



The Implications of China's Regional Military Power Projections: Challenges for India's Military Strategy

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Abstract

The economic revival became the main locomotive for China to continue its modernization and military strength building program. As a representation of the 21st century's global power, China has proven a stronger and more aggressive revival. Aggressiveness in building military strength in quality and quantity has influenced the security order in the Asian region and encouraged him to be more assertive in dealing with security issues involving his region. India is one of the most threatened countries. The spread of military power along with provocative actions of China in the border region with India, the intensification of the development of maritime facilities and infrastructure in the Indian Ocean region, as well as the superiority of Chinese combat power over India are some of the strong basic reasons for India to make China a major threat to the security of its territory. With limited strength and combat capabilities under China, India responded to China's military threat by increasing its defense power. Defensive military strategy became the most rational choice and more profitable for India in order to reduce the aggressiveness and threat of the Chinese military power.

Keywords : *China's military power; Chinese military threat; India's military strategy*



Introduction

Besides economic revival of China which makes China became a new force in global politics, there is another movement out of China within the last ten years that were more attracted for the attention of many states, especially the neighboring states of China in Asia, even for the United States, namely sustainability of modernization and development of China's military power. It can be understood as one of the main goals of China to reach its capacity as a modern country, that the improvement of military capabilities is needed to block threats from other countries, support the achievement of national interests, and as an instrument to gain international recognition as a strong state (Swaine, 2005, p.266).

Nevertheless, the revival of China, especially its military force, can't be seen only as China's effort to get title as a strong state in international politics. China's effort to improve its military capability could be a serious threat for other states, especially those states who is directly bordering with China. This case is in line with the assumption from Robert Jervis in *Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma*, that any effort to increase security by a state will reduce the security of the other state (Jervis, 1978, p.186). In addition, the sensitivity of relations between China and neighboring states in Asia and China's assertive behavior in dealing with security issues that is involving China also can create a bad situation for the neighboring states in the region. India is one of the states that is most threatened by the modernization and development efforts of China's military power. Besides caused by the trauma of the defeat from China in the Sino-Indian war in 1962, the ongoing border dispute with China in the Himalayan region, and distrust India against China's commitment to resolve the border dispute are also strong reasons for New Delhi to be vigilant and to improve their security (Swaine, 2005, p.278).

Responding threat from China, India immediately continues their effort to improve defense capability by upgrading their combat gear and weaponry technology in purpose to safe their sovereignty and to block any kind of China's threat. For India, it becomes a dangerous decision to make. India should not make



a risky decision. India needs to apply defense strategy by considering rationality, capabilities and advantages they have.

The success of Deng Xiaoping on economic modernization and reformation with his big ideas he made is a China's key success to revive its economy. One of long term effects from economic policy decision that was made by Deng is China high economic growth every year. The proof is, China's economic growth average from 1989 to 2015 is 9,06% every year (Bergsten, et.al., 2008, p.106). Even more, after economic reformation on 1978, China became the only state with highest economic years (reached 10% ever year) for 3 decades. Since the beginning of 1978 reformation until 2006, China per capita GDP has been multiplied for 13 times (Bergsten, et.al., 2008, p.106). Even though in this last few years China economic growths have been decreasing, but they are still around 7 to 9%. From 2008 to 2011, average GDP is around 9,6%, and became 7,7% on 2012 and 2013 (Morisson, 2009, p.3-4). In 2014 the GDP decreased to 7,4% (Sweeney, 2015), it warns the government to keep the GDP on 7% in 2015 (Harjani, 2014).

With fast economic growth, it is not hard for China to reach some agendas that can't be reached before, for example providing huge capital to build world class military force. So it is not surprising that China uses its fund to modernize China's military force.

Modernization and Development of Military Force

Actually, since the middle of Cold War, China has hardly tried to invest on modern military force development. But, it couldn't be implemented because the communist regime that day didn't have enough capital. When China got momentum to revive its economic, China had opportunity to revive its military force with its capability to provide a lot of capital to buy high class and capability military equipment (Goldstein, 2000, p.3).

Undeniably, possession of capital that was so big, that is termed by Goldstein as "pockets of excellence", China has been able to provide a powerful source for financing the shopping needs of armament and modernization of



military forces in all dimensions. In addition, the availability of middle class military technology and weaponry by the states' military industries that are in need of financial income such as Russia, also became a golden and greater opportunity for China to succeed the modernization agenda and efforts to improve its military capabilities (Goldstein, 2000, p.10-11).

In general, there are several factors that make China modernize its military force. If it is seen from strategy and comprehensive national power perspective, development of military force can be understood as China's effort to secure its domestic stability, region security from other states' threat, and to keep geopolitical influence as big state, or even more to increase its position as main actor in global politics (Singh, 2009, p.125). Theoretically and based on its history, People Liberation Army encouragement to modernize its military force was influenced by modern war technology show on Gulf War 19921 as a mark of the beginning of new modern war era, the changes of policy about war characteristic internationally, and policy revolution in military affairs (RMA), where information technology has influenced war format and organization and military leadership world direction (Cordesman & Yarosh, 2012, p.34). Besides that, based on white book China's National Defense 2010, China's effort to modernize its military force caused by the uncertainty of international environment situation, especially in the increasing of security threat which was more integrated, complex, and changeable any time (Cordesman & Yarosh, 2012, p.12).

China realizes that national defense issue is very important to prepare, as important as economic development issue. So, it is not so surprising if China is so serious preparing its modern military force in this information and technology era. In general, China military modernization program consist of 3 pillars that will be explained below.

- 1) Determining modern war doctrine

China military modernization trend starts with changing traditional war doctrine or known as people's war by applying a new concept in running the war strategy, which is more oriented to the use of modern technology and



information or better known as the doctrine of Local War under Conditions of Information / High tech condition in 1993. The changes of the doctrine are aimed at making the Chinese military forces are capable of mastering modern war equipment technology in accordance with the demands of modern war equipment with characteristic of High-Tech Local war (Chansoria, 2011, p.20). Furthermore, by implementing this new doctrine, China military forces are expected to be capable taking advantages by time efficiency and effectively attack. In this doctrine, mastering modern war technology that is combined by smaller geographical range makes war ends sooner, but the destructive effect is much bigger because the use of modern weaponry technology. This is why PLA tries to increase its capability on first strike for short time war (Cordesman & Yarosh, 2013, p.55).

It needs to be noted, this military doctrine is only a general image of China behavior when facing new format of modern era war, because in its implementation, PLA still using operational guidelines or basic strategic known as 'active defense.' This operational guidelines determines that PLA is bordered by defense strategy, which means that PLA is only allowed to attack when they are attacked (Cordesman & Yarosh, 2013, p.54). Furthermore, operationally, PLA needs to develop this doctrine so it can be an orientation in implementation of defense strategy which is appropriate in 21st century modern war demands.

2) Increasing defense budget, personnel war capability, and technology and modern weaponry system ownership

This move becomes the main indicator to see China's seriousness on developing its military. Since military modernization program was conducted on 1989, China's defense budget increases every year with 12,9% ascension every year. Until 2015 March, when government announces the defense budget, defense budget still got around 10%, even though it is fewer than previous year budget which is 12,2% on 2014, 10,7% on 2013, and 11,2% on 2012 (globalsecurity.org). It makes China becomes one of the states with largest defense budget in the world. Based on 2013 *The Stockholm*



International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) report, China is the 2nd largest defense budget with 171 Billion USD, which is below USA with 618 Billion USD (Frohlich & Kent, 2014). The large availability of defense budget resources and encouragement to modernize military have made China as the second largest contributor to world military spending of the top fifteen states, with a share of 11%, below the United States which contributed 36% of the world's total military spending (Freeman & Salmirano, 2014).

Furthermore, in terms of possession and development of modern weapons systems, PLA has had some armor with advance ability. Among them is the DF-31B, intercontinental ballistic missile that can be carried and launched through the war vehicle. The advantages of this missile are difficult to detect and because it can be carried by war vehicles, this weapon provides a distinct advantage for large China region (Want China Times, 2015). China also stated that China has a new generation of intercontinental ballistic missiles with nuclear warheads, the Dongfeng-41 (DF -41) missiles. Besides being equipped with nuclear warheads, according to a report from Jane's Strategic Weapon System, the range of the missile attack reaches 12,000 km, it makes the DF-41 missiles is the longest range distance (The Telegraph, 2014). The Chinese Air Force has also successfully developed several sixth-generation fighter jet, such as J-20 and J-31 which are equipped with laser guns and rail gun. Meanwhile, to increase the strength of Navy, the PLA has had several latest warships, including latest nuclear submarines, type-093G nuclear sub which is equipped by long-range attack missiles, and of course the first China air craft carrier, Liaoning, which has been commissioned since 2012 to support the Navy strategic operations (LaGrone & Majumdar, 2014).

China has also launched a satellite that is designed to run the activities of ISR (intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance) and track movement of the vessel or aircraft which are in the territory which is under the supervision of the satellite network. Development of satellite network for defense needs has also made China has the ability to counter-space the ISR systems which can disrupt the opponent and make it quicker to counter attack (Nurkin, et.al.).



In order to improve the ability of the war soldiers, the PLA troops have also been involved in various military exercises, either at bilateral and multilateral levels. It is proved from the annual report of the US Department of Defense to Congress which includes China defense and military development in 2014 which showed that the PLA has been involved in various types of combat training is more than 50 times since 2008 (Department of Defense, USA, 2014, p.74-75).

3) The military education system management reformation and the deployment of military personnel in military units PLA

The seriousness of Chinese PLA in modernizing military force is not only done on the construction material strength. Professionalism and expertise of military personnel is also an important concern of modernization. It is required that all military personnel are becoming more educated, skilled, and have the ability to operate the technology and capable of running the appropriate strategy guidelines and the doctrine applied effectively. In this case, PLA efforts is by improving the recruitment of new personnel, military education, training, and improve employee military utilization (Corbett, et.al., 2008, p.140). This step begins by setting guidelines that combines military education and military science with the involvement of college graduates to be appointed as an employee in military. The improvement started in the early 1990s, when Ziang Jemin served as head of the Chinese Military Commission (CMC).

In 1999, CMC also started to make changes to the curriculum of military education, where there are only two focuses on education: basic education and training for prospective officers, and secondary and higher education levels for officers. Furthermore, the students at the military academy just divided into two areas of expertise, which are a specialist in one field (single-discipline specialized Academies) or to pursue studies in several fields with a wider coverage (multi-disciplinary comprehensive, Academies) (globalsecurity.org). Besides that, for the first time, the PLA set up a special unit for the personnel who do not have rank (non-commission officers /



NCO's), which is the military forces that do not take the path of education at a military academy or duty and occupies a structural position in the military units. The policy aims to open up opportunities for them to develop a professional military career ladder (Bergsten, p.196). The increasing number of professionals in the field of information and technology, restructuring unity and NCO rank system, administrative services, and salaries personnel NCO are also done through a policy of "Plan for Deepening the Reform of the Non-Commission Officer System" published CMC in 2009.

Chinese military posture in Asia and its implications for India's security

One of the important facts that must be realized by China's neighboring states is a change in security order in the region as a result of the growing Chinese military force posture. Furthermore, the potential threat of China's military modernization becomes greater since China has changed the policy which was originally just "assurance" (give certainty) be more indicative of "assertiveness" (firmness) related to the issues faced in the year 2010 (Keam, 2013). Therefore, for those who believe in "the theory of China threat," the revival of the Chinese military, has become a serious threat to security and stability in the region, and they also believe China will use its military to some strategic goals, such as getting rid of US dominance in the region by utilizing some of the issues involving the role of US, such as the reunification of Taiwan, the disputed border region of Tibet, and South China Sea dispute (Broomfield, 2003, p.266). It becomes logical, since China is the only force in Asia that is involved in security issues in four sub-regions, which became part of Asia Pacific: East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Central Asia (Pollack, 2005, p.330).

India is one of the states which is most threatened against the aggressiveness of the development of China's military strength and the increasing of assertive behavior in the region. In fact, the modernization and development of China's military power has caused a security threat to the whole region of India, whether by land, sea, or air. The development of infrastructure that can be used for military operations, including the deployment of missiles and the



establishment of the Information Warfare at land borders with India (Tibet and LAC), the construction of maritime facilities and ports in some strategic points in the Indian Ocean, and the deployment of modern weapons systems, such as the sixth-generation fighter aircraft, cruise missiles latest systems, and cyber technologies that strengthens the power of the Chinese Air Force, have been able to be utilized to perform provocative actions and attacks schemes against India from all directions.

Besides the increasing of the China flexibility to put pressure on India to with better combat forces, the perception that China is the biggest threat to the security of India is also increasing with the China provisions in providing military aid to allies in Asia such as Pakistan which is also a rival of India in South Asia (Seyak, 2013). Moreover, the absence of a commitment from China to peacefully resolve the border dispute with India becomes New Delhi consideration for increasing vigilance. It can be seen throughout 2010 and 2013, when the China military forces have more than 500 times into the sovereign territory of India in the border. Although since 1993, China has signed the settlement agreement the border in a peaceful manner through the Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with India (Nair, 2013). Once again, it shows that despite legal efforts can't prevent an increase in action provocative China that could threaten the security and sovereignty of India.

China's efforts in building some infrastructure and maritime facilities are also potentially be used to perform permanent military deployment in the Indian Ocean region. For India, it makes China can surpass India's strength both in quality and quantity in terms of the deployment of military forces and increasingly asserted its position as a determinant of stability in India (Brewster, 2015, p.51). The deployment of Jin class submarine which based in Sanya, which is very close to access into the Indian Ocean region in 2008 and the incidence of interception by Chinese warships to the Indian submarine when it was patrolling for pirates in the Gulf of Aden, can be a bad signal for India which is also involved in the competition in the Indian Ocean region (Pant, 2010). India also can not ignore China's airspace mastery which is currently projected has strength that has been



equaled with the Western states. The combination of technology and sophisticated weapons systems as a result of the success of the military modernization program, has made the Chinese Air Force becomes the largest and strongest in Asia, and if Beijing took the initiative to attack New Delhi, the weapons systems and technology owned will be able to easily destroy bases Indian military, even with an attack from the farthest distance (Chari, 2015).

Of course, some of the reasons above became serious concern for India and assured that there is no correlation between the developments of China's military power with what has been campaigned to the world as "awakening peaceful China." That means, in facing the behavior of China's which is more assertive in addressing security issues and the unification of the territory, including the border dispute involving India, India will more often faced with a confrontational relationship with China as a result of China military modernization program and superior combat power possessed. Therefore, India needs to rebuild its defense force projection. However, in reacting this, India can not simply ignore the superiority of military force posture that is owned by China. At least, India's defense policy or strategy must ensure that India is quite able to secure the entire region and block the threat from China.

India's response: implementing a defense strategy

Over the past decade, India has been openly and intensively shows preparation in the face of potential threats and pursuing deficit expanding military power from China. India steps starting with raising military spending. In the period 2015-2016, the Indian government raised the allocation of defense spending to 2.57 trillion rupees, equivalent to \$ 40.07 billion, it increases 12% from the previous period allocation of defense spending which is 2.29 trillion rupee (Miglani, 2015). Similar thing had been done in the period 2011-2012, in which the allocation of defense spending rose 11.6%, or \$ 36.28 billion worth (Miglani, 2013). In the period 2013-2014, the allocation of defense spending also rose 5.3%, or \$ 37.4 billion worth. However, the number is still relatively low, especially when it is compared with China's defense budget. This was due to



defense budget cuts as an alternative to maintaining the country's financial stability due to India's economic growth that is still relatively low. Based on the report Center Statistical Organization, which also acts on behalf of the government official, it is reported that during the period 2012-2014, the acquisition of India's GDP is only around 5% to 6.7%, below the target of 9%. Despite these efforts continue, because the budget cuts, the Indian military modernization grows slowly (Behera, 2013).

Regardless of the low defense budget, the Indian military force development efforts are also made to increase the import of weapons from states that are in accordance with the projected construction of India defenses such as the USA, Russia, India or the European Union (The Diplomat, 2011). India is also trying to combine the internal balancing of military power development with external balancing. Internal balancing means an attempt to increase the combat power through modernization in all dimensions, including increased deployment of military forces in the border region with China (LAC) and in India Ocean region (Thorp, 2012). While external balancing means an attempt to establish military cooperation with other countries outside the region. Some military cooperation that has been achieved by India are: defense cooperation with Mongolia in 2001; military cooperation with Singapore since 2003; strategic cooperation with Afghanistan in 2011; and strengthening defense cooperation with Japan (Thorp, 2012).

India also seeks to take advantage of the multilateral cooperation forum such as the ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum), ADMM-Plus (ASEAN Defense Minister's Meeting-Plus), IONS (Indian Naval Symposium), and IOR-ARC (Indian Ocean Rim-Association for Regional Cooperation) to open military cooperation with countries in the Asia Pacific region like Australia (Gokhale, 2013). All of the efforts above are form of response and Indian efforts responding China's development on military power that threatens the security of its territory.

Although the construction of military force has been run, India still has to accept the fact that China's military power is superior, both in terms of military spending and the overall combat power. This makes India is impossible to take



policy or defense strategy that actually provoke military action from China, due to its military strength at the moment, India is unlikely to win if involved in an open conflict with China. Therefore, the entire development Indian defense forces project would be better focused to meet the minimum combat power possessed, equalizes with the Chinese military force posture, and ensuring the security of each part of the territorial sovereignty of all forms of threats. In other hand, despite the perception of a threat from China is increasing, but there is no certainty that China would actually conduct attacks against India. That means, the status quo has not changed, and the situation can be exploited by India to develop strategies to better blocking. Defense strategies are also more advantageous for India with the geography that makes it possible for India to get a natural line of defense in the form of the Himalayan mountain range that runs right along the border with China.

Conclusion

As a result of China's success on providing large funding resources for modernization and development of military force program, China's military becomes the most powerful military in Asia. But, the sustainable development of military power which is followed by the changes of policy which is becomes more assertive and provocative due to face security and border dispute issue, has increased the perception of threat for China's neighboring states. India is one of the states which is most threatened by modernization and development military force program that is conducted by China. Responding China's military threat, India choose defensive military strategy because this strategy is appropriate with capabilities, rationality, and more advantageous on facing the situation.



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