Century" by Scott M. Leeb, an on-line article published by the Institute for National Strategic Studies, the author indicates that throughout the 1990s China has softened its long held beliefs against multilateral engagement. Primarily due to economic needs, Chinese multilateral dialogue with ASEAN has nonetheless spread to support for security cooperation in the region. "China's pledge to support efforts aimed at enhancing security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific has resulted in its annual participation in ARF" (Leeb 1999). Mr. Leeb concludes his article with several recommendations for improving relations with China that include strengthening bilateral and multilateral military ties. Continued Chinese participation in ARF may provide an opportunity for Chinese military forces to participate in multilateral regional peacekeeping exercises that would almost certainly involve US SOF elements.

As for common problems that the US shares with China, trafficking of illicit narcotics and terrorism are perhaps the most obvious. *The China Reader: The Reform Era*, a collection of articles and speeches edited by Orville Schell and David Shambaugh includes sections on the changes in Chinese culture and society in the wake of economic reforms. One article, entitled “Shake, Rattle, and Roll” tells how “opium from Yunnan Province’s poppy crop and hashish from Xinjiang can be bought in almost every major city in China” (Schell 1992, 284). “Shanghai’s Dark Side” by Angelina Malhotra reports that Shanghai has returned to its pre-communist revolution state of decadence with official corruption tacitly allowing, if not participating in, narcotics trafficking, gambling, and prostitution (Malhotra 1994, 396). The US Department of State’s International Narcotics Control Strategy Report of 1999 states that “China is now the principal route for heroin smuggled out of Burma, with roughly 90 percent of seizures of Southeast Asian heroin occurring within Chinese borders” (US Department of State 1999). This report also mentions that China and the US have signed a treaty whose purpose is to “speed communications and enhance the flow of counter-narcotics related intelligence” (US Department of State 1999). Bilateral cooperation in the war on drugs, including US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) training to Chinese law enforcement, continues as a priority for the US Department of State. A report published by the PRC’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and obtained on-line indicates that China places similar priority on developing international cooperation to staunch the flow of illicit narcotics (China 2000b). China and the US appear to share narcotics trafficking as a serious national problem.

Terrorism is another problem that China shares with the US. Nicolas Becquelin's "Xinjiang in the Nineties," appearing in the July 2000 issue of *The China Journal*, provides insight into China's terrorism problem, its root causes and the PRC fear of it. Throughout the 1990s China has experienced an increase in terrorist activity, primarily in the Muslim dominated province of Xinjiang. Located in the extreme northwest part of the country, Xinjiang is the traditional home of Uighurs, Kazakhs, and other less numerous Turkic speaking people. Most important to the PRC, Xinjiang is also the location of recent discoveries of vast amounts of untapped oil and natural gas (Becquelin 2000, 65). Increasing numbers of Han Chinese and subsequently, a higher demand for the precious commodity of water in this high desert region, has added new vigor to already existing ethnic rivalries (Becquelin 2000, 76). The newly independent Central Asian states, comprised of people culturally and linguistically related to Xinjiang's population and sharing a porous border region with China, have given the Beijing leadership more cause for concern. The "Shanghai Five" summits--dialogue between the PRC, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, and Tajikistan--have resulted in the establishment of "a platform for regional security and economic cooperation" (Becquelin 2000, 70). But as the author astutely points out, the PRC's main focus in this forum is "to ensure these states do not support" terrorism or a separatist movement within Xinjiang (Becquelin 2000, 70). The shared threat of terrorism is just one more area that the US and the PRC could face together.

Another issue of great interest to both countries is maritime safety, specifically in the South China Sea. The US Pacific Command's Public Affairs Office published a news release on 3 June 2000 that both highlighted the concerns that both countries have in this

area, as well as announcing the progress made via negotiations. The most recent talks centered on maritime communication between ships and aircraft for the assurance of safety (*News Release 07-00* [USPACOM Public Affairs], 3 June 2000). US-PRC cooperation in maritime safety could be enhanced to tackle other maritime issues.

An article appearing in the December 1998 issue of *National Geographic* entitled “South China Sea: Crossroads of Asia” tells of an increase of piracy in this vital shipping lane. Nearly one-half of the reported acts of piracy worldwide in 1997 occurred in the South China Sea. “Most stop at thievery, grabbing cash from the captain’s safe or stealing videotape recorders, personal computers, or other luxury goods from the hold. But there is occasional violence” (Dahlby 1998, 23). According to the author, the increase in piracy is due in part to decreased Russian and American naval presence in the area (Dahlby 1998, 19). Decreased naval activity provides pirates more freedom of action. Using high performance speedboats, pirates board target vessels at night and “armed with knives, rob the crew” (Dahlby 1998, 19). Piracy does not now seriously impact commercial shipping but if it continues to grow in intensity the nations most affected by it may take action.

According to Sheldon W. Simon in “Asian Armed Forces: Internal and External Tasks and Capabilities,” published on-line by *The National Bureau of Asian Research*, “Malaysian Prime Minister Mahatir has suggested that cooperative peacekeeping could be expanded beyond the traditional separation of combatants to ‘keeping sea-lanes and air space free of piracy and hijackings’” (Simon 2000). China and the US are two of the many countries that have a vested interest in secure sea-lanes and could provide mutual support to deter piracy.

No matter how many areas of mutual interest the US shares with the PRC, the US cannot afford to alienate its friends and allies in the Asia-Pacific region while getting closer to China. Two sources cited earlier in this chapter provide insight into how several Asian nations view China and the US role in Asian security. Both “Asian Perspectives on the Challenges of China,” the Final Report of the National Defense University’s Pacific Symposium 2000, and “Living with the Colossus: How Southeast Asian Countries Cope with China” by Ian James Storey, published in *Parameters*, winter 1999-2000, by the US Army War College, suggest that many Asian countries approach China with cautious open arms. Strongly desiring increased trade with China, while wary of hidden hegemonic designs, they favor continued US military presence in the region and ways to make China’s military more transparent to the outside world. Mr. Storey concludes his piece by saying: “ASEAN supports a policy of engagement with China, hoping that economic interdependence and China’s participation in the embryonic regional security architecture will mitigate their security concerns” (Storey 2000).

The available literature points toward a US desire to engage China, with the full support of its friends and allies in the region, in order to give the Beijing leadership every opportunity to demonstrate its good will through security cooperation. The capabilities and past utilization of SOF indicates that SOF has not only demonstrated its expertise in engagement activities, but continues as the vanguard for US military engagement activities worldwide. Peacefully engaging China militarily with SOF then becomes a matter of identifying areas where the US and China share common interests and whether the two nations are politically willing to accept SOF as a means of engagement.

## CHAPTER 3

### FEASIBILITY

“Feasibility is an assessment of the strategic concept (ways) given the resources (means)” (Davis 2000, L1-E-1). Currently, military engagement between the US and the PRC consists of high-level civilian and Defense Department official visits, military educational institution visits, bilateral and multilateral security talks, seminars and forums, and naval port calls. While these confidence-building measures are certainly valuable means for pursuing increased understanding between the two nations, this chapter examines whether, given SOF characteristics, capabilities, and current engagement methods, SOF are a feasible “next step” in military-to-military engagement and can accomplish USCINCPAC’s China objective of “develop[ing] areas where [China] can play a constructive, responsible role in promoting security and peaceful development in the region” (US Congress, House 2000, 12).

#### SOF Characteristics

Regardless of service component or unit of assignment, SOF personnel share characteristics that indicate they are a highly effective means of engagement. The US SOF Posture Statement 2000 lists the SOF characteristics as: “Mature professionals with leadership abilities; specialized skills, equipment, and tactics; regional focus; language skills; political and cultural sensitivity; and [a] small, flexible, joint-force structure” (SOF Posture Statement 2000, 1).

The professional maturity of SOF personnel, when combined with their other inherent characteristics and mission capabilities, makes them ideally suited for

engagement activities. Their specialized skills, equipment, and tactics, as will be seen, are easily adapted to international threats of grave concern to many countries, including China.

Regional focus and language skills prepare particular SOF elements for a variety of missions in the area of the world to which they are assigned. In the case of Asia, the Army SOF (ARSOF) unit charged with being ready for missions in the PACOM Area of Responsibility (AOR) is 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne). This element is headquartered at Fort Lewis, Washington, with one battalion forward deployed in Okinawa, Japan. The Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command at Fort Bragg, North Carolina maintains active and reserve units that are regionally and linguistically trained for duty in Asia (SOF Posture Statement 2000, 53). Naval Special Warfare Group One, headquartered in Coronado, California, maintains NAVSOF readiness for USPACOM and USCENTCOM (US Central Command). SEAL Team One and SEAL Team Five, also in Coronado, have geographical areas of orientation in Southeast Asia and the Northern Pacific, respectively. SEAL Delivery Vehicle (SDV) Team One, located at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, is deployable to both the PACOM and CENTCOM areas. Naval Special Warfare Unit One in Guam provides command and control for NAVSOF elements deployed to the Pacific area (*SOF Reference Manual* 1998, 4-9). AFSOF maintains a variety of specialized air wings and squadrons that support the Pacific theater and a Foreign Internal Defense (FID) Squadron at Hurlburt Field, Florida, that contains subordinate elements prepared to conduct FID and coalition support missions in Asia. The aviation FID squadron provides training and support to host nations in the areas of air power doctrine, force planning, operational support,

tactical employment, aircraft maintenance, supply, logistics, safety, and airbase defense (SOF Reference Manual 1998, 5-49). Maintaining a regional and linguistic focus allows SOF personnel the knowledge to fully understand the host nation with which they are engaging and the skills necessary to teach and train foreign soldiers, sailors, and airmen.

Perhaps the two most critical characteristics that ideally suit SOF for engagement activities are their political and cultural sensitivity and their small, flexible nature. One author refers to SOF as “Warrior-Diplomats,” emphasizing, “The very nature of special operations requires that SOF be politically attuned to both the foreign and domestic ramifications of their actions” (Goodman 1995, 42). The small, task-organized elements in which SOF normally deploys led another author to describe SOF as an “unobtrusive” means of engagement (Adolph 1992, 40). Because SOF maintains such a wide variety of skills within its organizations, it is able to “tailor-to-task” for engagement activities (Schoemaker 1998, 4). This means that a small element can provide a variety of training venues simultaneously, as the author experienced first hand in the Kingdom of Thailand. While a reserve Civil Affairs detachment conducted a combined humanitarian assistance project, two Special Forces teams provided both air mobility training and urban combat training to Thai infantry units. These characteristics are invaluable traits when conducting engagement activities with nations that may be politically uncomfortable with taking the initial steps toward a more visible international security role.

The above SOF characteristics indicate an adeptness well suited for politically sensitive engagement activities. But just possessing skills for teaching people of a different culture and nationality does not equate to possessing knowledge worth learning.

In a world that is increasingly challenged by a variety of transnational threats, knowledge at combating those threats is also in high demand.

### SOF Capabilities

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the US military's Joint Publication 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*, gives guidance on the employment of US SOF. This doctrine designates nine "principal missions" and seven "collateral activities" for SOF. Brief descriptions of each are provided below. It is important to note that SOF prepare to conduct these tasks throughout the spectrum of conflict and is therefore, when called upon, proficient at teaching these skills to the soldiers of foreign militaries.

### Primary SOF Missions

#### Direct Action

SOF conduct Direct Action (DA) missions "to seize, destroy, capture, recover, or inflict damage on designated personnel or material" (JP 3-05 1998, II-3). DA involves a variety of techniques requiring knowledge in basic infantry squad movement procedures to more advanced skills such as directing precision air, ground, or naval munitions. SOF train to conduct DA in maritime, coastal, riverine, subsurface, urban, rural, and uninhabited areas and is provided the equipment necessary for success. In a bilateral engagement program with the PLA, SOF and PLA units could conduct combined training in small unit tactics, raids, and ambushes. Training such as this could build mutual confidence and rapport between soldiers and increase transparency.

#### Special Reconnaissance

As its name implies, Special Reconnaissance (SR) missions are "reconnaissance and surveillance actions . . . to obtain or verify, by visual observation or other collection

methods, information” (JP 3-05 1998, II-4), required by the supported headquarters. Like DA, SR requires knowledge in basic military skills as well as advanced collection techniques and the ability to traverse all types of terrain. In addition to building rapport, confidence and increasing transparency between SOF and the PLA, this training would have a very practical application in stemming the flow of illegal narcotics, a concern of both countries. In a multinational setting, it is not hard visualize several nations of Asia, all with narcotics trafficking problems, conducting combined reconnaissance operations aimed at curbing the flood of narcotics and its negative affect on regional stability.

### Foreign Internal Defense

The SOF role in Foreign Internal Defense (FID) is only part of a government program of the same name. In the larger context of the term, FID is an interagency effort to assist another “government to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. SOF’s contribution . . . is to organize, train, advise, and assist HN [Host Nation] military and paramilitary forces” to counter their countries internal threats (JP 3-05 1998, II-6). The SOF FID mission, and the following mission (UW), provides SOF with the requirement of being capable to teach and train military skills, from basic rifleman skills to more advance military operations to non-English speaking soldiers. Conducting Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) in a host nation is the principal means in which SOF prepare for this mission. Conducting JCETs in China with the PLA would benefit SOF units greatly by providing language and cultural experience and training opportunities, while also providing training opportunities for the host nation’s units.

## Unconventional Warfare

Unconventional Warfare (UW) represents the foundation of SOF. In the US military, the UW roots of SOF go back to World War II and the Office of Strategic Services. UW involves the organizing, training, equipping, supporting, and directing of indigenous forces to conduct combat operations in support of a larger, conventional force. The whole range of the other SOF missions applies to the SOF role in UW (JP 3-05 1998, II-7). Like FID, the best method to train SOF for this mission is through the JCET.

## Combating Terrorism

The ever-increasing threat of international terrorism to the US and other nations makes the SOF role in Combating Terrorism (CBT) a growth industry. Its roles include “antiterrorism (AT) (defensive measures taken to reduce vulnerability to terrorist acts) and counterterrorism (CT) (offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorism), taken to oppose terrorism throughout the entire threat spectrum” (JP 3-05 1998, II-8). SOF can conduct combined CT training with the PLA. If the PLA does not currently have a CT capability, SOF can assist in developing one. Exposure to each others CT capabilities not only increases transparency, but should it become necessary to conduct combined CT operations in the future, building confidence now is better than trying to build building confidence during a terrorism crisis.

## Psychological Operations

Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) are “planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences” in order to influence their behavior. SOF PSYOP units plan and prepare pre-approved material, as well as coordinate the dissemination effort, at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels (JP 3-05 1998, II-8).

PSYOPS teams are often the most effective way to get vital information out to the populace immediately after a natural or man made disaster. Combined training between SOF and the PLA in the venues of peacekeeping operations and humanitarian assistance would certainly include PSYOPS teams.

### Civil Affairs

SOF units, principally Army Civil Affairs (CA) units, train to conduct “activities . . . that establish, maintain, influence or exploit relations between military forces and civil authorities, both governmental and nongovernmental, and the civilian population in a friendly, neutral, or hostile area of operations to facilitate military operations and consolidate operational objectives” (JP 3-05 1998, II-9). Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief are perhaps the most visible military operations that require significant CA support. The author’s own experience in Haiti highlights the need for close cooperation between the military and government and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). A “constructive, responsible” PLA, participating in humanitarian assistance operations and peacekeeping in the region, will certainly come into contact with NGOs. Combined training between PLA units and SOF CA units in a nonstressful, peacetime environment, can better prepare both nations for this certainty.

### Counterproliferation of Weapons of Mass destruction

The proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), like terrorism, is an international problem of grave concern. “SOF is tasked with organizing, training, equipping, and otherwise preparing to conduct operations in support of US Government Counterproliferation (CP) objectives” (JP 3-05 1998, II-10). Many of the skills used to conduct CT and DA also apply to CP.

### Information Operations

SOF conduct DA, SR, PSYOP, CA, and FID missions in support of Information Operations (IO). The goal of IO is “to affect adversary information and information systems while defending one’s own information and information systems” (JP 3-05 1998, II-11).

### SOF Collateral Activities

#### Coalition Support

As demonstrated during the Persian Gulf War and subsequent peace support operations, the US Government, while maintaining the capability to act unilaterally with its military forces, intends to pursue coalition building to counter the threats that endanger the international community. SOF, because of its characteristics and capabilities, is uniquely qualified to provide Liaison Coordination Elements (LCEs) to coalition partners. This collateral activity “includes training coalition partners, . . . assisting with communications . . . and establishing liaison to coordinate for combat support and combat service support” (JP 3-05 1998, II-11). Conducting combined training with the PLA would prepare SOF to provide this same support to PLA units deployed in a multinational peacekeeping role.

#### Combat Search and Rescue

Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) is the rescue or recovery “of distressed personnel” throughout the spectrum of conflict. SOF maintain this capability, primarily to rescue their own personnel, but also to assist in the recovery of personnel from all the

service components and coalition partners, when required (JP 3-05 1998, II-12). CSAR operations inherently involve many of the same capabilities required by other SOF missions and activities. SOF and PLA units could potentially train together on search and rescue techniques that would benefit both militaries in peacekeeping missions as well as disaster relief.

#### Counterdrug Activities

“CD [Counterdrug] activities are active measures taken to detect, monitor, and counter the production, trafficking, and use of illegal drugs” (JP 3-05 1998, II-12). The SOF characteristics and capabilities that apply to SR, FID, and UW are equally important to CD. The narcotics trafficking problems faced by China will be discussed later in this paper. Suffice to say here that this problem is international. SOF have conducted counternarcotics training with other militaries in Asia and could do the same in China.

#### Countermine Activities

Countermine (CM) activities, inherently humanitarian in nature, are those activities “to reduce or eliminate the threat to noncombatants and friendly military forces posed by mines” (JP 3-05 1998, II-12). SOF personnel use their language and cultural skills, as well as their engineering skills to train foreign forces “to locate, recognize, and safely dispose of mines and other explosive devices” (JP 3-05 1998, II-12). PLA forces have extensive experience in this as well, especially along their national border with Vietnam (China 2000a, 20). Combined training in this activity can only lead to increased safety for the soldiers of both nations.

#### Foreign Humanitarian Assistance

Natural and man-made disasters have ripple effects that can threaten regional stability. Recognizing this threat, US military forces maintain the capability to aid in the relief and reduction of suffering caused by disasters. Presumably, a “constructive, responsible” PRC would also participate in regional disaster relief and humanitarian assistance. The aforementioned characteristics and capabilities of SOF make them indispensable in US Foreign Humanitarian Assistance (FHA) activities and multinational humanitarian assistance efforts. As discussed in the following chapter, the PLA has a wealth of experience in disaster relief within their own borders. FHA training venues, bilateral and multilateral, may provide excellent ways to build confidence, increase transparency, and further cooperation on the international scene.

#### Security Assistance

Pursuant to “the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (as amended) and the Arms Export Control Act of 1976 (as amended),” SOF can provide Military Training Teams (MTTs) to foreign militaries “in the furtherance of national policies and objectives” (JP 3-05 1998, II-13). FID skills are definitely at work when conducting SA.

#### Special Activities

SOF special activities are beyond the scope of this thesis, as they “require a Presidential finding and Congressional oversight” (JP 3-05 1998, II-13).

The capabilities, and the degree of knowledge, necessary to conduct these special missions and collateral activities across the spectrum of conflict, coupled with the characteristics of SOF, make SOF soldiers, sailors, and airmen, fully qualified to teach and train foreign military personnel, thereby furthering US policies, objectives, and interest through peacetime engagement. By training with the PLA in several of these SOF

missions, SOF could contribute to confidence building measures, increase transparency, and develop a role for a “constructive, responsible” PRC.

### Methods of SOF Engagement

SOF are thoroughly involved in engagement activities today around the world, consistent with the policies, objectives, and interests of the United States. “In FY1999 SOF units deployed to 152 countries and territories” (SOF Posture Statement 2000, 15). They conduct engagement through a variety of established programs, like the JCETs and MTTs previously mentioned. SOF also participate regularly in bilateral and multilateral training exercises. The prowess of SOF in engagement activities is best illustrated with a few recent examples of SOF in the conduct of JCETs, MTTs, and bilateral and multilateral exercises. Additionally, examples of SOF conducting current missions, where previous engagement activities get the true test of their effectiveness, are shown.

JCETs are the most prolific engagement method in which SOF participate. An important part of engagement strategy, they are nonetheless, designed to train US SOF primarily, while training provided to host nations forces is a secondary goal. Because of the unique nature of the SOF FID and UW missions, the most effective way to train US SOF personnel in these missions is to have them do it. Therefore, the JCET program deploys SOF teams to host nations in order to train host nation forces in a variety of military skills so that US SOF personnel can hone teaching, training, and language skills.

An excellent example is JCET BALANCE PISTON 99-3, conducted at Fort Magsaysay, Republic of the Philippines in April and May 1999. During this JCET US SOF teams from the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) and CA teams from Fort Bragg,

trained along side teams from the Philippine Army Special Operations Command. The training consisted of individual and small unit combat skills and “dual purpose” medical skills that could aid Philippine Army personnel in saving lives on the battlefield as well as saving civilian lives in the wake of a natural or man-made disaster. The combat training included “pistol and rifle marksmanship, combat first aid and lifesaving techniques, medical evacuation procedures, rappelling and fast-rope [insertion] techniques, patrol and ambush [tactics], and Philippine field survival skills” (Gardner 1999, 2). The dual purpose training of rappelling and fast-rope, medical evacuation, and first aid, can also be used by Philippine Army units to rescue their citizen after disaster strikes by being able to get to remote areas and provide initial medical care upon arrival. In the conduct of JCETs like BALANCE PISTON 99-3, SOF get real experience in training soldiers of another culture, while the secondary benefit of preparing foreign military personnel to work alongside Americans is also accomplished.

In Mongolia, where USPACOM has conducted SOF JCETs since 1996, SOF contribute to preparing Mongolian military forces for peacekeeping duties. In 1999, the President of Mongolia, N. Bagabandi, “directed that the Mongolian Armed Forces begin preparations for involvement in peacekeeping operations” (Denecke 1999, 5). The JCET program in Mongolia, known as BALANCE MAGIC, started with “training on humanitarian assistance [and] disaster relief operations” and evolved into more specific medical training, air mobility training, search and rescue, and aerial resupply training (Denecke 1999, 4). Continued expansion of the program may include combined Air Forces training and multilateral peacekeeping training between Nepalese Armed Forces, Mongolian Armed Forces and forces from the USPACOM (Denecke 1999, 5). The

evolution of the BALANCE MAGIC JCET program demonstrates the integral part SOF play in building security relationships between nations in the pursuance of US national interests. It also reveals that when a nation like Mongolia decides that it wants to take an active role in promoting regional peace and stability through participation in peacekeeping operations, SOF are capable of assisting in their preparation.

The effectiveness of SOF personnel in the conduct of MTTs is illustrated by their participation in the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI). Unlike a JCET, the purpose of the MTT is to train host nation military or civilian personnel as directed by the National Command Authorities. MTTs are tailored to meet the needs of the requesting host nation.

ACRI, an initiative promulgated by the Clinton administration, aims to prepare participating African democracies to respond to crises on the African continent.

The goal of ACRI is to work in partnership with African countries to enhance their capacity to respond to humanitarian crises and peacekeeping challenges in a timely and effective manner. The objective of the ACRI is to assist stable democratic countries in developing rapidly deployable, interoperable battalions and companies from forces who can work together to maintain peace on a continent that has too often been torn apart by civil strife. (McCallie 1998, 2)

SOF teams, as part of a US interagency program and a multinational effort that includes France and the United Kingdom, have provided invaluable military training in the form of “individual skills, such as rifle marksmanship and land navigation, [and] squad, platoon, and company-level [maneuver] tasks” (McCracken 1998, 11). SOF MTTs, from the 3rd and 5th Special Forces Groups at Fort Bragg, North Carolina and Fort Campbell, Kentucky respectively, generally “consist of approximately 60 personnel, commanded by a US Army Special Forces major” and include three Special Forces A-detachments and a

combat support detachment (including CA and PSYOP teams) (McCracken 1998, 10). With the assistance of SOF and other military and civilian organizations, it is hoped that the participating African nations can, in the future, alleviate the suffering brought on by natural and man-made disasters and prevent regional conflicts from becoming nightmares like Rwanda in 1994.

Bilateral military exercises have historically provided the US military the opportunity to train with international partners and allies and for the US government to demonstrate its commitment to the same. In Asia, a long-standing bilateral exercise has been the annual exercise COBRA GOLD in the Kingdom of Thailand. COBRA GOLD has traditionally provided SOF the opportunity to deploy a battalion of the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) to train as a combined force with a Royal Thai Army (RTA) Special Forces battalion. The author participated in COBRA GOLD 94, 96, 97 and 98. During these exercises a combined RTA and US SOF battalion conducted training in DA, SR, FID, UW, FHA, CSAR, CA, and PSYOP. COBRA GOLD continues to be an important regional exercise even as it has shifted to becoming multilateral in nature. “In exercise COBRA GOLD 2000, Royal Thai, Singaporean, and US troops train[ed] together. In the future, this exercise will grow into a larger multinational, regional event to improve readiness for combined operations” (Blair 2000, 1).

Another bilateral exercise in the Asia-Pacific is BALIKATAN, conducted in the Philippines with US and Philippine armed forces. “Involving 5,000 personnel evenly divided between both countries, the focus of the exercise [is] on cross-training and include[s] special forces and amphibious operations” (Simon 2000). Bilateral exercises,

such as BALIKATAN, have assisted the Philippines government in “develop[ing] a counter-terrorism capability” (*Armed Forces Press* [Hong Kong] 11 January 2001).

Whether the mechanism is bilateral exercises or multilateral exercises, SOF play an integral role in developing the military skills of the nations the US will most likely form coalitions with to conduct operations across the spectrum of conflict. Operations in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and Bosnia-Herzegovina are prime examples of recent SOF involvement in coalition operations. “In Operation DESERT STORM, SOF personnel . . . formed 109 coordination-and-training teams to operate communications and information-processing equipment for each [coalition partner] national command element. These teams also provided command-control-and-intelligence information to the host command to ensure coherent, unified action” (Adams 1993, 5). As part of IFOR and SFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Army Special Forces teams were organized into Liaison Coordination Elements (LCEs) and “attached to the Hungarian Engineer Battalion, or HUBAT; to the Romanian Engineer Battalion, or ROBAT; and to the Independent Russian Airborne Brigade, or RUSBDE” (Storlie 1999, 40). These teams provided the link between their host units and the NATO forces headquarters as well as close air support and medical evacuation (Storlie 1999, 45). Bilateral or multilateral exercises prior to crisis make forming cohesive coalitions less challenging.

Two other engagement methods that require mention are counterdrug and countermine training. Both, as noted earlier, are SOF collateral missions. But they can also provide opportunities to train with foreign militaries, allowing SOF to hone their FID skills while teaching foreign militaries and the civilian populace to counter the growing problems of narco-trafficking and land mine proliferation. SOF conduct several CD

training missions per year in Thailand to train “Thai CD forces in small unit tactics, leadership, marksmanship, jungle navigation, and combat lifesaving” (USCINCPAC TEP 1998, 30). “During FYs 1996 and 1997, ARSOF supported demining operations in Mozambique, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Laos, Costa Rica and Nicaragua” (Clarke 1999, 13). While training the host nation to counter these threats to their national stability, SOF are not only preparing for their FID mission, but also promoting peace and stability, in keeping with the goals of the United States.

Special Operations Forces provide a unique capability that strengthens the US national and regional CINCs’ policies of engagement. They possess characteristics that prepare them for working in foreign cultures and communicating effectively with their hosts. Their wartime missions give them the ability to respond to the threats that are becoming more prevalent in the twenty-first century. Whether it is combating terrorism, countering drugs, or lending a helping hand after the trauma of a natural or man-made disaster, SOF can deploy rapidly, with the right force mix, prepared to do the missions required. As “Warrior-Diplomats” they are aware of their operational environment and the sensitivities of their mission. When results are measured against the standard of having foreign militaries to assume a constructive, responsible role on the international scene, one need only look at the leading roles in East Timor peacekeeping operations assumed by Thailand and the Philippines (US Congress, House 2000, 5). Both nations have enjoyed a long acquaintance with US SOF training exchanges. While SOF are not the force for every challenge, they are certainly a feasible means of conducting peacetime engagement activities.

## CHAPTER 4

### ACCEPTABILITY

Determining acceptability of a program is essentially a cost-benefit analysis. If the benefits gained outweigh the costs incurred, then the program is determined as acceptable. “Success must be at a reasonable cost” (Davis 2000, L1-E-1). The difficulty in determining acceptability of a SOF peacetime engagement program with the PRC is that the benefits and costs associated with it are not nearly as tangible as dollars, equipment losses, or casualty figures would be in a war or conflict. Nonetheless, there are potential costs and benefits.

Benefits of a SOF engagement program with China become evident after examining where PRC interests and US interests converge and by identifying potential reciprocal threats to those interests. A shared interest in countering illicit narcotics trafficking for instance could potentially result in cooperation that is mutually beneficial in stemming the tide of illegal drugs in both countries. SOF engagement with China could also tread on the domestic and international concerns of both countries, creating certain costs. Weighing the costs against the benefits of a SOF engagement program with China is the subject of this chapter. Given the characteristics and capabilities of SOF discussed in the previous chapter, a judgment can be made as to whether the benefits justify the costs.

#### Shared Interests and Shared Threats

The People's Republic of China and the United States share a desire for regional peace, security, and stability. As previously noted, both the December 1999 US *National Security Strategy for a New Century* and *China's National Defense in 2000* espouse policies aimed at promoting peace in the region. Both security strategies also identify significant transnational threats to their individual national interests. Terrorism, drug trafficking, international organized crime, illicit arms trafficking, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, international environmental and health issues, and problems associated with regional conflicts are all listed by the US as threats to its interests (NSS 1999, 2-3). China's most recent defense white paper identifies threats to its interests as "local wars and armed conflicts . . . caused by ethnic [tension], religious [differences], territorial [disputes], [limited] resources, and other factors" (China 2000a, 2). The paper also lists "terror and extremist organizations," trafficking of illicit narcotics, refugee crises, and natural disasters as threats to the interest of regional and world peace and stability (China 2000a, 2). Clearly, the US and the PRC share threats to their national interests. Americans generally understand how these issues affect US security, but less is known of how they affect Chinese security. A closer look at each of these shared threats may indicate that SOF engagement is in the interest of both countries. Finding common cause against the threats presented here strikes to the heart of Admiral Blair's objective of engaging China to develop areas where it may contribute as a responsible regional member.

### Terrorism

The seriousness of the threat of international terrorism to the US is well documented on the US State Departments counterterrorism webpage. The attack against

the USS *Cole* in Yemen is just the most recent incident of terrorism aimed at the US. China also recognizes the threat of terrorism to its interests and the interests of world and regional security (China 2000a, 2). Many of the acts of terror effecting both countries are generated from extremist elements from the Islamic world.

China's Xinjiang Province was the scene of serious terrorist activity in the last decade of the 20th century. Located in northwest China, Xinjiang is predominately populated by Turkic speaking Muslims despite the government's transmigration efforts to increase the Han Chinese presence. It is also the location of potentially large oil deposits, as well as other natural resources, deemed critical to the expanding Chinese economy (Becquelin 2000, 65). "Most of China's oil reserves and nuclear power resources (including Lop Nur, China's only nuclear test site), as well as large gas, iron, and coal deposits, are located in Xinjiang" (Leeb 1999). Xinjiang shares a border with Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, countries that are less than stable, potentially ripe for terrorist exploitation, and also possess natural resources that are a potential source of energy for China.

Increasing acts of terrorism throughout the 1990s has caused the PRC grave concern. Extremist Muslim ideology fueled an insurrection in the vicinity of the town of Kashgar, near the Kyrgyz border in April 1990, leaving 50 Uygurs and Kyrgyz dead (Allen 1996, 13) and causing the PRC leadership to suspect a growing "ethno-nationalist separatist threat" (Becquelin 2000, 69). Terrorist acts related to growing Muslim discontent in Xinjiang include an assassination of a CCP official in 1995 (Becquelin 2000, 86) and bombings in Urumqi, the provincial capital of Xinjiang. "Bombs allegedly set by separatists exploded in Urumqi in 1992 and in Kashgar in 1993. Muslims rioted in

Hotan in 1995, when Chinese authorities removed a popular Islamic imam suspected of fomenting dissent” (Allen 1996, 13). In 1998, 380 fatalities caused by “over 70 serious incidents” and over 100 victims from 27 attacks from January through March of 1999. “The provincial governor, Abdulahat Abdurixit, admitted publicly in March 1999, ‘Since the start of the 1990s, if you count explosions, assassinations and other terrorist activities, it comes to a few thousand incidents” (Becquelin 2000, 87). The seriousness with which the PRC views the problem is indicated by a Central Committee document stating: “There is also a possibility that this as yet limited chaos and turmoil may influence Xinjiang’s and eventually the whole country’s stability” (Becquelin 2000, 87-88).

The PRC has taken diplomatic steps to decrease the threat of terrorism in Xinjiang. Their promulgation of and subsequent establishment in 1996 of the “Shanghai Five” consisting of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Russia is an effort to stabilize the border areas. Initially billed as a multilateral economic forum, this arrangement has evolved into a regional security platform aimed at stabilizing the central Asian region to which Xinjiang plays a predominant role (Becquelin 2000, 70). This action may be just the initial counter to what may prove to become a ever more serious Chinese national problem. As China’s economy becomes more robust its dependence on the natural resources of Xinjiang province and the Central Asian states is likely to increase. With increased economic world standing China is likely to become an even more attractive terrorist target.

#### Narcotics Trafficking

The PRC has a drug problem. The *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, 1999, published by the US Department of State, reveals just how big the problem

is. “China is now the principal route for heroin smuggled out of Burma, with roughly 90 percent of seizures of Southeast Asian heroin occurring within Chinese borders. There is evidence that some heroin also enters China from Laos and Vietnam and that smaller amounts enter from Southwest Asia” (US Department of State 1999).

Not just a route for drugs, “China is a major producer of precursor chemicals. The ephedra plant, from which the precursor of methamphetamine is made, grows wild in northern China” (US Department of State 1999). Additionally, a drug addiction problem exists. A PRC government drug report the 1999 figure of known addicts at 681,000 (China 2000b). This same report states: “Since the late 1970s, the illicit international narcotics tide has constantly invaded China, and criminal drug-related activities touched off by transit drug trafficking have re-emerged. The number of drug addicts has kept rising, drug related cases have constantly increased, the drug scourge is becoming more serious with each passing day, and the situation is grim for the anti-drug struggle” (China 2000b). The situation is grim and the PRC is taking action.

China’s participation in bilateral and multilateral drug control programs has been increasing since 1985. In May 1995 China signed an agreement with Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar (Burma), Cambodia, and the United Nations Drug Control Program to further cooperate on drug control in the region (China 2000b). In 1997 Jiang Zemin and President Clinton signed a joint statement, strengthening counterdrug cooperation between the two countries (China 2000b). In 1999, the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) opened an office in Beijing that “regularly provided operational intelligence to Chinese narcotics enforcement officials” (US Department of State 1999). DEA training to Chinese law enforcement officials has included a risk management

course, jetway narcotics inspections, and contraband enforcement team training (US Department of State 1999). The growing threat of narcotics trafficking in China and their apparent willingness to participate in multilateral counterdrug forums and US sponsored training indicates that this may be a way to further increase military-to-military contacts.

### Maritime Piracy

Piracy is a little known and small, but increasing, criminal threat in the South China Sea. “As the American and Russian naval presence in Southeast Asia has declined, pirate attacks have soared: Some gangs steal whole tankers with the help of corrupt local officials” (Dahlby 1998, 19). “In 1997, 105 of the 229 shipboard attacks reported world wide took place” in the South China Sea. Most attacks have been simple thievery, but at least one attack has resulted in the death of the ship’s master (Dahlby 1998, 23). China, along with other trading nations of the world, has cargo tankers that transit the South China Sea.

The situation is serious enough for regional leaders to discuss options of confronting it. “Malaysian Prime Minister Mahatir has suggested that cooperative peacekeeping could be expanded beyond the traditional separation of combatants to ‘keeping sea-lanes and air space free of piracy and hijackings . . . and . . . rescu[ing] the innocent hostages of hijackings and piracy” (Simon 2000). The increase in piracy in 1999 has prompted Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore to broach the topic of combined maritime patrolling of the Strait of Malacca. No objections to this proposal have been raised as of yet by the affected countries (Simon 2000). Combating piracy appears to be in the interest of many Asian nations.

China and US have, since 1998, been involved in bilateral consultative talks in the field of maritime safety. So far these talks have produced the small step of agreeing on the protocols for routine communication between ships at sea. Future talks are planned (*News Release 07-00* [USPACOM Public Affairs], 3 June 2000). This important step, although tied to maritime safety, could expand into combined maritime search and rescue training or possibly maritime safety cooperation.

#### Land Mine Removal

Like the US, China is involved in the removal of land mines, both internal to China and internationally, for the sake of reducing the human devastation they cause. Cleaning up the mess left over from their 1979 border war with Vietnam has been a high priority.

From early 1992 to August 1999, the Chinese government launched two large-scale mine clearance operations on Chinese territory along the Sino-Vietnamese border. Over 2.2 million landmines and explosive devices of various kinds were removed, and more than 700 tons of abandoned ammunition and explosive devices were destroyed. An area of over 300 square kilometers was cleared. Some 290 border trade paths and ports of entry and exit were re-opened, and 60,000 hectares of deserted farmland, pastures and forests were restored to their original state. (China 2000a, 20)

Internationally, the PRC has cooperated with UN efforts to assist countries affected by land mine problems.

In October 1999 and May 2000, China sponsored two international mine clearance training courses in collaboration with the UN. Forty trainees from seven mine-affected countries (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, Namibia, Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia and Rwanda) attended the courses, the contents of which ranged from mine-clearance techniques to operational methods and organizational procedures, with satisfactory results. (China 2000a, 20)

The active participation of both the US and the PRC in mine removal operations indicates a shared interest where cooperation between their militaries may provide additional

information to their individual programs. American and Chinese soldiers sharing techniques on land mine removal is beneficial for both.

### Natural and Man-made Disasters

When it comes to coping with natural disasters, the PRC, and the PLA, have lots of experience. After thousands of years of nearly annual flooding, the PRC is building the Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River. In 1996, “floods on the lower Yangtze displaced more than a million people from their homes” (Zich 1997, 10). The PLA’s knowledge and experience in disaster relief, if shared, has tremendous value for the rest of the region.

Because of the Yangtze floods and many other natural disasters that plague China, the PLA is very active in countering these threats to Chinese interests.

During the past two years, it [the PLA] has participated in building over 20,000 km flood-prevention dikes, over 30 reservoirs, over 300 km of anti-tide dams, and more than 300 irrigation and drainage pumping stations, including such comprehensive projects as the Xiaolangdi on the Yellow River, the Three Gorges on the Yangtze River and the Huaihe River Valley, rainfall flow concentration in Gansu Province, and sand prevention and control in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. (China 2000a, 13)

Routine rescue rehearsals are conducted to keep boats, planes, motor vehicles and other disaster relief assets in readiness for immediate action in case of any disaster. The past two years have witnessed more than 500,000 PLA officers and men participating in more than 100 rescue and relief operations. (China 2000a, 13)

It appears that, like the US military, the PLA is called upon routinely to conduct humanitarian relief following natural disasters at home.

Within the international community China has participated in ARF conferences on a wide range of regional cooperation, including emergency rescue and disaster relief

(China 2000a, 15). Continued meetings within ARF on this subject are reasonable to expect and may present an opportunity for engagement in the way of multinational combined training. With their vast experience in what most probably are mass evacuations and disaster relief operations, the PLA may be a great source of expertise in this arena that all ARF participants could learn from.

### Regional Instability and Peacekeeping

The PRC's "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" guide its foreign policy. "Mutual respect for sovereignty" and "noninterference in another's internal affairs" are two of these principles and appear to oppose the idea of multilateral peacekeeping or peace enforcement operations. However, "China's number one national priority is economic reform and modernization. Achieving this objective requires a peaceful international environment" (Leeb 1999). Perhaps this is one reason why China is slowly shifting away from its time-honored approach of bilateral relationships toward multilateral relationships.

China has long eschewed multilateral negotiations, commitments, and arrangements. It has instead opted for a bilateral approach, because this provides maximum flexibility and independence of action. However, in an effort to strengthen its good relations with ASEAN, China has in the past several years shown a willingness, albeit somewhat reluctantly, to engage in multilateral dialogue. In November 1991, China joined APEC, perhaps the region's most important consultative association. Also in that year, China's Foreign Minister Qian Qichen attended a meeting of the ASEAN states for the first time. China's pledge to support efforts aimed at enhancing security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific has resulted in its annual participation in ARF. (Leeb 1999)

China's participation in the "Shanghai Five" multilateral security dialogue also bears this out. In their defense white paper, China applauds the peacekeeping efforts of the UN,

albeit with a cautionary note to respect national sovereignty. This apparent shift in Beijing policy may present an opportunity for increased multilateral military engagement.

Despite the PRC's Five Principles, it has nonetheless been active in supporting UN peacekeeping activities. Their national defense white paper extols the participation of PLA officers and men in the conduct of UN sponsored peacekeeping functions with a long list of UN missions they have supported, including Iraq-Kuwait observer missions, the Cambodian Transitional Authority, the East Timor Transitional Authority, and many others. It also highlights the four Chinese lives lost and the "dozens" wounded in these international peacekeeping endeavors (China 2000a, 17). Their continued support to the UN and participation in ARF and other multilateral dialogues, including the February 1999 Pacific Area Special Operations Conference (PASOC 99) in Honolulu, Hawaii (Winfield 1999, 2), indicate that the PRC may desire to expand its role in peacekeeping operations. China's recent overtures in requesting observer status of the annual COBRA GOLD exercises (USDAO Beijing China 2000) may bode well for this scenario.

The PRC and the US share a great stake in maintaining peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. Threats to US interests in the region and throughout the world also affect China. Bilateral cooperation between the US military and the PLA, or multilateral cooperation that includes the PLA, would significantly benefit regional stability. Given Admiral Blair's objective of "develop[ing] areas where [China] can play a constructive responsible role in promoting security and peaceful development in the region" (US Congress, House 2000) and the previously examined capabilities of SOF in countering several of these threats, it appears that a SOF engagement program with the PLA, aimed at promoting military preparedness and cooperation to counter these shared threats, may

be in order. However, the US and the PRC have several key political concerns that cause their interests to diverge and may preclude the acceptability of such a proposal.

### PRC Political Concerns

The political issues surrounding the US-PRC relationship are wide and varied. However, from the PRC perspective, the political concerns tend to fit into two categories. First, and foremost, is the issue of Chinese sovereignty. Like the US, the PRC closely safeguards its sovereignty. Not coincidentally, two of the main issues causing a divergence of interests between the US and the PRC, namely Taiwan and human rights, are, in the mind of the Beijing leadership, sovereignty issues. In addition to the sovereignty issue, some within the Beijing leadership perceive the US as a hegemonic power attempting to contain China's growth. It is possible that they fear that a contained China may end up in a similar situation as the now defunct Soviet Union. For any engagement program with China to succeed in its aims, these political concerns must be understood.

The sovereignty issue stems from China's recent history. In the wake of the Opium War of 1839-42 came a series of humiliating Chinese concessions that quickly eroded the influence of the Chinese Empire and left several key nations as the real power brokers in China. The carving up of China into spheres of influence that followed the Sino-Japanese War in 1895, and the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, further stripped the Empire of control over its own destiny and sped up its ultimate demise (Lieberthal 1995, 25). This period of history is a Chinese national embarrassment and fuels the fears of the PRC

leadership of a repeat loss of control of its own destiny. Despite the victory of the Chinese Communists over the Guomindang nationalists in 1949, the PRC has had to live with the further embarrassment of a separate Republic of China on Taiwan. The shoring up of Taiwan by the US has been, and probably will continue to be, viewed as US interference in Chinese sovereignty. Despite the US's "one China" policy and its acknowledgment that Taiwan is part of China, continued US support to Taiwan rankles the PRC leadership and is seen to extend the date of reunification of Taiwan to the mainland.

Separatist forces in Taiwan are scheming to split the island province from China, in one form or another. This has seriously undermined the preconditions and foundation for peaceful reunification across the Straits. This is the root cause of tension across the Taiwan Straits. The United States has never stopped selling advanced weapons to Taiwan. Some people in the United States have been trying hard to get the Congress to pass the so-called Taiwan Security Enhancement Act. And some are even attempting to incorporate Taiwan into the US TMD [Theater Missile Defense] system. The newly revised Guidelines for US-Japanese Defense Cooperation has failed to explicitly undertake to exclude Taiwan from the scope of 'the areas surrounding Japan' referred to in the Japanese security bill that could involve military intervention. These actions have inflated the arrogance of the separatist forces in Taiwan, seriously undermined China's sovereignty and security and imperiled the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region. (China 2000a, 2)

Continued arms sales to Taiwan by the US will certainly cause an increase in tensions in the US-PRC relationship and most probably result in persistent anti-US rhetoric emanating from Beijing.

Another point of contention in the sovereignty issue is US and UN complaints about human rights violations within China. Although the Clinton administration decided in 1994 "to delink China's Most Favored Nation [trading] status from its record on human rights" (NSS 1994, 24), US, and UN, pressure to improve human rights in China is

still perceived by PRC leaders as meddling in its internal affairs. “A wide range of Chinese elites point to US intervention in Kosovo as setting a dangerous precedent for eventual US military operations against China in [the] Taiwan Strait or South China Sea conflict scenarios. They also suspect Washington will intervene openly or covertly in Beijing’s internal disputes with ethnic Tibetan or Muslim minorities in western China” (US Congress 2000). The PRC refers to US and UN use of force to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries “under the pretexts of ‘humanitarianism’ and ‘human rights’” as “neo-interventionism” and “neo-gunboat policy” (China 2000a, 2). The PRC does not implicate itself as a human rights violator in the document, or as having its sovereignty violated on this issue, however, it makes clear their position on US or UN interventions into other countries under these conditions as a violation of sovereignty.

China’s recent past has made it skittish of Western interference in its internal affairs. A loss of control over its own destiny, and thus a return to the conditions that led to the downfall of the Qing dynasty, is certainly feared within the PRC leadership. The US-PRC relationship tends to run afoul whenever the Beijing leaders perceive US words or actions as a violation of another nation’s sovereignty. Fear of containment by the US, and US hegemony in Asia, also causes considerable concern for China’s leaders.

A US containment policy toward China, although not a direct violation of Chinese sovereignty, would certainly interfere with Chinese national growth and prosperity, and therefore, is viewed in Beijing as a threat. The US continuously denies any intention of containing China. In a 15 May 2000 speech at the Ronald Reagan Trade Center, Defense Secretary Cohen highlighted the “folly” and futility in a policy of containment aimed at China (Cohen 2000b). Instead, emphasis is placed on a US policy of engagement with

China and the numerous interests shared by both nations. Secretary Cohen's speech to the Chinese National Defense University on 13 July 2000 was aimed at assuaging Beijing's concerns of a policy of containment. "The United States cooperates with China not only because China is a great and growing nation. We cooperate with China because we have a great interest in doing so" (Cohen 2000a). These attempts at calming Beijing's fears are offset however by US actions in Asia that, from the PRC perspective, indicates a different US policy towards China.

The PRC view US diplomatic and military ties with many of its neighbors as an indication of the true intent of a US policy of containment. "In the post-Cold War era, Washington has been advocating an Asia-Pacific security structure with the US as the sole leader and with the US-led bilateral alliances as the back bone. This is in essence hegemonic stability" (Wu Xinbo 2000). As mentioned earlier, China sees the increase of US interventions as a dangerous precedent in world security. But US actions closer to China's borders are even more worrisome. "Policymakers in Washington have already made it clear that after Korean unification, they seek to retain the security alliance with a unified Korea and maintain its military presence on the peninsula. For geo-strategic reasons, China naturally feels concerned with any security presence of other major powers on the peninsula" (Wu Xinbo 2000).

To the southeast of China, developments that strengthen military ties between the US and the Philippines, and the other Southeast Asian nations, are equally troublesome to China.

Since 1995, the US has stepped up its security presence in the region, including port access arrangements in Southeast Asia and joint military exercises with the Philippines. Undoubtedly, increasing the US military presence in the region is

aimed at “constricting” Chinese activities in the South China Sea. In addition, the United States has been working hard to encourage Southeast Asian countries to form a kind of “United Front” against China with regard to both the South China Sea disputes and growing Chinese power. (Wu Xinbo 2000)

On the western side of China, the Beijing leaders feel the pinch of expanded US interest in the Central Asian nations. “Washington has strengthened its military cooperation with some Central Asian countries (including joint military exercises, training and provision of arms, etc), and has shown interest in bringing Central Asia into NATO” (Wu Xinbo 2000). These actions, from the PRC perspective, threaten not only the physical security of China, but also a vital source of future energy resources required to keep the economic resurgence of China going. China sees itself in an ever-shrinking diplomatic box. Apparently, the actions of US foreign policy, not the words of American leaders, have the greatest impact on shaping the perceptions of the Beijing leaders.

Some Americans would probably be shocked to learn that Beijing does not trust our words. Assisting other nations on the road to democracy, insuring human rights for all, and the defense of friends and allies is viewed by many Americans as the decent thing to do. What would it take to convince Beijing of our benign interests in Asia? Wu Xinbo provides a potential answer. “Beijing would look to the following three major indicators of a stable strategic environment: a rough balance of power among major regional powers, indications that the United States does not intend to contain China either single-handedly or in concert with others, and the maintenance of China’s credible deterrence vis-à-vis other major powers” (Wu Xinbo 2000).

Some might say that the US has already provided strong indications of its intent to engage China. However, the US has not engaged in either bilateral or multilateral

military training with the PLA. Is this the indicator that would convince the Beijing leadership that engagement, not containment, is indeed the US policy? Considering that the PRC and the US share common threats and that a common response may be in the interest of both countries, combined bilateral or multilateral military training that prepares all concerned to confront shared dangers could also serve as the indicator of US intentions in the region and toward China. However, some in the US see this type of engagement as an unacceptably risky venture that endangers US security.

#### US Political Concerns

In the US, the debate on the true, long-term intentions of the PRC is hotly contested. Oddly enough in American domestic politics, opposition to the current US engagement policy with China is found on both sides of the political aisle. Those on the right side of the aisle tend to view China as a growing threat to US security. They are quick to point out that the PRC is still a communist country and therefore cannot be trusted (Gertz 2000, 6). Those on the left side tend to view the PRC as the great oppressor of human rights. The stories of PRC suppression of the Falun Gong excite their protests of the recent UN agreement with Beijing concerning human rights (*Associated Press* [Beijing], 21 November 2000). Both sides hold considerable sway within the halls of the US Congress. Any US engagement program with China must, in order to be acceptable, assuage the concerns of these groups.

Perhaps the biggest concern emanating from those that see China as a threat to US security and interests in Asia is that US military engagement displays American military capabilities while improving PLA capabilities. This concern led directly to the attachment of section 1201 to the National Defense Authorization Act of 2000. This section puts

strict limitations on military-to-military exchanges with the PLA. The following excerpt details the imposed limitations.

- (a) Limitation.--The Secretary of Defense may not authorize any military-to-military exchanges or contact described in subsection (b) to be conducted by the Armed Forces with representatives of the People's Liberation Army of the People's Republic of China.
- (b) Concerned Exchanges and Contacts.--Subsection (a) applies to any exchanges or contacts that include any of the following:
  - (1) Force projection operations.
  - (2) Nuclear operations.
  - (3) Field operations.
  - (4) Logistics.
  - (5) Chemical and biological defense and other capabilities related to weapons of mass destruction.
  - (6) Intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance operations.
  - (7) Joint warfighting experiments and other activities related to warfare.
  - (8) Military space operations.
  - (9) Other warfighting capabilities of the Armed Forces.
- (c) Exceptions.--Subsection (a) does not apply to search and rescue exercises or any humanitarian exercises. (*National Defense Authorization Act 2000*)

The passage of this section with the Defense bill indicates the seriousness to which Congress views the potential threat to US interests posed by the PRC. The fear of an expanding China bent on regional hegemony at a minimum, and international competition with the United States at a maximum, has merit.

The liberalization of the PRC economy has raised the national capital required to steadily improve the capabilities of the PLA. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, China has increased its defense spending by an average of 11 percent annually. It is the only major power to do so in the post-Cold War era (Howard 1999). The PLA's naval and air forces have priority in the PRC's modernization and improvement efforts in order to extend their operational capability out to 600 miles from China's borders (Howard 1999). The Army too is modernizing in order to become more mobile and more capable of joint

operations (Howard 1999). “If present trends continue, Beijing believes it will achieve the status of a ‘medium-sized’ great power by 2050 at a minimum” (US Congress 2000). Although the PRC outwardly portrays policies aimed at producing peace and stability in Asia, the China threat theorists note that China’s military is working hard to increase its capability of force projection so as to be able to influence international politics in the resource rich South China Sea (US Congress 2000). The bottom line, according to the China threat theorists, is that a more economically profitable China means a leaner, meaner PLA, capable of influencing the Asian balance of power and frustrating US interests in the region. They purport that China very much wants to be a force that must be considered by its neighbors and others with interests in Asia. The cost of dealing with an aggressive PRC in possession of a military force of similar capabilities to that of the US Armed Forces is, to the China threat theorists, not in the interest of the US.

On the far left of the American political fence are those that view the PRC as an oppressive, authoritarian governing body that has made only marginal progress in cleaning up its atrocious human rights record. As already mentioned, the PRC views human rights as a sovereignty issue and insists that the government has a right to maintain order within its borders. But it is not just in reaction to the oppression witnessed by the world in the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident that arouses the anger of human rights activists. They point to countless numbers of dissidents arbitrarily jailed or forced into exile, repression of religious groups of all faiths, a legal system lacking in “procedural safeguards” and an independent judiciary, inadequate legal defense, public executions, torture of prisoners, forced birth control, harvesting of organs from condemned prisoners, and the export of goods produced by prison labor (Nathan 1997,

408-410). Any military engagement training with units of the PLA or People's Armed Police that could be used to suppress the civil rights of the Chinese people would cause an uproar within the halls of the US Congress.

Both the China threat theorists and the human rights activists have legitimate concerns about US military engagement with the PRC. However, the counters to these concerns are equally valid. People straddling the fence on this issue note that although the PLA is modernizing at a more rapid rate than in any time in their past, they are not even close to matching the prowess of the US military. This provides the US "a strategic window of opportunity in which to engage China" and shape its future course (Anderson 1999). A program of "vigilant engagement" (Anderson 1999) that seeks to influence China's development in the new century is viewed as a pragmatic course of action. This view is currently held by many of China's neighbors (Simon 2000). A PRC, with a capable PLA, would be a valuable partner in combating the threats shared by both nations. Shaping activities also apply to human rights. More frequent contact, at the soldier-to-soldier level, as opposed to the high level visits, may have the long-term effect of reducing human rights violations.

#### Cost-Benefit Analysis

Given the shared threats and political concerns mentioned in this chapter, along with the capabilities of SOF discussed in the previous chapter, it is possible to compare the costs and benefits of a SOF engagement program with the PLA.

The most significant cost is certainly the risk of jeopardizing US national security interests by training with, and thus improving the capabilities of the PLA. A more efficient, more joint, and more lethal PLA could threaten its neighbors and disrupt other

facets of US foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific region. This is a real risk and should not be taken lightly.

However, as mentioned in the previous chapter, SOF can conduct training of a non-lethal nature and, as “global scouts,” can provide increased transparency in the PLA. SOF can train with the PLA in venues that do not put US interests and the interests of our allies at risk. Venues like search and rescue and humanitarian exercises are permitted in section 1202 of the Defense Authorization Act of 2000. This leaves open the opportunity, for example, to conduct medical training and humanitarian assistance exercises. If, some time in the future, training were expanded to include peacekeeping exercises, SOF, working as liaison coordination elements, would be in a unique position to witness the tactical efficiency of PLA combat units. The benefit of increased PLA transparency offsets the risk of making the PLA a more effective fighting force, especially given the huge technological advantage the US military currently enjoys.

Another potential cost is the risk of training PLA forces in venues that could be construed as potentially usable in the suppression of basic human rights. This cost could be mitigated by a careful vetting process that insures US forces only train with units that have not participated in acts of suppression in the past. Additionally, SOF training plans could complement other engagement programs like Foreign Military Officer Education (FMOE) and International Military Education and Training (IMET), which could train junior officers of the PLA in the responsibilities of a military in a democracy.

The immediate benefit gained in a SOF engagement program with China is the demonstration that the US means what it says. As mentioned, PRC leaders remain skeptical as to the intent of the US policy of engagement. Despite the constant references

made by senior US government officials that the US does not wish to contain China, concrete evidence of this intent, from the perspective of Beijing, has not been forthcoming. SOF engagement puts America's most precious commodity, her sons and daughters, at the forefront of the policy and sends a clear message to Beijing that the US government means what it says.

Another significant benefit is access. Much of the mutual uncertainty between the US and the PRC is based on what is not known as opposed to what is known. For example, the US knows about the Chinese military modernization process in terms of equipment procured and dollars spent. The extent to which this equipment is maintained and used in the field is another story. SOF engagement puts trained military professionals in close contact with PLA personnel and units. Observations made by these professional soldiers can confirm or deny much of what is currently only speculation and thus provide a clearer picture of PRC capabilities and intent.

An increase in overall understanding between the two militaries is another potential benefit. In January 20001, two PLA senior Colonels gave a brief lecture on PRC information warfare and defense strategy at the US Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. During the post lecture question and answer period it became obvious that, although the two Colonels spoke understandable English, a "perspective" gap existed between them and their audience. In response to a question concerning forward deployed US forces in Asia, one of the Colonels commented that once the Koreans were reunited and Taiwan established closer ties with the mainland, then there would be no reason for the US to forward base its forces in Asia. This ostensibly sincere statement of US interests in Asia betrayed the Colonel's lack of understanding to

what is really in the interest of the US. The bottom line is that the PRC does not understand the US and vice versa. Participatory communication at all levels of the military can provide a clearer picture of what is important to both societies. SOF engagement puts mature, professional, junior grade US officers and non-commissioned officers in close contact with their PLA peers. The daily communication required in training will lend itself to clearer understanding.

Finally, by starting small and building upon success and increased understanding, two nations with a great deal at stake in an unpredictable world may find that it is truly to their mutual benefit to work together in combating their shared threats. The international ills of terrorism, drug trafficking, piracy, natural and man-made disasters, and ethnic, tribal, and religious conflicts affect both countries. A SOF engagement program that begins with humanitarian training venues not only demonstrates the US policy intent of engagement but also may lead to increased understanding and combined efforts against shared threats. To paraphrase the late Deng Xiaoping, if there is something worth obtaining on the other side, then it is acceptable to cross the stream by feeling the stones (Tyler 1999, 375).

## CHAPTER 5

### SUITABILITY

The suitability of a military objective, plan, or program is determined by whether it leads to or accomplishes the desired political or national security objective (Davis 2000, L1-E-1). The *National Security Strategy* of 1999 makes plain that the US national security objective is a peaceful and stable international environment (*NSS* 1999, 5). Essential to attaining that objective in Asia is continued US military presence (*NSS* 1999, 34). Treaty alliances with Japan, Thailand, Australia, South Korea, and the Philippines are critical to preserving US presence as is the maintenance of healthy relations between the US and ASEAN (*NSS* 1999, 34). Vital to maintaining these bilateral and multilateral relationships in Asia is the USPACOM regional engagement plan.

The USPACOM regional engagement plan has two significant aspects to cope with the challenges of the twenty-first century. First, while maintaining and strengthening existing bilateral security arrangements, Admiral Blair seeks to move toward a multilateral security framework, what he has termed “security communities” (US Congress, House 2000). Secondly, the plan calls for engagement with the PRC in order to “develop areas where [China] can play a constructive, responsible role” in the security of Asia (US Congress, House 2000). Presumably, Admiral Blair aims to include China in an Asia-Pacific security framework.

A SOF engagement program with China then, in order to be suitable, must promote ways in which China can play a constructive, responsible role in multilateral security. Simultaneously it must neither detract from existing multilateral and bilateral security relationships nor disrupt the process of developing further multilateral security relationships. To do so could have an adverse effect on US regional presence.

This chapter first assesses whether US allies and friends in the region would support a US SOF engagement program with the PRC. It does this by examining their individual security situations, their relations with the US and China, and finally their perspectives on multilateral security cooperation. Secondly, this chapter examines ways in which a SOF engagement program with China may influence the desired outcome of a constructive, responsible PRC involved in maintaining a peaceful, stable Asia-Pacific.

#### US Allies and Friends in Asia

The US “will do what [it] must to defend [its] interests, including, when necessary and appropriate, using military might unilaterally and decisively” (*NSS 1999*, 1). However, it is also profoundly in the interest of the US to cooperate internationally to offset the challenges of the twenty-first century. “Many of our security objectives are best achieved--or can only be achieved--by leveraging our influence and capabilities through international organizations, our alliances, or as a leader of an ad hoc coalition formed around a specific objective” (*NSS 1999*, 3).

Asia possesses several international economic and security fora. The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), consisting of ten nations, and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), consisting of twenty-three nations, are perhaps the most commonly known. Additionally, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC),

consisting of twenty-one nations, the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), consisting of three nations plus the European Union, and the PRC's Shanghai Five, also figure prominently in Asian security and economic relationships.

The complex web of bilateral and multilateral security ties in Asia currently provides a measure of stability to the region. The US regards "durable relationships with allies and friendly nations [as] critical to [its] security" (NSS 1999, 3). This includes adapting existing relationships and multilateral fora toward an active security role (US Congress, House 2000). The maintenance of these relationships can be difficult at times, as recently illustrated by differences of opinion between the US and the Republic of Korea on how best to cope with changes in North Korea (Karon 2001).

In order to remain consistent with its ultimate national goal of peace and stability in Asia, the US must consider the reactions of China's neighbors prior to committing to proposed programs of engagement. The best China engagement program, even if successful in accomplishing Admiral Blair's China objective, would be of little value to the national goal if the US's critical bilateral security relationships and the nascent multilateral security relationships in Asia were placed in jeopardy. Therefore, the perspective of a nation that is critically important individually and the combined perspective of a multinational organization like ASEAN figure prominently into any US decision of engagement, SOF or otherwise. The following pages look first at the security perspectives of Japan, South Korea, and Australia, each of which has a mutual defense treaty with the US. Then, looking at the ASEAN perspective, emphasis will be placed on Thailand and the Philippines, also mutual defense partners with the US.

Japan

Japan is the most important ally the US has in Asia. “The [US-Japanese] alliance remains the cornerstone for achieving common security objectives and for maintaining a peaceful and prosperous environment for the Asia-Pacific region” (NSS 1999, 34). Geographically, Japan is the springboard for US military deployment to other parts of Asia (US Congress, House 2000). Politically, Japan is a stable democracy sitting opposite the East China Sea and the Sea of Japan from the PRC, North Korea, and Russia. Economically, Japan is second only to the US in the world and is vital to the Asian economy as a whole (US Congress, House 2000). Diplomatically, Japan is a supporter of the UN and US interests (Simon 2000), and a participant in APEC, ARF, and KEDO. Additionally, US presence and close ties with Japan assuage the concerns of other US Asian partners, historically fearful of a nationalistic, militaristic Japan (Thakur 2000). These factors combine to make American and Japanese security interests virtually identical.

Japan’s perception of the re-emergence of China as an Asian power, like most Asian countries, is a mix of optimism and concern. Chinese markets and goods are certainly viewed optimistically in Japan. “Japan is China’s No. 1 trading partner and China is Japan’s No.2 trading partner, after the US” (Dawson 2000). As of 1999, Japanese auto manufacturer, Honda, is making and trying to sell cars in China (Landers 1999). But Japan is wary of the PRC as well. Points of tension include the PRC claim of sovereignty over the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea (Storey 1999) and its growing military capability, including between twelve and seventeen nuclear missiles that can easily reach Japan (Howard 1999). The Japanese people remain split on whether the PRC can be trusted or not (Dawson 2000).

In Japanese foreign policy, optimism and concern over the PRC, appears to be grounds for pragmatism. In March of 2000, policy representatives and academics from Japan joined with others from the US, Australia, South Korea, the PRC, Singapore, and Thailand at the Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University in the US to discuss perspectives on China. The overwhelming consensus opinion of those involved was proengagement, anticontainment (Pacific Symposium 2000). Presumably, Japan views an economically integrated China as less threatening than an ostracized one. Given Japan's security concerns over the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands and the potential threat of China's nuclear arsenal, it is safe to assume that Japan would benefit from US military engagement with China for the purposes of increased military transparency. SOF engagement with China, as a means to increase transparency, would likely meet with approval in Japan.

#### The Republic of Korea

The historic volatility of the Korean peninsula places it high on the priority list of the US government. "Tensions on the Korean Peninsula remain the leading threat to peace and stability in East Asia" (NSS 1999, 35). In addition to the US-ROK mutual defense treaty, the US maintains a sizable deterrent force in South Korea to ensure a peaceful resolution of the Korean conflict. The preferred US scenario is a democratic, non-nuclear, and re-unified Korea. Keeping this process peaceful is "clearly in [the US] strategic interest" (NSS 1999, 35). Living in an unstable conflict zone, the South Korean government has an obvious interest in continued peace and stability as well.

South Korea's number one "persistent goal" is re-unification with North Korea while "ensur[ing its] lasting national survival and prosperity (Cho Seong-tae 1999). The

South Korean government currently espouses a policy of engagement with North Korea while maintaining a “firm resolve and watertight defense posture, as well as the highly coordinated ROK-US combined defense capability” (Cho Seong-tae 1999). Although some recent differences of opinion exist between the US and the ROK on engagement with the North (Karon 2001), it appears that South Korea views a strong bilateral deterrent capability as critical to ensuring its survival while it moves toward re-unification.

In addition to its bilateral security ties to the US, South Korea recognizes the value that engagement with other countries, bilaterally and multilaterally, can play in pursuit of its goal. Healthy PRC-ROK relations can significantly contribute to Korean re-unification. The PRC’s recently recovered influence over North Korea (Holland 2000) could potentially aid South Korea in its aims of re-unification. China, like the US and the ROK, has a vital interest in keeping the peninsula peaceful (Holland 2000). And like the US, China does not wish to see a nuclear capable peninsula (Han Sung-Joo 2000). Closer cooperation between the US, the PRC, the ROK, and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) could bode well for Korean unification.

South Korea also promotes itself multilaterally. Participation in ARF, APEC, and KEDO provide South Korea with opportunities to influence other actors through dialogue and action. South Korea demonstrated its willingness to support multilateral security efforts in Asia by volunteering an infantry battalion to the UN mandated peacekeeping effort in East Timor (US Congress, House 2000). Whether dealing with the issues associated with its national goal of reunification or Asian stability in whole, it is safe to say that South Korea understands the value of dialogue and engagement. Since both the

US and the PRC figure prominently in South Korea's re-unification process and a peaceful, stable Korean peninsula, it is reasonable to assume South Korean acceptance, and encouragement, of continued and enhanced US-PRC engagement.

#### Australia

Australia sees major power relationships as the key to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. "China, Japan, India, Russia, and the United States . . . are important to Australia's security because they have the power--actual or potential--to influence events throughout the Asia Pacific region. Their relationships will set the tone for the whole region" (Australia 2000, 17). Australia also views continued US engagement as "central to the Asia Pacific security system" (Australia 2000, 18). The US-Australia mutual defense treaty remains "an important element to [Australia's] overall strategic policy" (Australia 2000, 36). Recognizing the significance of engagement between the major powers and the security role of the US, Australia seeks to influence other Asia-Pacific nations by participating in bilateral and multilateral dialogue.

Multilaterally, Australia is a very active nation. Australia is a participant in APEC, ARF and a member of the Five Powers Defense Arrangement (FPDA) made up of Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Singapore, and Malaysia. The FPDA conducts regular combined military training exercises with its member nations (Thakur 2000). No stranger to multinational security operations, Australia provided the leadership for the initial coalition operations in East Timor that included forces from Thailand, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Korea, the United Kingdom, the US, Canada, and Italy (US Congress, House 2000). Australia has consistently demonstrated its propensity toward multilateral security arrangements.

Bilaterally, Australia is also very active, maintaining several security relationships and conducting extensive regional dialogue. In addition to its mutual defense treaty with the US, Australia retains a mutual defense treaty with New Zealand and security arrangements with Brunei, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and Thailand (Thakur 2000). Australia's relationship with Japan is "well developed and longstanding" and it also "places a high priority on working with China to deepen and develop . . . dialogue on strategic issues" (Australia 2000, 37). Australia's dialogue with Russia and India also continues to grow (Australia 2000, 38). Australia's persistent use of dialogue with the lesser and greater powers of Asia demonstrate Australia's desire for increased engagement. Given Australia's strategic outlook, the importance it places on US presence in the region, its own multinational military experience, and its penchant for multilateral and bilateral engagement, it is highly likely that Australia would strongly encourage and endorse the strengthening of US-PRC military engagement.

#### The Association of South East Asia Nations

ASEAN was formed in 1967 by Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines with the purpose of accelerating regional economic growth as its primary focus (ASEAN Declaration 1967). From its founding to the present ASEAN has grown to include Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar (Burma). Politically, ASEAN, as a collective body, does not aim to assert itself over the individual national will of member states (ASEAN 2001). Although mutual suspicions among member states still exist (Simon 2000), ASEAN members do share similar security concerns.

From the ASEAN perspective the main threat to the various sub-regions and the region as a whole is instability. Instability based on land and maritime border disputes,

illegal migration, maritime pollution, and domestic insurgent activity that often spills across borders in the forms of illegal arms trafficking, drug trafficking, piracy and hijacking, and the ever-present potential for natural disaster. ASEAN states also face the common dilemma of an economically and militarily growing PRC (Simon 2000).

The principal reasons for ASEAN concern about China are geographical and historical. The sheer size of China, in such close geographical proximity, is cause for anxiety in ASEAN nations. China outweighs all the ASEAN states combined in territory and population and outspends ASEAN collectively on defense (Storey 2000). History, however, has an even greater impact. Several ASEAN countries once paid tribute to the “Middle Kingdom” (Fairbank 1986, 36), and more recently, several were affected by Beijing’s former practice of exporting communism (Storey 1999). Vietnam and China fought a brief, but bloody, border war in 1979 and in 1988 clashed over the Spratly Islands (Storey 1999). Malaysia, the Philippines, and Brunei join the Spratlys dispute with claims of their own (Storey 1999). Additionally, most ASEAN countries have substantial ethnic Chinese minorities residing within their borders due to centuries of migration. This last point adds to ASEAN’s dilemma the fear that a weak, disintegrating PRC is just as destabilizing as a PRC growing more powerful. A fragmented China, it is reasoned, would lead to massive migration to ASEAN countries, territorial encroachments, and massive economic dislocation, resulting in their individual and collective destabilization (Storey 1999).

ASEAN nations use three avenues of approach in coping with their perceived threats to regional stability: Engagement with China, continued US presence, and multilateral security dialogue. Despite their concerns over the growing power of the PRC,

ASEAN states generally agree that engagement is critical to their collective security. “ASEAN leaders hope that by engaging China in a security dialogue at both bilateral and multilateral levels, their security concerns vis-à-vis their elephantine neighbor can be substantially mitigated” (Storey 1999). Equally important to engaging China, most ASEAN countries concur that US presence is also a critical factor in the regional security architecture. “Cognizant of their own limited military capabilities to balance China, the five founding members of the Association plus Brunei (the ASEAN -6) recognize the continued need to maintain defense links with external powers--primarily the United States, but also the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand--as a prudent hedge against a more assertive or aggressive China” (Storey 1999). This precarious balancing act is not without its risks. The ups and downs of the US-PRC relationship could potentially sour the ASEAN strategy (Storey 1999). Additionally, ASEAN does not want Beijing to perceive it as conspiring with the US to contain China (Storey 1999). Nor does it wish for Washington to view its engagement with China as disengagement from the US.

While hedging their bets with the PRC remains practical for ASEAN, the organization is growing closer militarily. Although the chances of ASEAN becoming an Asian NATO are at this time remote, steps are being taken to increase transparency among member nations and toward combined military operations to counter shared threats. The Malaysian Prime Minister has suggested closer military ties among ASEAN to counter threats to the sea-lanes, especially piracy and hijacking (Simon 2000). ASEAN shifted dramatically away from its standard of non-interference in the internal affairs of member states when Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore, and Malaysia responded to

Indonesia's request for multinational assistance to quell violence in East Timor (Simon 2000). This combined response opened the door to future cooperation in countering regional instability.

In wrestling with the uncertainties of the future, the ASEAN states are inclined toward engagement, with each other and with China. Given their collective situation, it is reasonable to believe that ASEAN would strongly support closer US-PRC ties and would not object to the evolution of US-PRC engagement toward combined military exchange training. This said, it is nonetheless important to take a closer look at the independent security situations of Thailand and the Philippines, the two ASEAN countries with which the US has mutual defense treaties.

### Thailand

In the wake of the Cold War, Thailand perceives threats to itself and the region as stemming from social, economic, and environmental problems (Teerawat 2000). Ethnic and religious unrest along the Thai-Malay border has dissipated but problems along the Thai-Myanmar and Thai-Cambodian borders continue. The Thai-Burmese border has been the scene of clashes between Thai and Burmese forces as well as clashes with ethnic Karens striving for independence from Burmese (Simon 2000). Also occurring along the Thai-Burmese border is the problem of a persistent flow of illicit narcotics. Regionally, Thailand is deeply concerned about potential maritime conflicts between its neighbors that "may have negative implications on the freedom of sea lines of communications," particularly in the South China Sea (Teerawat 2000). Based on these threats, Thailand's security strategy includes "preventive diplomacy in the form of constructive engagement and bilateral and multilateral security cooperation" (Teerawat 2000). With this strategy,

Thailand aims to prevent conflict and war while coping with current instabilities (Teerawat 2000).

Thailand greatly values its relationship with the US. “Because the United States has an open and democratic society, US Armed Forces are seen as benign, as a stabilizing factor, and as an honest broker in the region” (Teerawat 2000). Thailand benefits tremendously from US weapons sales and professional military education provided by the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) and IMET programs, respectively. In addition to the annual COBRA GOLD exercise, US SOF continue to conduct numerous JCETs in Thailand that benefit both security partners. This close relationship has led to Thailand taking a leadership role in regional multilateral security.

Without abandoning its bilateral security relationship with the US, Thailand is playing an increasingly constructive and responsible role in the multilateral security arena. COBRA GOLD 2000, hosted by Thailand, initiated multilateral military exercises between Thailand, the US and Singapore. Thailand is also a strong supporter of UN security activities and continues to provide support for UN peacekeeping operations in East Timor. Thailand is also developing a Rapid Deployment Force to better support regional security contingencies (Simon 2000). These steps set a positive example for regional cooperation.

With a security strategy based on engagement and multilateral and bilateral security links, it is highly likely that Thailand would support continued US-PRC engagement. Thailand’s prodigious experience with US SOF may also incline them toward supporting a US SOF engagement with China. Overtures by China to obtain observer status during a future COBRA GOLD (USDAO Beijing China 2000) may

present an opportunity for US SOF, Royal Thai Army SOF, and PLA units to train together in a variety of mutually beneficial scenarios including peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and counterdrug.

### The Philippines

Compared to Thailand, the Philippines' security situation is not nearly as stable. Internally, the Philippines has, for decades, been fighting both a Maoist rebellion and a Muslim separatist movement (*BBC News* [Asia-Pacific] 10 March 2001). Externally, encroachment by the PRC into territory claimed by the Philippines has heightened tensions in the Spratly Islands. "The Philippines now identifies its [Spratly Islands] dispute with China as one of its two most urgent national security problems" (Storey 1999). To add insult to injury, piracy, smuggling, and illegal fishing plague the archipelago and "rob the country of tens of millions of dollars annually" (Simon 2000). The bottom line is that the Philippine military has not been successful against the insurgents nor can it protect its maritime claims (US Congress, House 2000).

The mutual defense treaty between the US and the Philippines provides the government an opportunity to stabilize its security situation. In an effort to balance their perceived threats from China, the Philippine government, in 1999, ratified the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), which allowed a resumption of military exercises, on hold since 1996, between the US and the Philippines. In February 2000, the two countries resumed BALIKATAN, a previously annual bilateral exercise (US Congress, House 2000). The ratification of VFA also opened the door for the "transfer of excess defense equipment to the under-equipped Philippine Armed Forces" (Simon 2000). The future of

bilateral exercises between US and Philippine forces appears bright. The resumption of BALIKATAN and US SOF JCETs will renew military ties and benefit both countries.

The Philippines also conducts other bilateral and multilateral security engagement training. Along their common maritime border, Philippine and Malaysian maritime forces conduct annual exercises to counter “piracy, smuggling, and illegal arms shipments from East Malaysia to the Moro rebels in the Sulu archipelago” (Simon 2000). Interestingly, the ongoing Spratly Islands dispute, which pits the Philippines, Malaysia, and others against one another, does not appear to affect military cooperation between the two toward countering piracy, smuggling, and illegal arms trafficking in the Sulu area.

Despite all of its own security problems, the Philippines is an active supporter, and leader, in multilateral security efforts. “The Philippines has taken on a leading and responsible role in East Timor” by volunteering ground forces for the initial coalition and leading the follow-on UN mission (US Congress, House 2000).

Given its rather tenuous security situation, the Philippines could benefit from increased transparency of the Chinese military. US SOF engagement with the PLA could provide this increased transparency through combined military training exchanges. Additionally, the Philippine experiences in bilateral and multilateral military cooperation, along with its experience with US SOF, indicate that it would not feel threatened should the US proceed toward a SOF engagement program with China.

In summary, US allies and friends throughout Asia appear to view engagement as an appropriate strategy toward the PRC. While differences exist in their individual security situations, most currently engage China diplomatically, economically, and, through ARF participation, militarily. A consistent engagement of China by the US is in

their interest. Collectively, their security situations would greatly benefit from increased transparency of PLA capabilities and PRC intentions. They recognize the value that US presence plays in their security and wish to maintain it. They also recognize the value of multilateral security cooperation for the future of Asian stability. It is likely then, that if SOF engagement with China allowed for greater transparency while simultaneously developing areas for the PRC to contribute constructively and responsibly to regional stability, America's allies and friends would support it.

### SOF Engagement with the PRC

A discussion on SOF engagement with the PRC is merely speculative since to date no engagement of this kind has occurred. However, given the SOF capabilities discussed in Chapter 3 and the common problems shared by the US and China discussed in Chapter 4, it is possible to identify areas where combined SOF-PLA training could pave the way for China to play a constructive, responsible role in Asia. A suitable SOF engagement program would be one that focused on *developing areas* where the PLA could cooperate with the militaries of the region in addressing common problems.

When looking at the common problems shared by the US and the PRC and comparing them with the security situations of US allies and friends in the region, three possibilities for multilateral security training and cooperation become apparent: peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, to include disaster relief, and counternarcotics. SOF capabilities and missions prepare them to provide training in all three. This does not mean to suggest that PLA units are currently not sufficiently trained to accomplish missions in these types of operations. However, a measure of familiarity and interoperability is a prerequisite for smooth bilateral and multilateral operations. Whether

during bilateral training events or multinational exercises, SOF can train with, assess, and become familiar with PLA methods and vice versa, as well as practice language skills and gain additional understanding of Chinese culture. Additionally, bilateral or multilateral training events would provide a positive way for the PRC to demonstrate a willingness to play a constructive, responsible role in Asian security.

Bilateral training events between the PLA and US SOF would more than likely take the form of a JCET. This form of engagement is meant to primarily improve the individual and collective skills of US SOF, while assisting the host nation is secondary. Additionally, JCETs enhance interoperability and promote better military-to-military relations (Gardner 2000). Several potential SOF JCET training venues support preparation for the PLA to assume a constructive, responsible role in peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and counternarcotics operations.

Because all military operations assume some risk to individual soldiers, a good place to start SOF-PLA exchanges is with medical training. SOF medical JCETs can include first aid training, combat lifesaver training, and medical evacuation training. This type of training can include performing CPR, dressing wounds, stabilizing and transporting patients, and starting intravenous treatment. Medical evacuation training can include preparing a helicopter landing zone, conducting aero medical evacuation, and caring for patients in transit. The value of this type of individual and collective medical training is immeasurable in the conduct of peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and counternarcotics operations.

Another potential training venue of value to peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance operations, is land mine clearance. Chapter 4 showed that the PLA has

extensive experience in land mine clearance and has assisted in UN sponsored mine clearance activities. SOF also participated in land mine clearance operations around the globe (Clarke 1999, 13). Learning from each other's experiences as well as training together on engineering and mine removal techniques would improve the capabilities of both thereby increasing safety. Additional training of value in mine clearance operations could include land navigation, communications, instructor training, and mine clearance mission planning. Land mine clearance, like medical training, would be a good start point for bilateral training between SOF and the PLA.

Multilateral training opportunities also exist in which SOF and PLA units could gain experience working together as members of a multinational force. As previously mentioned, the PRC has expressed interest in observing the annual COBRA GOLD exercise in Thailand. This exercise could involve military units from Thailand, Singapore, the US, the PRC, and other ARF members as desired, and could focus on peacekeeping operations. In a peacekeeping training operation, SOF could deploy as liaison coordination elements, as they have in recent peacekeeping operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Storlie 1999, 40). Multilateral counternarcotics training between Thailand, the US, Laos, and the PRC, all with similar drug trafficking problems, is another potential training opportunity in which SOF could work along side PLA units. Counternarcotics training could include combined patrolling, surveillance techniques, basic rifle marksmanship, and human rights education.

Success in the initial SOF-PLA combined training exchanges could lead to additional training exchanges. Training venues that promote cooperation in counterterrorism and counterpiracy operations would benefit both countries and

potentially the whole region. SOF proficiency in coastal and “brown water” combat patrolling, urban combat and hostage rescue, and their language and cultural training, could provide a link between the militaries in the region, should they decide to pursue multinational security efforts to counter piracy and terrorism. PRC participation in such an effort would be considered constructive and responsible.

Whether bilateral or multilateral in nature, opportunities exist for US SOF to help *develop areas* for the PLA to *constructively and responsibly* participate in an Asian security framework. Within the parameters of peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and counternarcotics operations, SOF engagement with the PLA nests well now with the USPACOM China objective. Enhancement of these initial steps toward combined training in counterterrorism and counterpiracy has potential for a robust Asia-Pacific security arrangement.

US military presence is essential to peace and stability in Asia and bilateral security treaties will remain the bedrock for that presence. Healthy relations with ASEAN countries are also highly valued in this regard. US allies and friends in Asia are currently inclined toward improving relations with the PRC via engagement. Several Asian allies and friends have been, and currently are, part of multinational operations in the region. Additionally, US SOF have worked closely with several of these countries in the past and continue to do so. SOF engagement with the PLA in venues such as peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and counternarcotics could assist in shaping the desired outcome vis-à-vis China’s role in Asia. It would appear then, that SOF are a suitable means of engagement to accomplish US goals in China.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS

The interests of the US are all encompassing. While seeking to ensure its own survival and the survival of its allies, the US also ventures forth to promote peace and stability, economic prosperity, and spread the fortunes of democracy and human rights. These interests invariably come into conflict with the interests of other nations, occasionally touching off misunderstandings and increasing the potential for conflict. Seeking peaceful means in which to broaden understanding between nations, therefore, is also in the interest of the United States.

In the course of the last thirty years the US and the PRC have attempted to increase their mutual understanding of one another. From 1972 to 1989 the two nations were able to work around their differing interests in order to focus on the common goal of containing Soviet global adventurism. Following the demise of the Soviet Union, the US-PRC relationship returned to a status of suspicion and distrust over unresolved differences despite apparent agreement on the need for continued peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region.

For the sake of global and regional stability, both nations recognize the importance of setting a course toward the reduction of tension and the role of governmental exchanges in reaching that end. Exchanges of a diplomatic, informational, economic, and military nature continued throughout the 1990s and even do today despite occasional setbacks in the bilateral relationship. It is feared by many that without

increased understanding and a reduction in tension, the US and the PRC are potentially on course for a second cold war or regional conflict.

To prevent this outcome, the US, and its regional allies and friends, have embarked upon policies of engagement with China. In an effort to weave China into a complicated web of mutual economic reliance, the nations of the region continue to seek closer ties with the Beijing government. To promote greater military transparency in the region the nations of the ASEAN Regional Forum have welcomed China to the table for consultations. The US and the PRC have opened the doors, albeit slightly, to their respective military establishments. Bilateral defense department exchanges, consultations on safety at sea, and naval visits have become the standard means by which both countries strive to achieve their shared interest of reducing tension and promoting peace and stability. However, in order for the US to fully realize its goal of a constructive and responsible PRC, further steps are required.

This research has explored the possible use of Special Operations Forces in an engagement program with the PRC, specifically setting out to determine whether SOF engagement with the PRC is in the interest of the United States. The “FAS test” was applied to ascertain the feasibility, acceptability, and suitability of the proposal. In all three criteria, the research indicates that SOF engagement with the PRC is in the interest of the United States and, most importantly, can facilitate the USPACOM objective of “developing areas” where the PRC can become a “constructive, responsible” participant in managing the peace and stability issues facing Asia.

While exploring feasibility it was discovered that SOF are not only capable of conducting engagement activities, but has been active around the world in these

endeavors for many years. The soldiers, sailors, and airmen of SOF are specifically recruited for their maturity and ability to comprehend the political sensitivity of their missions. Regionally and linguistically oriented, SOF personnel are keen to the culture in which they are tasked to operate. They are also trained to access the military force with which they are working, to evaluate strengths and weaknesses, and report what they observe. They have consistently demonstrated prowess in assisting other nations prepare to meet their own security needs as well as participate in multinational stability operations. Because of these skills SOF are often tasked to provide Liaison Coordination Elements to various coalition units, filling the need for smooth coordination between units of differing nationalities, cultures, and military effectiveness. The maturity, military professionalism, and language and cultural proficiency make SOF a feasible means for engagement activity.

Adding to SOF feasibility for engagement with China is their proficiency and experience in areas where the US and China share difficulties. SOF personnel are trained to accomplish tasks used in a wide variety of missions throughout the spectrum of conflict. Of these, only search and rescue operations and humanitarian relief operations are in accordance with Congressional guidelines as stated in the *National Defense Authorization Act* of 2000 and are thus acceptable right now. However, SOF experience in peacekeeping, counterdrug, countermine, and counterterrorism operations, makes them a feasible means of engagement in areas where the US and the PRC have common problems. Several SOF skills could also be used to counter piracy; a problem shared by China and several US allies and friends in the South China Sea area. These venues are beneficial in both bilateral and multilateral settings and fit well within the intent of

USPACOM's objective to "develop areas" in which the PRC can contribute to regional peace and stability.

The research indicated that SOF are an acceptable means of engagement with the PRC in the above-mentioned areas of search and rescue and humanitarian relief. Although some costs associated with training alongside the PLA are certain, the benefits, coupled with what one author called "a strategic window of opportunity" to shape China (Anderson 1999), outweigh these costs. Without overlooking the potential cost of assisting the PLA in becoming more joint and therefore more lethal, the fact remains that US military capability at this time in history far exceeds that of China and this is likely to continue for at least the near term. Using this opportunity to shape the PRC toward a constructive, responsible role in Asia is in the interest of the US. Focusing on training venues that support issues of common concern like peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and counternarcotics reduces the fear of making China into a more formidable foe while providing China the opportunity to demonstrate cooperative policies.

Two additional benefits to SOF engagement with China are access and proof of US intentions. The US government has consistently espoused engagement over containment of China. Engaging the PRC through combined bilateral or multilateral military training exchanges and exercises provides tangible proof of US commitment to engagement policies. At the same time, these exchanges and exercises provide access to PLA capabilities. Trained military professionals, such as SOF, can then provide accurate assessments of PLA performance in training, thereby increasing the transparency of the PLA. The cost-benefit analysis indicates that SOF engagement with China is in the interest of the United States.

Finally, the findings of this research indicated that SOF are a suitable means of engagement with the PRC. Due to the importance of maintaining healthy and cooperative relations amongst US allies and friends in Asia toward continued US presence in the region and the peace and stability that presence provides, it was necessary to discover the views of those allies and friends with regard to China. An examination of the security interests of US allies, their own policies of engagement with China, and their apparent interest in multilateral security efforts, suggests that US allies and friends in the region would not object to SOF engagement with China. The common theme amongst the nations investigated was a healthy respect for growing PRC power coupled with a desire to engage China in the areas of economics and security dialogue. It is fair to assume that the nations studied in this research would profit from closer US-PRC ties and the increased transparency that would result from SOF engagement with the PLA.

However, it is the USPACOM stated China objective that provides the most conclusive evidence to support SOF engagement with China. In desiring to “develop areas” where China can become constructive and responsible in an Asian security framework, USPACOM has produced a mission for SOF. As mentioned earlier, peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and counternarcotics are areas that SOF has extensive experience and training. These are also areas where PRC and US interests appear to overlap. SOF engagement with the PLA in training venues that support the development of PRC participation in operations such as these appears to be exactly what the Commander-in-Chief of USPACOM desires.

The application of the FAS test as a method to determine the applicability of SOF to US programs of engagement with the PRC suggests that SOF engagement should be

included. The scope of this research however, was geared only to discover whether SOF engagement with China is in the interest of the US. In order to fully develop SOF engagement as a course of action further research is required. Suggestions for further research therefore include specifics of implementation. For example, the exact training venues, in sequenced order, were only slightly addressed in this research. Additionally, the reactions of other major Asian powers, such as India and the Russian Federation, to the enhancement of US-PRC engagement were not addressed. These areas require further study and should be addressed prior to launching into SOF engagement with the PRC.

Potential for US-PRC military cooperation in several Asian areas of concern also require further study. Combined military efforts during a transition period for a reunified Korea is one such area. Providing the US-PRC relationship matures along the lines suggested in this research, it is not inconceivable to envision US-PRC military cooperation to assist in peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance on the Korean peninsula. Cooperation between the US and the PRC in reducing tensions between India and Pakistan presents another area for future study. Multilateral military cooperation between the US, the PRC, Thailand, Burma, and Laos to counter the narcotics trade along the border area known as the “golden triangle” is another area requiring further research. Likewise, implementation of multilateral military cooperation to counter piracy and terrorism throughout the Asia-Pacific also requires further research. Bilateral or multilateral training events or exercises for these operations, specifically what type of training and how frequently, require additional study.

The potential for military cooperation may very well grow with time and the rapidly changing international threat environment of the twenty-first century. Additional

security needs for the US and its allies and friends may become apparent. Changing international relationships will also play a part in the future security needs of the US. However, at this time, the findings of this study suggest that SOF engagement with the PRC is in the interest of the United States.

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