



STRATEGIC FILE

No. 18 (81), November 2015 © PISM

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China's Security Activities Extend beyond Asia

Justyna Szczudlik-Tatar

China's increasing global engagement requires an adjustment of the security mindset and new security-related instruments to safeguard against expanding Chinese interests overseas. Under Xi Jinping, the PRC has modified its military strategy, highlighting a new dimension of security threats (e.g., cyberspace), paying more attention to the country's navy and air forces and in developing capabilities to win information wars along with centralising decision-making. Under these circumstances, China's security activities extend beyond Asia and may lead to tension or even conflicts. But there are also opportunities. The PRC's growing interests in Europe, Africa and the Middle East mean the EU may be able to cooperate with China on such security issues as the refugee crisis and fighting terrorism.

Towards Securitisation

After Xi Jinping ascended to power, China began more strongly elevating security issues to top state priorities. It is widely acknowledged that Xi is a fan of the army and has great relations in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and a military background. His strong position in the army was confirmed at the 18th Communist Party (CPC) Congress in November 2012. Contrary to expectations and an unwritten rule that the previous CPC Secretary General would remain the chief of the Central Military Commission (CMC)¹ for at least two years to make the power transition smooth and as leverage on the new leadership, Xi was nominated CMC Chairman at the 1st Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee (1st CC Plenum).

Since Xi assumed office, one can observe China's rising activities in the security domain and other signs. Among them are increasing military expenditures, a reshuffle of the PLA, including nominations of new generals and an anticorruption campaign, intensive military drills, modernisation of the PLA, more assertive behaviour in China's neighbourhood, and expanding involvement in security activities far from home.

The ongoing modifications of China's security posture are related with its strategic goal to regain superpower status. Under the "new" global circumstances,² the PRC's activities and assertiveness serve its foreign policy aim to be a contributor to the global order. But the most important reasons are safeguarding China's core interests overseas, mainly economic ones, but also maintaining domestic and external stability as a prerequisite for further development and extending the legitimacy of the Communist Party. China's greater opening to the world, rising diplomatic activities, such as its Silk Road flagship initiative, and identification of non-traditional security threats have necessitated reform of the country's security

¹ The CMC commands the PLA. Formally, there are two CMCs, one a CPC organ and the other a state and constitutionally established institution. But in reality, both of them have the same chairman and membership. In that sense, there is one CMC, described as "two brands, one team/body" (*liangkuai paizi, yitao banzi* or *yige jigou, liangkuai paizi*).

² A catchphrase which is being used very frequently by Chinese leaders in many documents and speeches to describe the current global changes.

architecture to avoid being vulnerable to these changes or unfriendly behaviour from the outside. What is more, the PRC, which is now facing an economic slowdown, is highly interested in stable relations with all countries perceived as prospective economic partners. Moreover, the Chinese government is trying to satisfy nationalistic sentiments that had been initiated by its rhetoric of a “century of humiliation”³ by reinforcing it with the slogan of a “Chinese dream,” defined as “the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.” Further, Beijing’s assertiveness in the security domain may also be an attempt to cover up its current economic woes.

All these factors have paved the way for new security laws and strategies, which expand the definition of security, reinterpret its “active defence” notion, and set up new institutions to augment and centralise the decision-making, grant the PLA new tasks and a wider scope of activities, and strengthen civil-military relations. Although the probability of a “hot” conflict in the region is not high, one can expect temporary increases in tensions, which in a worst-case scenario might go out of control and result in local conflicts. Under Xi, China will not pull back from its assertive behaviour in its region and will be more active on the global scene.

Redefinition of China’s Security Mindset

Recently, China has modified its security and defence perceptions. Its security definition appears to have wider scope, including new areas of involvement and greater activities beyond China and Asia-Pacific. In November 2013, a document released after the 3rd Central Committee plenary session presaged adjustment and reform of military policy. It mentioned better security management, a reduction in non-combat units, building new combat forces, modernising military education, closer civil-military cooperation, and others.⁴ Eventually, in late May 2015, China released its first-ever military strategy.⁵ This document is an elaboration of ideas indicated in the plenum file. Further, in late 2014 a new anti-espionage law was introduced, and then in July 2015, a new national security law was endorsed.

Despite the fact that the military strategy is more of a diplomatic paper for domestic and foreign audiences and not a strategy *per se*, it—together with the two other documents—serves as the main source of knowledge about the Chinese leaders’ perception of security. Contrary to previous defence white papers, the strategy presents the impression of greater analytical work and serves as a playbook on China’s security policy.⁶ But the most important feature is a conceptual shift in China’s security perception and clear manifestation about what kind of power it would like to become.

Under the incumbent leadership, security is perceived through a prism of a holistic or **comprehensive security concept** (*zongti guojia anquan guan*). This idea was first mentioned by Xi at the inaugural meeting of the Central National Security Commission (CNSC) in April 2014 and offers a wide but nebulous definition of security. It includes the following security types: internal and external, Chinese territory and citizens, traditional and non-traditional security, existing and developing security issues, individual and collective security.⁷ It also encompasses seven areas: people, politics, economy, military, culture, society and the international sphere.⁸ In a broad sense it is that security is everything. This extremely vague concept gives the Chinese authorities seemingly limitless room to manoeuvre to define what security is or is not. As a result, the strategy may create a feeling of apprehension about China’s intentions and increase tensions in the region because of fears the PRC may want to use coercive means to safeguard its interests

³ This notion (*guochi xintai*) refers to the 1839–1949 period when China was divided between the Western powers, Russia and Japan as a result of the Opium Wars (1839–1842, 1856–1860), Japanese aggression (1894–1895, 1937–1945) and the civil war (1927–1949).

⁴ “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu quanmian shenhua gaige ruogan zhongda wenti de jue ding (quanwen)” [Central Committee’s Decision on Major Issues Concerning Comprehensively Deepening Reforms (full text)], Chapter 15, points 55, 56, 57, *Xinhua*, 15 November 2013.

⁵ Since 1998, the PRC has released (in biannual instalments) eight “China Defence” papers, but none of them was titled as a military strategy. The previous documents depicted the Chinese PLA without strategic views.

⁶ Ch. Baker, N. Godehardt, “China’s New Military Strategy,” *Euractive*, 8 June 2015.

⁷ “Zhongguo de junshi zhanlüe (quanwen)” [China’s Military Strategy (full text)], May 2015, *Xinhua*.

⁸ “Xi Jinping zhuchi Zhongyang guoanwei shouci huiyi, changshu zongti guojia anquan guan” [Xi Jinping presided over the first meeting of the Central National Security Commission and elaborated on the holistic security concept], *Xinhua*, 16 April 2014.

and rights. In a worst-case scenario, Beijing's brinkmanship (e.g., aggravating territorial disputes) may lead to misconceptions and incidents that might hamper regional stability.⁹

China's greater worldwide engagement indicates that under Xi the country will pay more attention to **overseas interests**. Compared to previous white papers in which the focal point was to protect national development and interests, the new perception highlights interests beyond China.¹⁰ This entails an extended scope and new dimensions of PLA operations. Under these circumstances, China is redefining its long-lasting "**active defence**" concept—a combination of defence and counterattack (so-called "offensive defence"). The essence of that mindset, created in the early 1950s, is reactivity, because—at that time—"the enemy was stronger than us." With China ascending in the global order, there seems to be the need for a great adjustment of that concept.¹¹

The most striking modification of the strategy is extending security involvement beyond China's near neighbourhood. This move requires a new range of PLA operations. Nowadays, definitely more **focus is on naval forces and maritime security**. The document clearly states that "the traditional mentality that land outweighs sea must be abandoned, and great importance has to be attached to managing the seas and oceans and protecting maritime rights and interests."¹² Against this backdrop, the navy can be expected to extend its operations from littoral defence to open seas or far abroad. While the first means seas adjacent to China, the latter indicates shipping lanes and other areas, and there, China aims to be prepared for potential military struggles, even on the high seas.

The new scope of PLA operations also indicates that all of its forces should not only focus on defence—a security policy cornerstone—but also be prepared for **offensive tasks and military struggles**. Land forces should be reoriented from regional defence to global activities, while the air forces should be transformed from defending Chinese territory to both defence and offence and even building an airspace defence force structure.

An innovative element of the new security perception is a focus on at least two new dimensions of security—**cyberspace and outer space**. Both are perceived as new areas of global rivalry. What is more, China claims it is the main target of hacker attacks from all over the world. In that sense, Beijing aims to develop an array of mechanisms to **win information wars (e.g., cyberwarfare)**, which currently are becoming the warfare core.

Another rather new element of the changed security mindset is a **redefinition of the people's war** or civil-military relations (*quanmin jiebing*). This notion pays great attention to the possibility of using civilians, civilian features and equipment for military purposes. In other words, it entails the PLA's influence on ordinary people's everyday lives, or even country militarisation. These civil-military relations include both better trained and prepared reservists and well-educated civilians.¹³

The modification of the security mindset requires new mechanisms and instruments. The document clearly states that there is a need for changes in how the country prepares for military conflict. What is more, the strategy notes that in general the possibility of war is not high. Nevertheless, it also acknowledges that China is already engaged in cyberwarfare and the PLA's main aim should be to win those kind of conflicts.

Among the instruments it may use to implement this strategy are a stronger ideological emphasis as well as high quality education and training for military personnel and civilians. The aim is to create efficient military management and a new type of military personnel, taking into account new threats such as cyberwarfare and information battles. For example, in 2013, the Central Committee Organisation Department and the PLA General Political Department launched a national defence education program for party and state officials as well as for representatives of large and important enterprises that deal with security and cyberspace.¹⁴ What is more, alumni of selected universities and faculty members who are perceived as

⁹ T. Heath, "The 'Holistic Security Concept': The Securitisation of Policy and Increasing Risk of Militarized Crisis," *China Brief*, vol. 15, iss. 12, 19 June 2015, p. 7.

¹⁰ D.J. Blasko, "The 2015 Chinese Defense White Paper on Strategy in Perspective: Maritime Missions Require a Change in PLA Mindset," *China Brief*, vol. 15, iss. 12, 19 June 2015, p. 4.

¹¹ Ben Kan, "Zhuanjijiedu 'Zhongguo de junshizhanlüe' baipishu" [Expert explains "China's Military Strategy" White Paper], *National Defense*, 22 July 2015, pp. 17–18.

¹² "Document: China's Military Strategy," The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 26 May 2015.

¹³ W. Lam, "White Paper Expounds Civil-Military Relations in Xi Era," *China Brief*, vol. 15, iss. 12, 19 June 2015, pp. 13–16.

¹⁴ "Central-level officials receive national defense education," *Xinhua*, 26 May 2015.

important to security are trained and/or nominated to CPC posts.¹⁵ Those steps aim to improve the quality of China's reservists, especially in the navy and air forces.

The need to create a new type of staff and modern weaponry require better allocation of financing and a reduction in outdated units or those with obsolete equipment. This need is reflected in Xi's decision to reduce the number of troops by 300,000. The decision was announced in September at a military parade in Beijing celebrating the 70th anniversary of the defeat of Japan in the Second World War.¹⁶ It will be the fifth army reduction since the 1990s and this new phase should be finalised by 2017. Eventually, the PLA will have 2 million troops. The reduction will include land forces, office personnel, non-combat units and those equipped with outdated weaponry. It is worth noting that there is no plan to decrease military expenditures, as China is facing a variety of threats, including a complicated situation in its neighbourhood.¹⁷ It seems that the savings from the reductions will be spent on the navy and air forces, new and high-quality weapons and equipment, and to establish new or strengthen existing units, including those tasked with cyberspace security.

Xi's Security Decision-Making Style

Along with the change in security mindset, Xi has introduced changes in the decision-making process. Among the incumbent leadership, one can observe a process of setting up new institutions and announcing new initiatives as a means for China's greater contribution to the world, and to meet its goal of becoming a norm-setter instead of being only a follower. These initiatives are also aimed at strengthening Xi's position, who has the goal to become a paramount leader similar to Deng Xiaoping or even Mao Zedong. Xi's ambitions are visible by his grasping at almost all dimensions of China's domestic and foreign policies. Security is no exception.¹⁸

The need to consolidate power, that is, overcoming various interest groups within the party, and China's expanding involvement in the world, as well as dissatisfaction with his predecessors' policies, were among the reasons a new security institution was established to act as an umbrella over the country's whole complicated security scheme.¹⁹ In November, during the 3rd CC Plenum, the party announced the establishment of the National Security Commission. The new body was established by the Politburo in late January 2014, while the first meeting was held in April 2014, and Xi is its chairman.

In the early PRC, there was no need for such a body. The world was bipolar, which meant that the enemy was clearly defined, and Chinese leaders experienced in wars knew how to deal with security issues. But after the Cold War and Deng's death, the situation changed remarkably. As part of a multipolar world, China's greater openness and global involvement created a new security dimension. Simultaneously, CPC democratisation, such as the abolition of long-life tenure, introducing collective leadership, intra-party democracy and elevating technocrats (who were not experienced in security issues) to the highest party and state posts, created the necessity to build a flexible security apparatus.²⁰ Gradually, the security system has been expanding, becoming more dispersed and marked by overlapping tasks and competences.²¹ Currently, there are examples of security bodies that compete with one another, including situations when they have made decisions without consultations or even prior information from Beijing. There is

¹⁵ W. Lam, "White Paper Expounds ...," *op. cit.*, pp. 14–15.

¹⁶ "Zai jinian Zhongguo renmin Kang-Ri Zhanzheng jishijie fan faxisi zhanzheng shengli 70 zhounian dahuishang de jianghua" [Speech delivered at the ceremony of the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of victory in the anti-Japanese and anti-fascist world war], *Xinhua*, 3 September 2015.

¹⁷ "Guofangbu juxing xinwen fabuhui xiang jie yuebing he caijun deng wenti" [Ministry of Defence holds a press conference to explain in detail the issues of the military parade and army reduction], 3 September 2015, Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China.

¹⁸ It is a kind of default that Xi Jinping is anointed chairman of all newly established institutions, such as the Central National Security Commission, the Leading Group for Deepening Reforms, and the Central Leading Group of Cyberspace Affairs.

¹⁹ D.M. Lampton, "Xi Jinping ...," *op. cit.*

²⁰ Zhao Kejin, "China's National Security Commission," 22 July 2015, Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy.

²¹ There are at least three types of institutions that deal with security: state, party and PLA bodies. Here is an incomplete list of such institutions: 1) State: Ministry of National Defence, Ministry of Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Central Military Commission; 2) Party: Central Military Commission, Central Leading Group for National Security (which was responsible mainly for external security), Foreign Affairs Leading Group, Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission, International Department, United Front Work Department, Party's General Office; 3) PLA: Central Military Commission, four PLA departments, seven military regions, etc. See also: D.M. Lampton, "Xi Jinping ...," *op. cit.*, p. 766.

speculation that some of the Chinese provocations at sea are independent initiatives of particularly lower-level institutions, and not a decision made meticulously by Beijing.

These circumstances as well as other, more complicated security issues and new security dimensions such as terrorism and cyberterrorism have prompted the Chinese leaders to rethink the state's security structures. It is widely acknowledged that since Jiang Zemin, Chinese authorities have been considering the establishment of a body similar to the U.S. National Security Council.²² But until Xi, the Commission had not been established. In that sense, a new security umbrella in the form of a security commission is the best example of Xi's strength and determination in security matters.

The newly created CNSC is responsible both for domestic and external security issues. The Commission has the following tasks: to advise Politburo members, coordinate different security bodies or to become a proxy, conduct crisis and risk management, and introduce new legislation.²³ Not only are the Commission's tasks and scope of activities interesting but also the process of setting up this body reflected the so-called responsibility system of the Central Military Commission Chairman, which meant Xi's personal command to a great extent,²⁴ along with the greater role of the party at the expense of state administration.

The document released after the 3rd plenum contained a passage that named the National Security Commission, and at that time it was apparent that it would be a state body. But eventually, the Commission was established by the Politburo and the name changed to the Central National Security Commission (CNSC), which meant the Commission reported directly to the Central Committee. Contrary to some expectations, the Chinese parliament, during its second plenary session in March 2014, did not establish the state security commission under the "two brands, one body" framework (see footnote 1).²⁵ This, at first sign was not a very significant change, has a profound implications for understanding Xi's security policy as well as his position within the party and state. There are at least a few reasons for that decision.

It seems that Xi wanted to bypass the existing institutions to avoid overlapping interests and opposition and to create a completely new body (with a new staff) that would be entirely dependent on him. In that sense, he aimed to improve Chinese performance on the global stage and consolidate and centralise supervision over security matters. This decision reflects also the added focus on the party's role, instead of on state institutions. Supposedly, for Xi, the party is more flexible than the conservative state apparatus, limited by the constitution and other rules.²⁶ To some extent, Xi is creating a grey area by highlighting the party's leading role. This gives him wide latitude to manoeuvre and allows him to further consolidate his power. A good example of this approach is the huge anti-graft "tigers and flies" campaign ("laohu, cangying yiqi da") within the party.²⁷ Another is the process of downgrading the main party body responsible for security—the Politics and Law Committee (PLC). A symbol of that approach was Xi's decision to nominate Meng Jianzhu—a member of the Politburo but not the Standing Committee as the PLC's head. It is a clear message that this decision was made to avoid other party members becoming a security leader. Under Hu Jintao, the then-head of the PLC—Zhou Yongkang—held extreme power and made himself a security tsar. Eventually, after Xi ascended to power, Zhou was accused of corruption and violations of party rules, and expelled.

The new institutions with new personnel symbolises Xi's innovative approach to make China more active worldwide, and it entails more robust security management. It seems to be beyond doubt that although Xi is setting himself up as a very strong, paramount leader, there is still a tug-of-war inside the party between various interest groups. There is speculation that Xi's predecessors (probably Jiang Zemin) continue to

²² D. Mulrooney, "Rethinking National Security: China's New Security Commission," *Policy Brief*, no. 152, 6 May 2014, p. 1.

²³ Zhao Kejin, *op. cit.*

²⁴ J. Mulvenon, "The Yuan Stops Here: Xi Jinping and the 'CMC Chairman Responsibility System,'" *China Leadership Monitor*, Summer 2015, iss. 47, 14 July 2015.

²⁵ "Weihe jiao zhongyang guojia anquan weiyuanhui?" [Why is the name Central National Security Commission?], *Takungpao*, 21 January 2014.

²⁶ There are doubts about the position of the Commission in the legal framework. Some experts are convinced that the new body should be a state institution established by the Standing Committee of National People's Congress or even might be inscribed in the Constitution. See: Xiao Q., Li X., "Cong zhongyang guojia anquan weiyuan hui de kunjing lun guojia anquan weiyuanhui de xianfa guizhi" [From the Central National Security Council's Dilemma. Discussing the Constitutional Regulation of the National Security Council], *Shidai Faxue*, vol. 13, no. 4, August 2015, pp. 38–42.

²⁷ This notion means that nobody, regardless of position in the party, could feel safe. It means that everybody might be prosecuted in case of corruption or violation of the "political principles"—a new, very nebulous term coined by Xi.

meddle in politics despite being formally retired, which suggests that there is a certain resistance in the party to Xi's changes.²⁸

New Security-Related Activities and Campaigns

The new security mindset as well as the process of the centralisation of decision-making are reflected in new security-related activities and campaigns in China and beyond. Beijing's security moves can be divided into two groups. On the one hand, China is presenting a more assertive face, both domestically and externally, through stronger control over society and by aggravating tensions in the Asia-Pacific region. But, on the other hand, the PRC is casting itself as peaceful, the most significant feature of which is a reinterpretation of its foreign policy principle of non-interference (or even, to some extent, gradual implementation of R2P elements), such as expanding evacuation, search-and-rescue and peacekeeping missions.

The main goal of this two-track security approach is to secure China's expanding interests, a course especially important after launching its Silk Road initiative, the main feature of which is inclusiveness and the broad inclusion of other countries. Another goal is to satisfy national sentiments extremely elevated by Xi's catchphrase of "Chinese Dream," "great power diplomacy" and by replacing Deng's "keep a low profile" dictum by "forging ahead."

It is beyond doubt that Xi's main headache is domestic stability. Currently, he is undertaking various actions to protect that stability. Among them is an anti-terrorism campaign in Xinjiang after incidents in 2014.²⁹ This policy will be continued, especially bearing in mind the fact that about 100–300 Chinese, probably Uighurs from Xinjiang, are fighting for ISIS in Iraq and Syria. Following the terrorist attacks in Paris (13 November), Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi called for more international support for China's domestic fight with terrorism, mentioning the Uighurs and underscoring that the world could not create double standards on terrorism.³⁰ What is more, in July 2015, Xi launched a campaign against a "criminal gang," starting an unprecedented crackdown on human rights lawyers and activists. The supposed reason for that move was to prevent people from organising public protests against the Chinese authorities, especially taking into account worsening economic data. Another example of turning the screw on Chinese society is stricter control over the internet, such as new rules that require bloggers and chat room users to register under their real name and agree in writing not to undermine the party's rule.

In its security-related behaviour as related to its foreign policy, China's less-than-friendly activities are especially noticeable in its region. The most spectacular of these was its unilateral decision to set up the East China Sea Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ), which covers the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku islands and overlaps similar zones long maintained by South Korea, Japan and Taiwan. Other examples of its provocative steps include setting up an oil rig (protected by military vessels) inside Vietnam's Exclusive Economic Zone near the Paracels, expanding land reclamation activities on disputed islets in the South China Sea (turning reefs into artificial islands capable of supporting airstrips and harbours), and Beijing's unilateral decision to open in March 2015 four new flight routes over the Taiwan Strait, in conflict with existing air routes around the Taiwanese Kinmen and Matsu islands, which are located close to the mainland.

In contrast to its vexing moves in the region, China presents a mild face in relations with its neighbours and globally. Its comprehensive and universal tool in this regard is the Silk Road concept, which in fact is a generous economic offer for other countries, along with the rhetoric accompanying it of "win-win," voluntary cooperation, cultural exchanges, and the like—aimed at placating those who are afraid of the newly assertive China.

China is also becoming more active in peacekeeping and rescue operations. The best example of this is China's involvement in the UN peacekeeping operations in Sudan (700 Chinese peacekeepers) and in Mali

²⁸ In August, the *People's Daily*—the CPC mouthpiece—published an editorial indirectly calling on retired leaders to stop meddling in Chinese politics. Supposedly the addressees were Xi's predecessors, most likely Jiang Zemin. See: Gu Bochong, "Bianzheng kandai: 'ren zou cha liang'" [Dialectically: When a person leaves, his tea becomes cold], *Renmin Ribao*, 10 August 2015.

²⁹ For example, the mass stabbings at the Kunming and Guangzhou railway stations and a double suicide bombing at the Urumqi railway station during Xi's inspection tour to Xinjiang.

³⁰ "Zhongguo waizhang cheng fankong buneng shuangchong biaozhun, guoji ying daji dongtu" [China's Minister of Foreign Affairs said that there should not be double standards on terrorism; international community should fight against Eastern Turkestan Movement], 16 November 2015, www.sina.com.

(MINUSA). In the latter mission, Beijing has for the first time sent a separate protection unit (or combat troops) to protect UN personnel, not only Chinese citizens. In fact, China is very active in UN-led peacekeeping operations and has the largest number of peacekeepers among the UN Security Council members, though traditionally its participants have been doctors or engineers, not combat troops. What is more, China is becoming very active in emergencies, such as the search for the missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370, the evacuation of Chinese and foreign citizens from Yemen, assistance in the removal of chemical weapons from Syria, and more.

There is also one more dimension of China's rising activities in the security domain—military diplomacy—which includes its presence in various security forums such as the Shangri-la Dialogue, SCO, ARF, CICA (the latter is promoted by China as an Asian security forum led by Asians for Asia), military exchanges, joint training and military drills, which are not only conducted in China's vicinity but also, for example, in Europe (e.g., in May, China and Russia conducted joint military exercises in Mediterranean and European waters in the Black Sea). Recently, Poland has been included to China's military diplomacy. In October, three Chinese Navy ships visited Gdansk. It was the first such visit in Central Europe. Chinese warships also visited Sudan, Egypt, Denmark, Finland and Sweden.

Implications for China-Europe Security Cooperation

The redefinition of China's security perceptions, centralisation of decision-making and new security-related activities are the apparent results of Xi's "great power" diplomacy. China's greater global engagement, new initiatives, diplomatic directions, institutions and forms of cooperation have created new opportunities but also new threats, not only in China and its neighbourhood but also in areas far away from the PRC. It is apparent that China will be continuing this approach of extending itself beyond Asia, not only in economic matters but also in the security domain.

China's interests in Africa, the Middle East and Europe are not only economic, such as securing access to natural resources, infrastructure projects and export markets, but also include protecting Chinese nationals living there and preventing terrorism from having a spillover effect that creates a security problem for China. On the other hand, this activity might be perceived as a chance for China-Europe security cooperation. The fact that China welcomed the U.S.-led airstrikes on ISIS in Iraq where Beijing has considerable economic interests (e.g., in the oil sector) and many Chinese nationals working there, as well as China's tacit support for Russia's operation in Syria, are examples of the PRC's greater involvement in security near Europe. It is apparent that Beijing is afraid of becoming a target of terrorists,³¹ not only abroad but also at home. Although China still abides by its principle of non-interference, there are signals that when it comes to vital interests, that dictum to some extent might be re-addressed. Although it is difficult to imagine China's active military engagement in other countries, such as in the fight with ISIS, Beijing might be more than eager to help in the refugee crisis in Europe through political support and financial means (it recently announced an additional \$15 million in support for Syria, Jordan and Lebanon). Bearing in mind China's greater economic engagement in Europe, such as in Greece (the COSCO company's involvement in the port of Piraeus) and the Balkans (Chinese infrastructure projects, e.g., railways), a refugee crisis that might destabilise the situation in the parts of Europe where it has an interest may have negative impact. China's willingness to actively prevent ISIS-led terrorism is reflected in Foreign Minister Wang's speech to the UN. He said that China "advocates extensive and comprehensive international counter-terrorism cooperation within the UN framework." Wang also called for a third Geneva conference on Syria to make another attempt to resolve the Syrian crisis by political means. After the attacks in Paris, he said that the international community should establish "a united front to combat terrorism."³²

Under these circumstances, Europe as a whole, but also particular EU members should put security issues on the agenda in their relations with China. The exchange of information, intelligence-sharing, financial and political support in tackling the refugee crisis or in joint evacuation operations might be the first steps of prospective and tangible China-Europe security cooperation.

³¹ For example, in late November 2015, ISIS announced that it had executed a Chinese citizen.

³² "Zhongguo waizhang ...," *op. cit.*