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Sailing with the Enemy; the Integration of China into the Proliferation Security Initiative

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of JMO based on the following assigned topic:

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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## **Abstract**

### *Sailing with the Enemy; the Integration of China into the Proliferation Security Initiative*

The world's nations must take action to prevent the growing threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) proliferation. WMD material must be prevented from reaching terrorist and rogue states via the high seas. With 80 percent of the world's trade transported on the maritime domain, it will take the combined effort of all nations to monitor the large maritime domain and interdict WMD. The Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) is a great tool to prevent the spread of WMD on the high seas, but its current form is lacking structure and doctrine. This has not been a problem with long time allies, but will present problems with the eventual integration of China into the PSI. This paper discusses the current problem of incorporating China into the PSI, and the need for the United States to develop structure and doctrine into the PSI to facilitate the integration of China into the PSI. The recommendation to this problem is providing the needed structure and doctrine by forming a JTF that will incorporate the operational functions of command and control and operational intelligence. The JTF will allow an organized integration of China, concentrating on command structure, communication, information sharing, and training while ensuring operational and intelligence security to the risks involved. This will give unity of effort to the PSI partnership between China and the United States while initiating and legitimizing a needed rapport with the Chinese navy that will expand to their other armed forces.

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## Introduction

In this current age of the global village with interlinked economies threatened by terrorism, the world anxiously awaits the next horrific attack by determined terrorists or rogue states. An important tool in preventing an attack will be countering the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) by prohibiting its transport on the high seas. The *National Security Strategy* specifically lists the following tasks for the United States in regards to WMD proliferation and its dangers:

- Strengthen alliances to defeat global terrorism and work to prevent attacks against us and our friends.
- Prevent our enemies from threatening us, our allies, and our friends with weapons of mass destruction.<sup>1</sup>

And the introduction for the *National Strategy for Maritime Security* states:

The safety and economic security of the United States depend in substantial part upon the secure use of the world's oceans. The United States has a vital national interest in maritime security. We must be prepared to stop terrorists and rogue states before they can threaten or use weapons of mass destruction or engage in other attacks against the United States and our allies and friends. Toward that end, the United States must take full advantage of strengthened alliances and other international cooperative arrangements, innovations in the use of law enforcement personnel and military forces, advances in technology, and strengthened intelligence collection, analysis, and dissemination.<sup>2</sup>

One of the tools available to satisfy the tasks of the *National Security Strategy* and the *National Strategy for Maritime Security* in relation to the proliferation of WMD is the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). The PSI is a set of security activities that involve applying intelligence, diplomacy, law enforcement, and other tools between participating nations to combat the spread of WMD to terrorist and rogue states. PSI is not based on treaties or organizations but on agreements and partnerships between countries<sup>3</sup>. It is also intended to supplement international treaties on non-proliferation and arms control as

well as national legislation on export control. But a major flaw of the PSI is its lack of structure and doctrine. The PSI relies too much on familiarity and ad hoc operations between nations. The PSI is an innovative concept with the capability to be truly effective if a more structured policy is established that allows for easier cooperation between all current and future nations participating in the PSI, not just long time allies. All current and future nations that are partners in the PSI should be able to flawlessly work with each other in this critical goal of preventing the proliferation of WMD upon the oceans.

An important nation that will become involved in the PSI is China. With Chinese influence spreading throughout the globe, from naval bases in Pakistan to economic footprints in Africa and South America, it is only a matter of time before China will become a target of international terrorism or become concerned about the spread of WMD material affecting its economic structure. Former Under-Secretary of State John Bolton remarked:

Both China and the United States obviously are firmly opposed to proliferation of weapons of mass destruction...and their means of delivery...The United States made it clear that PSI is an international response to the growing challenge posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems and related materials. China made it clear that it understands the concerns of PSI participating states regarding WMD proliferation and the proliferation delivery systems. China shares the non-proliferation principles and objectives of those countries participating in PSI, and we have agreed to continue our dialogue on PSI.<sup>4</sup>

This paper is not a policy essay arguing the need to persuade China to join the PSI, for it is evident that China will eventually join the PSI to protect its economic livelihood and homeland. What will be the focus of this paper is integrating China into the partnership of the PSI, which will require more than the current procedure of ad hoc partnerships

within the current unorganized structure of the PSI framework. What is needed is an operational level overhaul of the PSI, specifically command and control and operational intelligence, which is structured to allow the easy integration of China into this partnership. The United States needs to take the lead in establishing this structured environment and apply it towards a United States/China relationship in support of the PSI.

### **The Proliferation Security Initiative's Shortfall**

An example of a PSI success is the September 2003 interdiction of the *BBC China*, a German registered transport vessel, in Italian territorial waters with the help of British Intelligence. The *BBC China*, destined for Libya, was loaded with thousands of parts for gas centrifuges that could be used to enrich uranium. The ship's illegal cargo was confiscated and Libya eventually abandoned its nuclear weapons program<sup>5</sup>. The *BBC China* example is a PSI achievement story, one that involved long-time allies that already had a history of working together. Substituting China into the above example would not have achieved the same results. The PSI in its current form is not prepared to effectively incorporate China, or another country that is not a familiar ally, into the PSI process. Two of the statements of principals for the PSI affirm that countries will:

- Undertake effective measures, either alone or in concert with other states, for interdicting the transfer or transport of WMD, their delivery systems, and related materials to and from states and non-state actors of proliferation concern.
- Adopt streamlined procedures for rapid exchange of relevant information concerning suspected proliferation activity, protecting the confidential character of classified information provided by other states as part of this initiative, dedicate appropriate resources and efforts to interdiction operations and capabilities, and maximize coordination among participants in interdiction efforts.<sup>6</sup>

But the current structure of the PSI does not support these two principles efficiently. Effective measures for PSI interdictions are woefully poor without an effective command and control system in place to coordinate actions between a state's local police or national military assets with those of other states. It would be shortsighted to believe that coordination between the United States and China would be maximized without a structured command and control arrangement in place. A streamlined procedure for rapid exchange of relevant information and intelligence is also missing from the PSI operational picture. The United States and China do not have the luxury of decades of operational experience between them. The lack of intelligence networks and contacts between the United States and China will hamper any exchange of relevant information concerning WMD. The status quo of the PSI will not be acceptable in this case; to integrate China into the PSI, doctrine must be introduced to facilitate a robust partnership that supports the principles of the PSI.

### **Command and Control**

Previous successes in PSI operations have been due to long time working relationships with allied navies and governments. With China, this will not be the case. A well defined C2 structure must be in place not only to provide efficient use, integration, and synchronization of assets between the two countries but to also provide legitimacy and structure to an untried relationship. A proposal would be to establish a new Joint Task Force PSI (JTF PSI) under the direction of United States Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM), the combatant commander responsible for WMD. The other option would be to put the JTF under the direction of United States Pacific



Command (USPACOM), but that would limit the area of responsibility, and could cause some concern to the Chinese due to the conflicting interest USPACOM has with Taiwan and Japan.

Due to the large ocean areas, lack of dedicated forces available, and generalized mission scope of JTF PSI, it would have no military forces assigned to it. It would be the supported commander for PSI, and would request forces as needed from the other combatant commanders for surveillance, interdiction of suspect vessels or training exercises. The command relationship with the Chinese would be parallel, with a corresponding joint task force established by the Chinese. This parallel command structure is crucial due to the sensitive nature of this initial venture. Thus unity of command will be sacrificed for unity of effort. By setting up a parallel command structure, the Chinese will gain valuable knowledge and experience in joint operations that will aid the Chinese in their effort in PSI and in conducting safe multinational operations; experience that the Chinese are lacking according to the 2007 Office of Naval Intelligence report on the Chinese navy.<sup>7</sup> Initially, the Chinese forces must be controlled by the Chinese, and the United States forces controlled by the United States. Only after a proven working relationship has matured could cross-command be established, as has been witnessed with Russian ships being under the command of NATO in the Mediterranean Sea in support of Operation Active Endeavor providing maritime security.<sup>8</sup>

Both the United States and Chinese task forces must have liaison officers assigned to each country's corresponding task force. The liaison officers will be critical to bridge not only the language barrier, but also the very wide cultural barrier that exists between

the United States and China. The liaison officers are paramount in achieving success in the four tenets listed in Joint Publication 3-16 for the successful implementation of unity of effort in a coalition or partnership. These tenets are respect, rapport, knowledge of partners, and patience.<sup>9</sup>

One of the most important elements within CTF PSI staff will be the Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG), or the J-9. PSI relies upon interagency coordination, from the Department of State, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Central Intelligence Agency, and Homeland Security. The ability to coordinate and work jointly between these agencies is vital. And as revealed in the 9/11 Commission Report, interagency coordination was poor.<sup>10</sup> Within the current framework of PSI, this lack of interagency coordination has not been addressed. This lack of structure in interagency coordination may make some processes and decision making quicker, but as PSI expands and becomes more complicated with more diverse and intricate partners such as China, it is imperative that structure be implemented to utilize all information and synchronize all available assets.

It would also be prudent for the J-9 of JTF PSI to be involved with the Maritime Operational Threat Response (MOTR) process. The MOTR process is a synchronization framework among federal departments and agencies at the national level and “provides a mechanism for the federal government to make a reasoned decision in real time about the desired outcome and the appropriate response to a particular maritime threat”<sup>11</sup>. It must be stressed that PSI is not the single authority or the lead for the struggle against the proliferation of WMD, but a tool to be used in this effort. Thus involvement in MOTR will add JTF PSI to the tools used by the federal government in the overall campaign for

maritime security and also as a conduit for federal interagency coordination. This interagency coordination needs to be reflected in the Chinese command structure also, allowing for a full synchronization of Chinese governmental assets.

Communications is a vital component that must be addressed early. It is obvious that the language barrier is a major problem with China, and the liaison officers will handle the bulk of the verbal communication translation at the operational level. As for communications architecture, a dedicated interoperable common operational picture needs to be established in support of JTF PSI. Not only is this important for information transfer and situational awareness between China and the United States, but this could also be established for all of the countries involved with PSI. This architecture should consist of “off the shelf” computer technology that can be purchased and trained on by both countries and upgraded easily. With this dedicated PSI specific computer system established, operational security is maintained while the important function of information availability and information flow is achieved.

Training will also be paramount, with tactical exercises and operational war games being conducted to hone the skills needed for the PSI and coalition operations. Future exercises could also be integrated with other PSI partners, exposing the Chinese to other doctrine and establishing further trust between the many nations involved in the PSI. Previous PSI war games have been conducted involving current PSI partners, but all of the war games to date have been scripted so that command and control issues and problems were not addressed.<sup>12</sup> This has artificially reduced the need to develop a more concrete form of structure for the PSI at this time. Future war games involving China

should heavily stress command and control issues to facilitate a robust and structured command and control architecture.

Another important command and control function will be the adherence to the Rules of Engagement (ROE) for the PSI. Specifically this is international and local law, and how the partners must abide by all laws of the sea and other country's laws that are applicable within their international waters. Without command and control in place, the ability to monitor ROE and project legitimacy will be compromised.

Even though this new JTF PSI is established to develop a partnership with the Chinese, it has the capability to expand to include other nations willing to establish a more structured version of PSI. During this evolution of PSI, the JTF PSI could advance to a Combined Joint Task Force integrating multiple nations synchronizing their combined efforts against WMD proliferation.

### **Operational Intelligence**

The cornerstone for a successful partnership in the PSI between the United States and China will be operational intelligence. Without accurate and timely intelligence, interdictions will not happen or be erroneous, and legitimacy and trust will be lost. An embarrassing example of poor maritime intelligence is the 1993 interdiction of the Chinese containership *Yin He*. The United States asserted that the *Yin He* was carrying chemical ingredients bound for Iran from China that would be used for Iran's chemical weapons program. Secretary of State Warren Christopher went public with the allegations and stated that the intelligence about the *Yin He* was reliable. Though China refuted the allegations, they allowed the ship to be boarded and inspected in a Saudi

Arabian port. None of the chemical precursors were on board after an inspection by United States and Saudi technicians, and no apologies or restitutions were made by the United States to China or Iran.<sup>13</sup> This embarrassing intelligence mistake not only irritated the Chinese, but would cast doubt on United States interdiction efforts in the years to come. More mistakes like the *Yin He* could jeopardize the PSI. Accurate intelligence information collaborated with interagency and international intelligence is critical for the PSI. Though mistakes in intelligence are inevitable, apologies and financial restitution will be needed to nations and shipping companies who lose valuable time during mistaken inspections and interdictions.

To establish trust and legitimacy to this partnership as well as provide the most accurate intelligence possible, the United States and China must share intelligence information. But this presents the age old problem with intelligence sharing; how much to share with your partners without compromising your own national interests. Obviously with China this is magnified greatly. The answer is to weigh the risk associated with not sharing information and allowing the possibility of WMD to be transported to its destination against the risk of sharing information to successfully stop WMD proliferation but possibly compromising some sensitive data. Clearly the method of meticulously sanitizing intelligence before sharing it with the Chinese must continue to ensure operational security until the United States trust relationship with China improves over time. This will lag information flow severely due to the added layer of critically screening the intelligence, but the increased time needed for this screening will reduce the risk of compromised intelligence. But even though information flow is slowed, the most

important result will be that information is shared between the United States and China, and this shared information will be used in the effort to counter WMD proliferation.

The JTF PSI J-2 (Intelligence division of JTF PSI) must be integrated with the Global Maritime Intelligence Integration Plan (GMII). The GMII integrates current intelligence abilities from all sources available to the United States to support maritime security and planning. “The overarching requirement will be to identify, locate, and track potential threats to United States maritime interests and subsequently transfer accurate, relevant, and collaborated information to those operational entities.”<sup>14</sup> The GMII Plan involves multi-agency, multi-national, and international business and commercial entities that are involved with maritime interests.<sup>15</sup> It is a community focus that brings together a wealth of maritime intelligence that can contribute greatly to JTF PSI. The JTF PSI J-2, with the approval of the director of GMII, will post on the JTF PSI common operating picture network appropriate intelligence data to be shared with the Chinese relevant to WMD proliferation in the Area of Operations for JTF PSI. In response, data from the Chinese can be uploaded into the GMII system further enhancing the intelligence capabilities of the GMII.

It must be stressed that one of the key facets of the PSI is the myriad sources in support of intelligence. Therefore it is critical for the intelligence to be thoroughly screened and filtered to prevent the compromise of intelligence sources. It is a risk decision to share this intelligence information with the Chinese, but it is important to be able to use the current maritime intelligence and the capabilities of the GMII plan and consolidate this intelligence with the Chinese for unity of effort.

Dissecting a country's nuclear, chemical, or biological program is not the responsibility of the PSI. The PSI intelligence network must be cognizant of this fact, and simply use the information to stop the WMD proliferation, not the sources that are using nuclear sources legitimately. One of the problems with nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons is that their components are dual use. A fertilizer plant could easily produce chemical weapons with just a throw of a switch on a machine. Therefore one of the goals of intelligence operations is being able to recognize the difference between legitimate uses of nuclear, chemical, and biological technology and illegal uses of this technology.

Many countries now export nuclear technology legally, including 44 countries that belong to the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), an organization of nuclear states that pledge to adopt controls to prevent nuclear proliferation from their peaceful nuclear activities and exports. The NSG includes China and the United States.<sup>16</sup> Still, it is possible that these countries could have breaches in their internal security measures. An example of this is the A.Q. Khan network that was directly responsible for passing nuclear intelligence illegally to North Korea, Libya, and Iran. Dr. A.Q. Khan, a Pakistani nuclear physicist, acquired millions of dollars from the 1980's through 2000 through his clandestine organization that dealt in black market nuclear technology and parts sales. The information gained from Pakistan about the A.Q. Khan network has been very beneficial in realizing the scope of his dealings, though a full understanding of the depth of the network may never be learned.<sup>17</sup> As for A.Q. Khan, he was pardoned by the Pakistani government but lives under house arrest in Pakistan.<sup>18</sup> The reality is that there are probably more A.Q. Khan-like networks functioning, selling nuclear, chemical, and

biological technology to the highest bidder. Many countries, including the United States and China, engage in nuclear technology export, and it is almost certain that motives ranging from greed to religious ideology will inspire some scientist to deal in WMD proliferation. Intelligence from the United States and China, along with all of the PSI partners, must be ready for this dire threat, and must also work with the responsible country, not to embarrass it in the world community, but to acquire the information of the offending scientist and put a stop to his/her actions.

It is also pertinent to note that some states might not reveal some of their interdiction successes in PSI due to the fact that some WMD proliferators would use these announcements to search for weaknesses in their own operations and more dangerously, those security measures of the PSI partners.<sup>19</sup> Though this will obviously curtail intelligence information sharing, it will provide critical operational security.

### **The Relevance of the United States working with China**

Why do we care if China is successfully integrated into the PSI? China and the United States working together in the PSI will clearly reap the benefits of a combined effort to thwart the proliferation of WMD in the busy maritime shipping lanes of the South China Sea, Western Pacific Ocean, and Indian Ocean. Any WMD attack upon China, the United States, or the economic ties between the two countries would be detrimental for both economies. Also, the benefits of a mutual military partnership would promote understanding and trust between two countries who view each other now as potential adversaries. China and the United States share a unique relationship; economic trading partners with 350 billion dollars worth of maritime trade a year and



military juggernauts competing for maritime supremacy in the Asian maritime area.<sup>20</sup>

This delicate balance must become more stable, and this can be attained by a military partnership initially between both navies in support of the PSI that utilizes understanding, respect, and a common goal. The United States needs to work with the Chinese navy, not only to understand and reduce tensions, but also to help the Chinese navy “mature”. The Chinese have been on a swift pace in building up their naval arsenal, but their training and experience is woefully poor. United States training through the PSI with the Chinese will help them develop these new and advanced platforms peacefully and not recklessly go about gaining experience and doctrine through conquest and poor judgment. The opportunity to work with the Chinese through the PSI gives the United States an opportunity to develop a rapport with the Chinese navy and establish a mutual goal of defeating WMD proliferation. This is supported by the National Strategy for Maritime Security that states:

The United States will continue to promote development of cooperative mechanisms for coordinating regional measures against maritime threats that span national boundaries and jurisdictions...The United States will also work closely with other governments and international and regional organizations to enhance the maritime security capabilities of other key nations by:

- Offering maritime and port security assistance, training, and consultation;
- Coordinating and prioritizing maritime security assistance and liaison within regions.<sup>21</sup>

### **But China is the Enemy**

Working with China is working with our adversary. Why would we want to form a partnership with our naval rival in the Pacific? There is no doubt that the Chinese naval forces and their overall military structure is rapidly expanding at a torrent pace. And

there is no doubt that the Chinese are looking to exert military influence in the Western Pacific region, specifically Taiwan and the Spratly Islands. Would a partnership with China validate excessive Chinese maritime claims? It could be argued that a partnership with the Chinese navy would legitimize the Chinese political claims in the South China Sea and slowly allow Chinese influence to replace the current United States influence in the region.

But this partnership with the Chinese for the PSI has a specific purpose; the interdiction of WMD on the high seas. The training and intelligence cooperation between the United States and China will be in support of the PSI, which has a specific purpose. Security cooperation between the United States and China will not be to enforce Chinese maritime claims upon the Spratly Islands or excessive Chinese Economic Exclusion Zone claims. Interdictions for purposes other than WMD proliferation will not be supported by this PSI relationship.

The Chinese military has been expanding, but the real power of the Chinese is their economic influence in the region. China has now replaced the United States as the leading importer of goods and investment capital from Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore. Other East Asian economies are also depending upon China. The Chinese have free trade agreements with the Association of South East Asian Nations members giving these countries huge economic benefits and stability. China is becoming the economic hub of East Asia.<sup>22</sup> It is improbable that the Chinese would risk their economic livelihood by using their military to challenge the United States in the region. Plus, it is doubtful that the Chinese would want to engage in an expensive arms race with the United States. According to the Pentagon, if China maintains its present economic rate of

growth until 2025, its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) would still be roughly 30 percent of the United States GDP.<sup>23</sup> Preventing terrorism and working with the United States to provide for security of their growing economic domain will be the top priority of the Chinese.

Even though the East Asian countries are turning to China for economic reasons, they are turning to the United States for their security. Singapore, The Philippines, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and Indonesian all are turning towards the United States for defense cooperation and aid. As Singapore's defense minister expressed, "It is no secret that Singapore believes that the presence of the U.S. military . . . contributes to the peace and stability of the region. To that extent, we have facilitated the presence of U.S. military forces."<sup>24</sup>

A partnership with the Chinese in support of the PSI will not compromise United States naval dominance in the East Asian region. In fact, it should increase United States dominance in the region and give legitimacy for a continued United States presence in the name of maritime security. China will need to protect its economic dominance in the area and not become involved in an arms race with the United States. China and the United States will not benefit from a continued "cold war" mentality. China, in support of the PSI, will now become an important partner in the security of the maritime domain from WMD proliferation. Both the United States and China will benefit from continued economic prosperity and a mutual naval relationship that supports defending that economic success from WMD and terrorists attack.

## Conclusion

The world's nations must take action to prevent the growing threat of WMD proliferation. WMD material must be prevented from reaching terrorist and rogue states via the high seas. With 80 percent of the world's trade transported on the maritime domain, it will take the combined effort of all nations to monitor the large maritime domain and interdict WMD. The PSI is a great tool to prevent the spread of WMD on the high seas, but its current form is lacking structure and doctrine. This has not been a problem with long time allies, but will present problems with the eventual integration of China into the PSI. The United States must address this problem and be ready to integrate China into the PSI. Incorporating China into the PSI will require a structural overhaul of the PSI, specifically adding a JTF that will incorporate the operational functions of command and control and operational intelligence. The JTF will allow an organized integration of China, concentrating on command structure, communication, information sharing, and training while ensuring operational and intelligence security to the risks involved. This will give unity of effort to the PSI partnership between China and the United States while initiating and legitimizing a needed rapport with the Chinese navy that will expand to their other armed forces.

The United States cannot wait and hope the emerging Chinese military threat goes away much as the Soviet military threat did at the end of the cold war. With the Chinese economy so intertwined with the United States economy, it is imperative that the two countries work together to protect this economic link and at the same time develop a working relationship between their military forces. When the time comes to integrate

China into the PSI it is imperative that the United States is ready and has a solid plan in place.

### **Recommendations**

The following are recommendations for integrating China into the PSI.

- Establish a Joint Task Force for military inclusion in the PSI with the ability to expand the Joint Task Force to a Coalition Task Force to countries willing to be a partner.
- Adopt command and control measures to operations that will help integrate China into the PSI architecture. Specifically addressed should be communications, command structure, information sharing, training, and war gaming.
- Adopt intelligence measures to specifically address intelligence sharing between interagency organizations and international partners in the PSI.
- Have doctrine established to facilitate the introduction of other PSI partners that have limited multinational experience.
- Allow exposure of the Chinese navy to multinational operations and doctrine.
- Facilitate a relationship with China through the PSI that allows for mutual maritime economic security through military cooperation and understanding.

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## Endnotes

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