

The U.S. and China's Participation in Multilateral Joint Military Exercises in Asia-Pacific Region

美國和中國大陸在亞太地區多邊聯合軍事演習的參與

Li-Hsiang Lin

林麗香

General Education Center, Air Force Academy

空軍官校通識教育中心

Abstract

The U.S. army holds more than thousands of military exercises in Asia-Pacific region each year. The U.S. army keeps its military cooperation with allies and partners and maintains military hegemony by the opportunity of multilateral joint military exercises. Along with the growth of China's comprehensive national strength, the foreign policy has turned into active and positive. PLA strives to participate in various types of joint military exercises in Asia-Pacific region. PLA enhances its military capability and regional influence, and establishes military-friendly cooperative relations through multilateral joint military exercises. This paper analyzes the purpose, the content and the future development of the U.S. and China's participation in the multilateral joint military exercises in Asia-Pacific region.

Keywords : Multilateral joint military exercises, 'Golden Cobra' multilateral joint military exercise, 'Pacific Rim' joint maritime exercise, 'Khan Quest' military exercises, 'Komodo' multilateral exercise, 'Kowari' military exercise

摘要

美國軍隊每年在亞太地區舉行數千場軍事演習，美國軍隊與盟國和夥伴保持軍事合作，並通過多邊聯合軍事演習保持軍事霸權。隨著中國大陸綜合國力的增強，外交政策變得主動和積極，人民解放軍努力參加亞太地區的各種聯合軍事演習。人民解放軍增強軍事能力和地區影響力，透過多邊聯合軍事演習建立軍事友好合作關係。本文分析美國和中國大陸參與亞太地區多邊聯合軍事演習的目的、內容和未來發展。

關鍵字：多邊聯合軍事演習、金色眼鏡蛇多邊聯合軍事演習、環太平洋聯合海上演習、可汗探索軍事演習、科摩多多邊演習、科瓦里軍事演習

1. Introduction

In today's world, joint training exercises have become an increasingly popular style of international military cooperation. The U.S. army holds more than

1,500 military exercises in the Asia-Pacific region each year. The U.S. army keeps its military cooperation with allies and partners, demonstrates its commitment to the strategic partner nations of the region and maintains military hegemony by the

opportunity of multilateral joint military exercises. On the other hand, along with the growth of China's comprehensive national power and military strength, PLA goes out of the country actively, and participates in military exercises in the Asia-Pacific region. Through multilateral joint military exercises, China enhances its influence and military capabilities, and establishes military friendly and cooperative relations with Asia-Pacific nations.

At present, the U.S. and China's involvement in the annual joint military exercise in Asia Pacific region include 'Golden Cobra' multilateral joint military exercise, 'Pacific Rim (RIMPAC)' joint maritime exercise, 'Khan Quest' peacekeeping exercises, 'Komodo' multilateral naval exercise and 'Kowari' military exercise. This paper analyzes the motivation, purpose, the content and the future development of the U.S. and China's participation in the multilateral joint military exercises in Asia-Pacific region.

2. The Motivation and Purpose of the U.S. Participation in Multilateral Joint Military Exercises

Since the Asia-Pacific region has an important national interest in the security and economy of the United States, the return to Asia and the consolidation of its Asia-Pacific allies enables the United States to maintain its power balance in the region and continue to stabilize its influence and leadership.

The United States intends to maintain and strengthen its military presence in the Asian region. President Obama [1] emphasized this point during his November 2011 speech to the Australian Parliament: "As we consider the future of our armed forces, we've begun a review that will identify our

most important strategic interests and guide our defense priorities and spending over the coming decade. So here is what this region must know. As we end today's wars, I have directed my national security team to make our presence and mission in the Asia Pacific a top priority. As a result, reductions in U.S. defense spending will not—I repeat, will not—come at the expense of the Asia Pacific."

Beyond new deployments and the identification of Asia-Pacific region as a high-priority area for the U.S. Department of Defense(DOD), several features of the approach are notable [2]:

- A broader distribution of forces: One aim of the rebalancing effort, which accelerates changes underway since the George W. Bush Administration, is to make the U.S. defense posture in Asia "more broadly distributed," as President Obama has stated, by strengthening the U.S. military presence in the southern part of the western Pacific. The guiding premise appears to be that it is much more advantageous to the United States, and a better reflection of the way in which states in the region view their interests, to strengthen the U.S. military presence in the increasingly vital southern part of the region on the basis of a much more flexible model than in Northeast Asia. It is unclear to what extent the "pivot" is linked to the controversial plan to build up U.S. forces on the island of Guam. In the National Defense Authorization Act, P.L. 112-81, Congress zeroed out the Administration's request for the Guam military construction program pending a review of costs.

- Increased flexibility: The shift in focus toward the south will be carried out by what officials describe as a more "flexible" approach to deployments in the region, in which U.S. deployments will be smaller, more agile,

expeditionary, self-sustaining, and self-contained. In contrast to a reliance on the large permanent bases in Japan and South Korea, U.S. forces in the south will carry out operations mainly through rotational deployments of military units of various kinds to different parts of the region. Measures to sustain the U.S. presence include a substantially expanded and widely varied range of naval access agreements; expanded training exercises; and other, diverse means of engagement with foreign militaries. The model seeks to avoid large expenditures on permanent new bases and to build security systems that are less rigid than Cold War, European-style treaty regimes.

- Enhancing partners' capabilities: A corollary effort is strengthening the independent security capacity of key "partner states" through more flexible security assistance mechanisms and through cooperative counter-terrorism, counter-drug, and counter-insurgency operations. The White House and DOD have stressed their desire to increase training and joint exercises with allies and new military partners, in order to "ensure collective capability and capacity for securing common interests."

The U.S. relationships with Asian allies and key partners are critical to the stability and growth of the Asia-Pacific region. The U.S. emphasizes the existing alliances, which provide a vital foundation for Asia-Pacific security. The U.S. also expands the networks of cooperation with emerging partners throughout the Asia-Pacific to ensure collective capability and capacity for securing common interests. The United States is also investing in a long-term strategic partnership with India to support its ability to serve as a regional economic anchor and

provider of security in the broader Indian Ocean region [3]. The U.S. economic and security interests are inextricably linked to developments in the arc extending from the Western Pacific and East Asia into the Indian Ocean region and South Asia. Accordingly, the U.S. military will continue to contribute to security globally, and rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region.

President Donald J. Trump delivers remarks regarding his administration's National Security Strategy on December 18, 2017. Mentioned in this report [4], "We will preserve peace through strength by rebuilding our military so that it remains preeminent, deters our adversaries, and if necessary, is able to fight and win. We will compete with all tools of national power to ensure that regions of the world are not dominated by one power. We will strengthen America's capabilities—including in space and cyberspace—and revitalize others that have been neglected. Allies and partners magnify our power. We expect them to shoulder a fair share of the burden of responsibility to protect against common threats."

In the regional cooperation section, mentioned "Our vision for the Indo-Pacific excludes no nation. We will redouble our commitment to established alliances and partnerships, while expanding and deepening relationships with new partners that share respect for sovereign-, fair and reciprocal trade, and the rule of law.....We will maintain a forward military presence capable of deterring and, if necessary, defeating any adversary. We will strengthen our long-standing military relationships and encourage the development of a strong defense network with our allies and partners [5]."

From Barack Obama's return to Asia policy and Donald Trump's expansion of military power policy,

it can be understood that the multilateral joint military exercise has become the main means by which the United States expands its military influence and consolidates its military supremacy.

As the Asia-Pacific region is related to the security and economy of the United States, the return to Asia and the consolidation of Asia-Pacific allies enable the United States to maintain its power balance in the region and continue to stabilize its influence and leadership. The purpose of the U.S. military deployment in the Asia-Pacific region is to avoid the rise of regional powers and endanger the passage of its Pacific waterways [6]. The U.S. military maintains its military alliance with its allies and partners and expands its military influence by multilateral joint military exercises. In particular, faced with the continuous improvement of China's overall national strength and regional influence, the threat of North Korea's nuclear test explosions, and the increasing frequency of non-traditional security incidents (natural disasters, terrorism, piracy, transnational outbreaks, etc.), the United States has staged various joint military exercises frequently in the Asia-Pacific region and the scale and frequency of military exercises have risen sharply.

3. The Motivation and Purpose of China's Participation in Multilateral Joint Military Exercises

Since 1990, the Chinese PLA began military exchanges with other national militaries and carried out bilateral and multilateral military exercises. The targets of the early joint military exercises were Russia and Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Now, the targets of the joint military exercise have been extended to the United States, Europe, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Africa and other

countries. The scope of the joint military exercise gradually expanded to counter-terrorism cooperation, humanitarian aid, maritime safety, joint search and rescue and so on. The extent of joint exercises and joint training has also evolved to the actual status of live-fire coordinated training.

Along with the enhancement of China's comprehensive national strength and military strength, PLA is actively going abroad and participating in various types of military exercises, enhancing its influence and military capability through multilateral joint military exercises, and conducting military exchanges with other countries to establish a military-friendly cooperation.

In January 2017, China released for the first time the white paper entitled "China's Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation Policy", elaborating on its concept and policy on Asia-Pacific security cooperation. The white paper mentions [7]: "As an important member of the Asia-Pacific family, China is fully aware that its peaceful development is closely linked with the future of the region. China has all along taken the advancement of regional prosperity and stability as its own responsibility. China is ready to pursue security through dialogue and cooperation in the spirit of working together for mutually beneficial results, and safeguard peace and stability jointly with other countries in the region..... we should improve the existing regional multilateral mechanisms and strengthen the framework for supporting peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. All parties concerned should adhere to multilateralism, oppose unilateralism, further support the development of regional multilateral security mechanisms, push for close coordination between relevant mechanisms, and play a bigger role in enhancing mutual understanding and

trust, and expanding exchanges and cooperation in the field of security dialogues.”

At the level of military cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region, China's armed forces have called for, facilitated, and participated in international security cooperation. China has followed the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, conducted all-round military exchanges with other countries, and developed non-aligned and non-confrontational military cooperation not targeting any third party. It has worked to promote the establishment of just and effective collective security mechanisms and military confidence-building mechanisms. On the basis of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit, and mutually beneficial cooperation, China has increased interactions and cooperation with the armed forces of other countries, and intensified cooperation on confidence-building measures in border areas. China has promoted dialogue and cooperation on maritime security, participated in United Nations peacekeeping missions, international counter-terrorism cooperation, escort missions and disaster-relief operations, and conducted relevant joint exercises and training with other countries [8].

To sustain the economic growth, China requires international stability [9]. Since 2013, China has played a very active role in multilateral joint military exercises in the Asia Pacific region, including ‘Golden Cobra’ multilateral joint military exercise, ‘Pacific Rim (RIMPAC)’ joint maritime exercise, ‘Khan Quest’ peacekeeping exercises, ‘Komodo’ multilateral naval exercise and ‘Kowari’ military exercise. From 2017 white paper, we can understand that China has taken the chance of PLA participating in the multilateral joint military exercise in the Asia-Pacific region to create an international

security environment that is in line with the rise and development of China and establishing military cooperation with other countries in the Asia-Pacific region to expand its military influence.

4. Multilateral Joint Military Exercise

Since 2013, China has actively participated in multilateral military exercises in the Asia-Pacific region. The U.S. and China’s involvement in the annual joint military exercise in the Asia Pacific region include ‘Golden Cobra’ multilateral joint military exercise, ‘Pacific Rim (RIMPAC)’ joint maritime exercise, ‘Khan Quest’ peacekeeping exercises, ‘Komodo’ multilateral naval exercise and ‘Kowari’ military exercise. The following sections discuss the purpose and the contents of the five joint military exercises, and the participation of the United States and China.

(1) ‘Golden Cobra’ multilateral joint military exercise

The "Golden Cobra" military exercise is an annual mechanism of multilateral joint military exercise hosted by the US and Thailand. It is also the largest multilateral joint military exercise in the Asia-Pacific region. The exercise includes commanding post exercise, field operations and humanitarian rescue operations, aiming to cope with regional and global security challenges, deepen international cooperation and safeguard the stability in the Asia Pacific [10].

The exercise started on Feb 14, 2017 and nearly 10,000 troops from 29 countries including Thailand, United States, China, South Korea and Indonesia participated in the joint exercise. China dispatched 17 military members to participate in the exercise at the invitation of the organizers. This was also the first time for China to send a fieldwork vehicle and

some goldsmith tools to the exercise held in Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand. The Chinese side focused on Military Operations Other Than War(MOOTW) subjects including the work of the command center, indoor deduction, construction aid drill and military medical seminar [11].

(2)‘Pacific Rim(RIMPAC)’ joint maritime exercise

Rim of the Pacific is a biennial large-scale multinational power projection/sea control exercise. Conducted biennially (every even year) under the leadership of the US Third Fleet, RIMPAC is a multinational, combined sea mobility exercise in which the ROK, the US, Australia, Canada, Chile, England, and Japan have participated since 1971.

RIMPAC is designed to enhance the tactical capabilities and cooperation of participating nations in various aspects of maritime operations at sea. The exercise is held with the objective to increase mutual cooperation and enhance the combined operations capabilities among the countries around the rim of the Pacific Ocean so that they can ensure the safety of major sea lines of communication and improve their combined response capabilities in the event of conflict on the sea [12].

Twenty-six nations, more than 40 ships and submarines, more than 200 aircraft and 25,000 personnel participated in Rim of the Pacific 2016, more countries and personnel than in any previous years. The exercise participants were Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, People’s Republic of China, Peru, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Tonga, United Kingdom, in addition to the

United States [13].

(3)‘Khan Quest’ peacekeeping exercises

Since 2003, the Armed Forces of Mongolia has been organizing “Khan Quest”. Initially the event was a bilateral peacekeeping exercise in partnership with US Pacific Command, but since 2006, “Khan Quest” has expanded into a major international exercise. Over 2,000 soldiers from 47 countries, including Australia, the U.S., Nepal, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the People’s Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, the Czech Republic, India, Burkina Faso, Vietnam, Guatemala, Honduras, Great Britain, Indonesia, Cambodia, Kyrgyzstan, Canada, Qatar, Kenya, Malawi, Malaysia, Mongolia, Norway, Russia, Pakistan, Peru, Poland, Romania, Singapore, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Tonga, Hungary, Uruguay, Fiji, the Philippines, France, Germany, Chile, Sweden, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, El Salvador, and Japan, took part in the 2016 joint training [14].

2017 exercise has attracted more than 1100 military personnel from 26 countries. The exercise consists of four main events: Command Post Exercise (CPX), Field Training Event (FTE), Engineering Civic Action Program (ENCAP) projects, Health Services Support Engagement (HSSE) as well as training on critical enabler capabilities such as unmanned aerial systems, explosive ordnance disposal and counter-improvised explosive device (C-IED) [15].

(4)‘Komodo’ multilateral naval exercise

Exercise Komodo aims at assessing the readiness and collaboration among the world’s navies, and is said to be the second edition of the exercise, which was initiated in 2014 in Batam, Indonesia [16].

The theme for 2016 'Komodo' exercises is "readiness and cooperation for peace," and they were conducted in Padang, Indonesia, and its nearby islands. Around 50 vessels from China, the United States, Russia, France, Australia and 16 other countries participated. The Komodo 2016 exercise has been divided into two phases: the harbour phase and the sea phase. The harbour phase includes an international fleet review, where US Navy Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 4 will collaborate with fellow naval engineers on a civil-military project. The sailors on-board the Arleigh-Burke class guided-missile destroyer USS Stockdale and Patrol Squadron 8 take part in community service projects at Padang Beach, and a cultural exchange with students at Andalas University. The sea phase features a range of activities, including divisional tactics, small boat operations, flight operations with helicopters, and maritime patrol aircraft, and communication drills [17].

The US Navy joins the forces in Komodo 2016 with staff from Task Force 73 and Destroyer Squadron 7, sailors from USS Stockdale, a P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft and flight crew from VP-8, and Seabees from NMCB 4. China deployed two vessels, Type 054A Guided missile frigate Weifang and rescue vessel Changxingdao to the exercise while Russia sent three Pacific Fleet ships, ADM Vinogradof DDG-572, RNS Boris Butoma and RNS Fotiy Krylof [18].

(5)'Kowari' military exercise

The purpose of the exercise is to enhance the trust, friendship, and trilateral cooperation of the United States, Australia, and China in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region [19]. The Australian Defence Force hosted

the third iteration of Exercise Kowari 2016, a trilateral survival training exchange, from August 27 to September 9. Participants from the U.S. Marine Corps and Army, the Australian Army, and the People's Liberation Army took the challenge to survive inside the outback around Northern Territory, Australia. This exercise was the first land-based trilateral military exercise involving soldiers and Marines from the United States, Australia, and China. They were mixed into teams consisting of members from each country [20].

5. Conclusions and Future Prospects

The United States and China have different considerations on participating in the multilateral military exercises in the Asia-Pacific region. The United States participates in multilateral joint military exercises in the Asia-Pacific region in order to maintain its military alliance with its allies and maintain its military influence and hegemony. China's participation in the Asia-Pacific multilateral joint military exercise is to ensure the survival of national security, cooperation and collective way of maintaining military friendly relations with Asia-Pacific countries.

The United States regards the multilateral joint military exercises as an important means and method for "rebalancing the Asia-Pacific region." In order to continuously deepen the military cooperation with Asian countries and maintain the hegemony of the United States, the United States will still conduct frequent multilateral joint military exercises in Asia-Pacific regions in the future. Especially in recent years, the non-traditional security issues, the disputes over the South China Sea islands, the expansion of China's military strength and the issue of North Korea's nuclear weapons are bound to

emerge. The United States will certainly continue to actively dominate various multilateral joint military exercises in Asia in order to consolidate its position in Asia Pacific and its military influence.

The relationship of the United States and China both cooperate and compete in the multilateral joint military exercise in the Asia-Pacific region. On the one hand, most of the multilateral joint military exercises conducted by the United States and China in the joint military exercise in the Asia-Pacific region are dominated by the United States. China's participation is limited to humanitarian aid and is not involved in combat exercises. For example, the "Cobra Gold" and "Pacific Rim" military exercises are clear examples [21]. Thus, although the United States advocates that the cooperation interests outweigh the benefits of conflicts and is willing to conduct joint military exercises with China in the joint military exercise in Asia-Pacific region, the United States fears that China's military forces are too huge and replace its Asia-Pacific influence and leadership. Therefore, the United States still hopes that maintains its dominance in the multilateral military exercise.

On the other hand, when the United States did not conduct joint military exercises with ASEAN(Association of Southeast Asian Nations), China took the lead in conducting joint military exercises with ASEAN. On October 24, 2017, Huang Yonghong, Singapore's minister of defense, the rotating chairman of ASEAN, stated that to enhance mutual trust, ASEAN will hold its first joint maritime military exercises with China in 2018 [22]. This also shows that along with the improvement of China's overall national strength and the increasingly influential military, its foreign relations have gradually shifted to the initiative and positive

attitude. China's move is bound to have some influence on the U.S. position and role in Asia Pacific region.

Although the military influence and dominance of the United States in the Asia-Pacific region today still exceed that of China, China is catching on to catch up. In order to enhance regional influence and expand military capabilities, PLA will take the initiative to cooperate with Asian countries in joint military exercises that will challenge the original position and influence of the United States in the Asia Pacific region. It is foreseeable that in the future, the United States and China are bound to be more active in carrying out multilateral joint military exercises in the Asia-Pacific region. The U.S.-China military cooperation and opposition will continue to take place in the Asia-Pacific region.

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