Air Diplomacy: Engaging China

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In late September 2009, General Xu Caihou, vice chairman of the Central Military Commission of the People's Liberation Army, visited Washington, DC. On his return trip to China, General Xu stopped in Hawaii, where he visited the headquarters of the United States Pacific Command (PACOM). One photograph of the general's visit went largely unnoticed by most observers. However, it caught the attention of the *Air and Space Power Journal*—the US Air Force's flagship professional journal. Standing in the line to welcome the distinguished Chinese guests were two American Air Force officers, Majors Anthony Davis and Troy Cullen. Their presence was a result of their participation in relief operations following a massive earthquake in the heart of China. The two men were the pilots who flew the first of two C-17s to Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport on 18 May 2008—carrying 75 tons of disaster relief supplies. The flights demonstrated the heartfelt sympathy of Americans for the victims and survivors of the devastating Sichuan earthquake.

Soon after the disaster relief mission, the two officers authored an article for the *Air and Space Power Journal in Chinese* discussing their feelings about this extraordinary experience: "The entire crew felt honored to be a part of this unique mission. . . . Following the presentation of gifts, the off-loading of humanitarian supplies began. Touchingly, our hosts' warm demeanor made it clear how much they appreciated the relief supplies and support."

This moving scene brings to mind the American pilots who flew the "Hump Route" during World War II. They too received similar expressions of gratitude from the Chinese. In both cases, the US Air Force engaged China in a joint effort to cooperatively combat disasters—human and natural. In years to come, the United States and China are likely to find many more opportunities to work collaboratively for the maintenance of regional and global security. This article discusses the concept of air diplomacy, focusing on its relevance to Asia-Pacific security and one of its lesser-noticed components—academic engagement.

Why Is Air Diplomacy Increasingly Important?

While *air diplomacy* is a new term, the concept is not. It can be defined as a proactive approach to preventing conflict by employing airpower—broadly speaking—in nonkinetic operations as an instrument of national power. Air diplomacy is likely to become an increasingly important capability of the US Air Force in the years ahead. More important than declining defense budgets and an anticipated preference for noninterventionist policies are air diplomacy's positive contributions to the United States' broader economic and strategic interests.

As American interests shift to Asia—where distance to the continental United States is much bigger than that from Europe—air, space, and cyber power offer distinct advantages over more land-centric approaches that were preeminent in Cold War Europe. Because of airpower's inherent speed, flexibility, and limited footprint, air diplomacy offers the United States a cost-effective way of maintaining access to bases in Asia, assuring allies of the United States' continued commitment to the region, and building new relationships with countries that have not traditionally been an ally.

Because of the Asia-Pacific region's size, airpower is the best means of rapidly responding to events in the region, on water, on land, or in the sky. The speed at which air, space, and cyber assets can be employed gives the United States a distinct advantage—whether engaged in hard- or soft-power missions. If, as suggested, airpower is best suited to cover the vast distances of the Asia-Pacific region, air diplomacy is a capability well suited to maintaining alliances and access to bases in the region.

In other words, air diplomacy is an effective way of defending vital national interests, building partnerships, working to prevent conflicts, and expanding American influence. With responsibilities in the air, space, and cyber domains, the US Air Force has critical assets that provide the United States an unmatched level of flexibility. Using these assets for soft-power purposes allows the United States to build and strengthen relationships with friends and allies that may or may not possess equal capabilities.

Airpower also has an inherent characteristic that makes it particularly good for soft-power missions: flexibility. With few exceptions, Air Force assets are "dual capable," providing the United States with an aircraft, for example, that can deliver kinetic effects or serve as a platform to improve interoperability between the Air Force and a friendly nation. While the

examples of this dual-use capability are numerous, the underlying premise is simple: Airmen and the systems they operate can be used to deliver effects or build positive relationships between the United States and critical allies and friends.

Airpower, broadly speaking, has one more important attribute worthy of mention. It is far less likely to create the anti-American sentiment that often accompanies large numbers of boots on the ground. This last point is one of particular importance. While many allies were willing to accept a large American troop presence during the Cold War, the lack of a clear and present danger is making it more difficult for allied governments to justify the presence of American forces in their countries. Airpower's limited presence is a key attribute. Fewer American personnel permanently stationed at overseas main operating bases means fewer opportunities to create a negative view of the United States.

Practicing air diplomacy deliberately and coherently has the potential to effectively leverage the capabilities of the Air Force on behalf of the economic and strategic interests of the United States. However, success will depend on the Air Force making a concerted effort to employ its assets with long-term strategic objectives in mind.

There is one obvious reason why the further development of air diplomacy as an Air Force capability is debated. Some argue that it does not fall within the service's core mission. However, air diplomacy is a broad conceptualization of "building partnerships," currently one of the Air Force's 12 core functions.[1] As currently understood, building partnerships fails to encompass many Air Force missions that would fall within air diplomacy. Every service builds partnerships, but only the Air Force conducts air diplomacy—a point worthy of consideration.

Although the Air Force prepares in peacetime to fight the nation's wars, preventing war is equally desirable. Air diplomacy has the potential to play a critical role in this mission.

Where Does Air Diplomacy Fit on the Diplomatic Spectrum?

Generally associated with peaceful relations between states, diplomacy nevertheless comes in many forms. Note Elmer Plischke's definition of diplomacy, perhaps the most comprehensive one in the literature:

> Diplomacy is the political process by which political entities (generally states) establish and maintain official relations, direct and indirect, with one another, in pursuing their respective goals, objectives, interests, and substantive and procedural policies in the international environment; as a political process it is dynamic, adaptive, and changing, and it constitutes a continuum; functionally it embraces both the making and implementation of foreign policy at all levels, centrally and in the field, and involves essentially, but is not restricted to the functions of representation, reporting, communicating, negotiating, and maneuvering, as well as caring for the interests of nationals abroad.[2]

Keith Hamilton and Richard Langhorne describe diplomacy as simply "the peaceful conduct of relations amongst political entities, their principals and accredited agents."[3] States use diplomacy to promote economic interests (trade), protect citizens abroad, propagate culture and ideology, enhance national prestige, promote friendship, and isolate adversaries. Moreover, diplomacy is the least expensive way to exercise power in international affairs.[4] Above all, diplomacy is one of two elements of foreign policy, the other being war. Both diplomacy and war are means to an end rather than ends in themselves.

Dividing diplomacy into two broad groups—incentive-based and threat-based—may offer additional clarity. On the one hand, incentive-based diplomacy does not rely on the threat of force for success. Rather, it succeeds when states engaged in diplomatic negotiations reach a mutually beneficial agreement. On the other hand, threat-based diplomacy relies on coercive means, such as the threat of force or sanctions. For the United States, the use of incentive-based diplomacy is likely to increase as the Obama administration may well signal a clear shift away from the use of hard power. This policy will give the US Air Force an opportunity to play a greater role in the conduct of soft power or, more specifically, incentive-based diplomacy.

Diplomatic theory and practice suggest that states typically conduct 13 types of diplomacy, each one differentiated by the means employed and ends sought. Although the types of diplomacy vary to a significant degree, their methods and objectives are not necessarily mutually exclusive. A description of each type of diplomacy is provided to clarify corresponding examples of air diplomacy.

Incentive-Based Diplomacy

Traditional diplomacy relies on a professional diplomatic corps that applies "intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between the governments of independent states."[5] *Commercial diplomacy* focuses on securing trade agreements that promote the economic interests of individuals, corporations, and industries (public or private) believed to support national interests. It is designed to influence the policies of foreign governments with respect to regulatory decisions, foreign direct investment, and trade.[6] *Conference diplomacy*, dating back to the Concert of Europe, is most widely known for its reliance on international committees such as the United Nations.[7] *Public diplomacy*, according to Amb. Christopher Ross, "articulate[s] U.S. policy clearly in as many media and languages as are necessary to ensure that the message is received."[8] *Preventive diplomacy*, coined by Dag Hammarskjöld in the introduction to the *15th Annual Report* (1960) of the United Nations General Assembly, seeks to de-escalate tensions by negotiating a resolution to grievances through an impartial arbiter.[9] *Resource diplomacy* emphasizes the acquisition of four vital interests: food, energy, water, and minerals.[10] *Humanitarian diplomacy*, developed in the aftermath of World War II, is often designed to aid at-risk populations after a natural or man-made disaster by providing them food, shelter, clothing, and security.[11] *Protective diplomacy* aims to provide physical protection to citizens abroad or to groups of civilians (ethnic or religious minorities, tribal groups, etc.) that may face persecution or find themselves in harm's way.

Threat-Based Diplomacy

Totalitarian diplomacy is marked by its forceful, inflexible, and seemingly irrational nature—propaganda and deception are two of its primary tools.[12] As the example of North Korea illustrates, totalitarian diplomacy often takes the form of threats to members of the international community or to stability within the international system.[13] According to James Willard, *military diplomacy* is "the conduct by military diplomats of negotiations and other relations between nations, nations' militaries, and nations' citizens aimed at influencing the environment in which the military operates."[14] *Coercive diplomacy* applies the threat of violence in a manner and magnitude sufficient to persuade an opponent to cease aggression without requiring the actual use of violence.[15]

Anne Sartori best describes *diplomacy by deterrence* as "the use of a particular subset of language—deterrent threats—to attempt to convey the information that a state is willing to fight over a disputed issue or issues. Thus, deterrent threats are a form of diplomacy."[16] Former secretary of state Condoleezza Rice describes *transformational diplomacy* as a multinational effort to build and sustain democracy while developing well-governed and responsible states.[17]

This brief discussion of modern diplomacy provides the context for an examination of the US Air Force's specific contributions to the conduct of diplomacy. At the risk of stating the obvious, airpower is a dual-use capability equally adept at producing kinetic effects on the battlefield and preventing conflicts through air diplomacy.

How Does the US Air Force Conduct Air Diplomacy?

The US Air Force has an illustrious history of conducting public, humanitarian, military, commercial, traditional, preventive, coercive, and deterrence diplomacy. Since the earliest days of aviation, decision makers have employed airpower for diplomatic purposes—and that practice is unlikely to change. Thus, presenting air diplomacy as an option to policy makers bodes well for the Air Force in the future as it seeks to play a part in the success of American foreign policy. Some past examples of the diplomatic use of airpower illustrate the breadth of the Air Force's contribution to furthering the national interest.

Air Diplomacy: Public

When aviation enthusiasts within the Army first attempted to convince Congress and the American people that aviation deserved their support, they undertook a large-scale public diplomacy campaign. In perhaps the earliest example of air diplomacy, members of the fledgling Aviation Section sent its small fleet of aircraft on a successful cross-country tour in 1910, eventually leading to widespread support for military aviation.[18]

In the first three decades of military aviation, the Army's Aviation Section (1914–18), Air Service (1918–26), and Air Corps (1926–41) became adept at conducting diplomacy at home, as leading aviators such as Brig Gen William "Billy" Mitchell and Maj Gen Mason Patrick worked tirelessly to increase the budget and prestige of military aviation.

Well before the establishment of an independent air force, the Army Air Corps conducted what may well have been the first overseas air diplomacy mission. In an effort to showcase the new B-17, demonstrate American power, and counterbalance growing German and Italian influence in Latin America, six B-17s under the command of Lt Col Robert Olds flew a public diplomacy mission from the United States to Buenos Aires for the inauguration of Pres. Roberto Ortiz in February 1938.[19] This mission began the engagement that continues today between the US Air Force and Latin American air forces. Other such missions include regularly participating in international air shows, hosting international conferences, transporting foreign dignitaries and media, and regularly conducting "show the flag" flights to foreign air bases. Perhaps the 89th Airlift Wing carries out the most well-known of the US Air Force's public diplomacy missions by flying Air Force One, certainly one of the most widely recognized symbols of the United States in the world.[20]

Air Diplomacy: Humanitarian

Humanitarian diplomacy is a particular specialty of the US Air Force because of the speed with which it can respond to a crisis. For example, during the Berlin airlift (24 June 1948–12 May 1949), perhaps the best known relief operation in American history, the Air Force responded to a call to provide food, water, and fuel to the people of West Berlin. Initially led by the United States Air Forces in Europe, the operation included airmen from the United States, Britain, and the Commonwealth, supplying Berlin with more than enough necessities for survival. Operation Vittles managed to deliver 13,000 tons of fuel and provisions per day. A resounding success, the Berlin airlift highlighted the ability of the allies to provide humanitarian assistance on a massive scale while avoiding a conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union.[21]

More recent examples of the US Air Force's participation in humanitarian diplomacy include Operations Provide Hope (1992–94) in the former Soviet Union, Provide Promise (1992–96) in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Support Hope (1994) in Rwanda.[22] When a 7.9-magnitude earthquake struck a remote region of Sichuan Province, China, on 12 May 2008, two US Air Force C-17s deployed from Hickam AFB, Hawaii, and Elmendorf AFB, Alaska, with desperately needed relief supplies, arriving on 18 May.[23] Joint Task Force Port Opening provided relief to victims of the 2010 Haitian earthquake.[24] Because of its ability to deploy rapidly to locations around the

world, the Air Force is undoubtedly the United States' best tool for providing immediate assistance. These relatively low-cost diplomatic missions build goodwill with governments and citizens around the globe.

Air Diplomacy: Military, Commercial, and Traditional

In recent years, the Department of Defense and Air Force have formulated approaches to conducting a combination of military, commercial, and traditional diplomacy.[25] However, current efforts are not the first for the Air Force. During World War II, for instance, the Army Air Forces equipped Britain and the Allies with a number of aircraft and supplies under the auspices of the Lend-Lease Program (1941–45).[26]

Current efforts often fall within the "train, advise, and equip" realm of military diplomacy. Although the sale of weapons systems to foreign governments—through an embassy's Office of Defense Cooperation—often receives the most attention, this example of commercial diplomacy is limited in scope.[27] Traditionally, the US Air Force directs most of its effort toward training and assisting foreign air forces, as it does through the Inter-American Air Forces Academy (IAAFA) at Lackland AFB, Texas. By offering Latin American officers and enlisted airmen a variety of training courses in their native language, IAAFA assists in creating professional air forces in the region, strengthening ties between the United States and Latin America, and building relationships with future Latin American leaders.[28] Officers who attend IAAFA may also receive additional US professional military education, in programs which give the best officers of international air forces a stronger grounding in the skills necessary to lead a professional air force, one capable of operating jointly with the US Air Force. These officers also find themselves more adept at correctly reading the many cultural and linguistic nuances of US diplomatic signals.[29]

Air Diplomacy: Preventive

During Operations Provide Comfort and Northern Watch (1991–2003), the Air Force conducted preventive diplomacy by protecting Kurds in northern Iraq from Saddam Hussein's depredations. An overwhelming success, the mission achieved its objectives.[30] Similarly, in Operation Southern Watch (1992–2003), the Air Force denied Saddam's regime use of the air south of the 33rd parallel in an effort to protect the Shia from further atrocities. Although not completely successful in this regard, it did prevent the Iraqi air force from using airpower in the south.[31]

Air Diplomacy: Coercive

When incentive-based diplomacy cannot fulfill American objectives, the nation often calls upon the Air Force to conduct coercive diplomacy, which can sometimes straddle the line between diplomacy and force. Operations such as El Dorado Canyon (1986), Deliberate Force (1995), and Allied Force (1999) are examples of airpower serving both purposes.[32] During the Cuban missile crisis (1962), though, the Air Force conducted coercive diplomacy that did not blur the line between diplomacy and force. Soon after the crisis began in mid-October, the Strategic Air Command (SAC) deployed a large number of its strategic nuclear bombers to Florida and the southeast United States. At Florida Air Force bases such as Homestead, MacDill, and McCoy, B-47s sat wing tip to wing tip, waiting to drop their nuclear payloads on Cuba. Aware of SAC's redeployment of nuclear bombers, among other efforts, the Soviet leadership backed down.

Air Diplomacy: Deterrence

For more than 60 years, nuclear deterrence has played a central role in shaping the composition and culture of the Air Force.[33] By maintaining a fleet of nuclear-capable bombers and intercontinental ballistic missiles—along with the US Navy's submarine-launched ballistic missiles—the United States has successfully deterred nation-states from attacking the American homeland with conventional or nuclear weapons. Additionally, conflicts that may have otherwise escalated were kept in check by the fear that limited war could become nuclear.[34] Undoubtedly, the nuclear arsenal is a key tool of American diplomacy.

Why and How Does the US Air Force Conduct Academic Engagement with China?

In addition to using aerial platforms for air diplomacy, the US Air Force employs academic platforms to engage airpowers around the world. The Air Force understands that no matter how fast and far its planes may fly, they have limitations in performing diplomatic missions. Suspicion, mistrust, sovereignty concerns, and high operational costs are all considerations that can restrict US military aircraft from entering a country's air space. Academic engagement, however, does not have these limitations. This is particularly relevant with the development of US-China military-to-military relations.

Military relations between the United States and China have never been stable, despite frequent high-level visits between the countries, port calls by the US Navy, and occasional joint rescue exercises at sea. Often when a disagreement over a political or economic issue arises, the bilateral military relationship suffers. The hotline may be cut, official visits suspended, and conferences cancelled. This "on-again, off-again" relationship is very frustrating to both sides.[35] More seriously, such volatility increases the probability of unwanted military conflict and risks the fragile security balance in the Asia-Pacific region.

To defuse this risk, the nations' militaries should maintain a certain level of transparency. The United States and Asian partners have pressed China for greater military transparency to reduce mistrust. The Chinese, however, vehemently reject accusations of ambiguity.

Undoubtedly, both the United States and China have worked hard to build confidence with each other. In March 2007, while serving as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen Peter Pace visited Beijing. He observed that the Chinese clearly understand the US position on military transparency: "I think they believe a lot of what they are doing is a head nod in the direction of transparency on their part."[36] However, General Pace was by no means sure about how the Chinese military might move in that direction. A famous photo of General Pace standing on top of the Great Wall looking at it stretch into the fog symbolizes his view on the subject.[37]

Another high-ranking officer, former PACOM commander ADM Timothy Keating, made seven trips to Beijing, three while on active duty and four after retirement. Gravely concerned that a "misunderstanding" might lead to a "miscalculation" that evolves to "serious consequences" in his area of responsibility, Admiral Keating repeatedly urged the Chinese to improve transparency. However, at the 2011 West Coast Conference, the retired Admiral Keating bluntly defined the current US-China military-to-military relationship in two words: strategic mistrust.[38]

Mitigating strategic mistrust was also a priority of US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates when he traveled to Beijing in January 2011. Before leaving he told reporters, "I believe that kind of a [strategic] dialogue contributes, not only to greater understanding, but contributes to avoiding miscalculations and misunderstandings and miscommunications." He

added, “Continuing the strategic dialogue will encourage transparency between the two nations.”

The Chinese military, in an effort to improve its image, has released seven biennial national defense white papers. The latest was released on 31 March 2011. As Defense Ministry spokesman Geng Yansheng stated: this document indicates China’s willingness to “build confidence” and “should help the international community better understand China’s armed forces and advance trust and cooperation between China and the rest of the world.”[39]

On various occasions, Chinese military leaders have also refuted the notion that China is hiding the intensions of its military expansion. At the fourth China-US Relations Conference held in Beijing on 22 October 2009, Major General Qian Lihua vigorously defended Chinese behavior. He argued that while some countries, including the United States, are concerned about China’s military development, the strategic intentions of China are clear and transparent. In the most recent visit by Chinese General Chen Bingde, the general again assured the US audience: “I can tell you that China does not have the culture, and capability to challenge the United States.” [40]

Such public statements by the Chinese military leaders, along with the defense white papers, offer some insight into why China is quickly expanding its military power. Still, it appears that high-level talks, white papers, and public statements are having limited effect because mistrust continues running deep. In our view, only when exchange of information between China and other militaries reaches a certain depth will such mistrust fade. Clearly, a more enduring, stable, and efficient conduit should be explored for military communications.

Academic Engagement: A Stable Channel of Communication with China

Academic engagement can stabilize communication between the American and Chinese militaries. As part of its air diplomacy effort, in the summer of 2007 the US Air Force launched the Chinese edition of *Air and Space Power Journal* (*ASPJ in Chinese*). Although Sino-American military-to-military relations wax and wane, military professional journals have not ceased to publish, and they continue the dialogue. They serve as an enduring channel of communication in good and bad times. Several characteristics make professional journals, particularly *ASPJ in Chinese*, an ideal air diplomacy tool.

First, academic research is often the accumulation of serious scholarship, experience, knowledge, and observation. Authors express their views in a more measured, studied, and prudent tone than, for example, ad-hoc or spontaneous public speeches. Quality articles often contain original thought, creativity, and foresight, which inspire leaders to think outside the box when tackling seemingly deadlocked issues, such as those frequently faced in the Sino-American relationship.

Second, authors publish articles to be heard and to influence. Such influence may not be as eye-catching as an enthusiastic public speech or a high-level visit, but it often lasts longer and penetrates deeper. *Air and Space Power Journal*, for example, publishes high-quality articles that may be translated and republished by its five foreign-language editions, reaching a wide and diversified audience. Last year, *ASPJ in Chinese* published an original article on China's view of nuclear deterrence by a renowned Chinese military researcher. The paper was then republished in the English and Portuguese editions, garnering attention from many military professionals and decision makers.[41]

Third, professional journals value the meaning of professionalism and independence. The *Air and Space Power Journal*, as an outreach arm of the Air Force Research Institute (AFRI), faithfully executes AFRI's mission "to conduct independent research, outreach, and engagement that contribute ideas for enhancing national security and assuring the continuing effectiveness of the United States Air Force."[42] Editors are encouraged to uphold a high professional standard, making sure the papers they publish are appreciated and valued by the professional readers of the targeted regions.

Fourth, professional journals are venues for academic freedom protected by both China and the United States. Authors speak for themselves when writing in these journals. *ASPJ in Chinese* makes the disclaimer that "the thoughts and opinions expressed in these papers are the authors' alone and do not necessarily reflect those of the organizations they serve." This disclaimer separates the views of individual authors from the official positions of their organizations. Authors are responsible for what they write and receive the legal protection they need.

Because of the characteristics described here, professional journals are not easily swayed by the fluctuations of bilateral or multinational

relations, which are a striking feature of the Sino-American military relationship.

Academic Engagement: An Effective Means to Help Build Confidence with China

Academic engagement can effectively deepen the mutual understanding between the American and Chinese militaries. In the US military, publications are abundant. Every geographic and functional combatant command and almost every military base has its own website, open to a public audience. On most of these websites one finds links to many military publications, all of them online and in the public domain. Indeed, the US military publishes more literature than can be timely consumed by Chinese researchers. In this sense, it is fair to say that the US military has remained sufficiently transparent. By comparison, public access to Chinese military-related publications is far more limited. The few publications and websites the public can access stay on the level of either grand strategy or "popular science", lacking the necessary depth. Additionally, far more Chinese military researchers read English than their American counterparts read Chinese—a clear asymmetric language advantage" for China.

Still, the Air Force Research Institute created *ASPJ in Chinese* as a platform to encourage military academic engagement with China. Driven by habitual mistrust, some *ASPJ in Chinese* readers questioned AFRI's motivation. The truth is that all editions of *ASPJ* publish only scholarly articles, many of them directly translated from the English edition of *ASPJ* or other sister-service professional journals whose primary readers are Americans. These articles, just as those published in other social science disciplines, are intended to foster the professional exchange of ideas.

The first article published by *ASPJ in Chinese*, a message of greeting from Gen Steven Lorenz, then Air University's commander, explains well why the US Air Force decided to launch a Chinese edition for a currently less friendly audience in China:

> As with our English and other language editions, our goal [of publishing the Chinese edition of *ASPJ*] is to provide a forum for airmen to discuss topics of common interest, stimulate new ideas to better employ air, space and cyberspace power and promote military professionalism. This new edition reflects our view of the importance of our Chinese-speaking Air Force colleagues to the United States Air

Force. We hold you in great esteem and feel that we can benefit from your long history of military innovation and strategic thought.[43]

Fundamentally, the launching of Chinese edition of *ASPJ* is based on the belief that open academic exchange is a demonstration of self-confidence, mutual respect, objectivity, and forward thinking. All foreign language editions of *ASPJ* are part of the US Air Force's air diplomacy strategy and are designed to promote better understanding among the world's air forces—including China's.

A search of the web (outside China) provides few professional papers authored by Chinese military members. The problem is not that Chinese military professionals cannot write—they write well and prolifically and, if necessary, can translate their writing into English. The problem is that their articles are published only in domestic sources and viewed in closed circles. Information security concerns, strict discipline, and the lack of a coherent publication clearance system, among other things, seem to dissuade Chinese military professionals from publishing their articles abroad.

By contrast, the US military, with a well-established publication clearance mechanism, encourages the free exchange of ideas and academic engagement with other militaries. Indeed, the world's militaries have benefited tremendously from such efforts. The US military sets a convincing example for other militaries that it is possible to remain transparent while ensuring information security. It is our belief that, in the current digital world, staying behind opaque or tinted windows, reluctant to publish academic analyses of military issues in international forums, won't build international confidence in one's military intentions, since any claim of being transparent must be supported with substantial actions with a certain depth and breadth.

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, in his most recent visit to Beijing, sought "to lay the foundation for a lasting military-to-military relationship" through "creating clear and open channels for dialogue and having greater transparency into each other's militaries."[44] China's Minister of Defense, Gen Liang Guanglie, concurred, saying, "We both recognize that enhancing and maintaining dialogue and communication at all levels is of great significance in the development of military-to-military relations."[45] *ASPJ in Chinese* is, by every measure, a "clear and open channel" designed not only to flow the latest American views to China but also to publish unfiltered views from Chinese military professionals. To persuade the world that

China's military is transparent, Chinese defense analysts must have their voices heard regularly by the international community.

ASPJ in Chinese welcomes the contributions of Chinese military professionals. Although one journal may seem insignificant when considering the broad range of air diplomacy capabilities, and missions, in the case of Sino-American military-to-military relations, *ASPJ in Chinese* can have a significant impact in reducing strategic mistrust.

Conclusion

The wide range of soft-power missions regularly performed by airmen makes airpower an attractive option for building partnerships, assuring allies, and dissuading enemies. In the case of China, US air diplomacy must remain focused on building confidence with a country that many fear will one day become a peer competitor of the United States. Considering all the complexities in the Chinese-American military-to-military relationship, building confidence is a daunting task but well worth the effort. Air diplomacy, particularly in the form of academic engagement, has the potential to diminish the distrust and suspicion that currently permeates Sino-American relations. With defense spending likely to decline in coming years, the Air Force and the nation must look for cost-effective ways to engage the Chinese in a positive and meaningful way. Air diplomacy and the Chinese edition of *Air and Space Power Journal* provides such an option.

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