

Everyone Loves Drones, Especially China

Exploring the motivations and characteristics of Chinese UAV policy

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ABSTRACT

While the United States' unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) or drone program has received a range of domestic and international scrutiny, the nascent Chinese program remains relatively less examined. The following paper seeks to explore the motivations for and unique characteristics of the Chinese drone program. The author will argue that the Chinese approach has distinct parallels in terms of activity, legality, and popularity to the American program. The strategic benefits of modeling the Chinese program after the US go beyond technical capacity to leveraging domestic audiences. An important distinction lies at the domestic level where the appeal of the US use of drones is that it seeks to take military intervention out of the spot light while the Chinese program pursues a public display of its increasing capacity. The motivating puzzle for this study is why would China, which lacks a high level of command and control for its UAVs, create a distinctly public drone program. The expanding Chinese program is a domestic source of pride, arguably a key motivator for why the country has prioritized this sector of military development. Furthermore, domestic assertiveness translates into perceived foreign policy assertiveness in the case of the Chinese drone program. With a complicated and robust program, China's drones have flown under the radar but are having an increasing impact on international security.

Introduction: Following America's Lead?

On 9 September 2013, a Chinese unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) flew alarmingly close to Japan's airspace. The Chinese actions prompted a Japanese jet scramble in response to these "unusual incidents" and the Japanese restatement of sovereignty over the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku islands.¹ Tensions between the two nations increased on this one-year anniversary of Chinese nationalistic protest against Japan. Furthermore, the moment displayed Chinese regional power and willingness to use its improved military capacity as part of its territorial claims. The Chinese Ministry of National Defense spokesperson Geng Yansheng declared, shortly after the events in September, that if a Chinese drone were to be shot down by Japanese defense forces it would constitute an act of war.² The incident is indicative not only of regional power dynamics but also of the setting of norms for the use of drones. A nationalist domestic audience picked up the public Chinese statements through the press and social media. The assertive positions of China serve to send a signal to Japan of Chinese resolve on the territorial conflict at the same time as appealing to domestic audiences. In this context, the emergent Chinese drone program necessitates a deeper analysis of motivations and capacity.

Existing literature on Chinese military modernization focuses on several developments including increasing defense expenditure, asymmetrical approaches such as anti-access/area denial (A2/AD), and cyber capabilities.³ The debate concerning the

¹ "Japan scrambles jets for drone near disputed islands". Channel News Asia. 9 September 2013. Accessed online: <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/japan-scrambles-jets-for/807320.html> Michale Cole. "China Flies Bombers and Drone Near Japanese Skies". The Diplomat. 10 September 2013. Accessed: <http://thediplomat.com/flashpoints-blog/2013/09/10/china-flies-bombers-and-drone-near-japanese-skies/>

² Yansheng Geng. Speech by the Chinese Ministry of National Defense. 26 Oct 2013. Accessed online: <http://eng.mod.gov.cn/>

³ Robert O'Gorman and Chris Abbott. Remote Control War Unmanned Combat Air Vehicles in China, India, Israel, Iran, Russia and Turkey. Open Briefing. London, UK 2013; Ashton Carter and Jennifer Bulkeley. "America's Strategic Response to China's Military Modernization". Harvard Asia Pacific Review. Volume 9,

proliferation of drone technology falls along the lines of whether states can more or less easily develop a robust program.⁴ Less explored are the motivations for a nascent drone program in the context of China. While it is possible to argue that barriers exist to the creation of a drone program, the Chinese military has taken on the task with vigor.⁵ The Chinese drone program can be traced to the 1950s with support from the Soviet Union and was supplemented by retrieval of American drones from United States (US) intervention in Vietnam. The program went public during the 2006 Zhuhai airshow where several drone models were revealed. Since 2006, the program has increased in capacity to the point where, despite the opaqueness of Chinese defense spending, most experts consider it be the second most robust in terms of spending if lacking in capacity. As the US Department of Defense finds: “China is moving rapidly to catch up and perhaps ultimately overtake the West in this rapidly growing and increasingly important sector of aerospace and defense.”⁶ Given existing British and Israeli UAV technology, this development is significant. Analyzing the emergence of the program allows for a greater understanding of motivations of Chinese military modernization and can serve as a proxy to test claims of Chinese foreign policy ‘assertiveness’.⁷

The Chinese program currently lacks a high degree of capacity yet has a strong domestic nationalistic appeal. Despite informational limitations, the expanding Chinese

issue 1 Winter 2007; Ronald O’Rourke China Naval Modernization: Implications for US Navy Capabilities: Background and Issues for Congress. Congressional Research Services. 28 February 2014; Robert Ross. “The Rise of Chinese Power and the Implications for the Regional Security Order,” *Orbis*, vol. 54, no. 4 (Fall 2010).; Ashley Tellis. “Uphill Challenges: China’s Military Modernization and Asian Security”. Strategic Asia. National Bureau of Asian Research, 2012.

⁴ Andrea Gilli and Mauro Gilli “The Diffusion of Drone Warfare? Industrial, Infrastructural and Organizational Constraints”. Andreas Lorenz, Juliane von Mittelstaedt, and Gregor Schmitz. “Messengers of Death: Are Drones Creating a New Global Arms Race”. *Spiegel.de*. 21 Oct 2011; Horowitz. “The Diffusion of Military Power: Causes and Consequences for International Politics”. Princeton Univ. Press. Princeton: 2010.

⁵ Gilli and Gilli “The Diffusion of Drone Warfare? Industrial, Infrastructural and Organizational Constraints”.

⁶ Defense Science Board, Department of Defense. 2012. The Role of Autonomy in DOD System: 71.

⁷ Alastair Iain Johnston. How New and Assertive Is China’s New Assertiveness? *International Security*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Spring 2013), pp. 7–48

drone program prompts further investigation going beyond technical evaluation.⁸ First, the author will explore the range of motivations for allocating defense resources towards the drone program. The primary question is why would China prioritize a drone program. The prevailing literature on the proliferation of military technology tends to focus on security concerns and geopolitical aspirations with a need for an additional consideration of interest in prestige both internationally and domestically, the later of which is supported by this study. The findings indicate that a purely technical reading of the benefits of UAVs neglects motivating factors such as domestic nationalism even in the face of some negative popular opinion. The Chinese domestic audience supports developments in the drone program as a source of national pride in contrast to the general American public which see drones less as a prestige marker but more as an effective way to covertly counter terrorism.⁹ Whereas China puts its expanding drone program in public display through air shows and government news broadcasts, the appeal of drones for the US is that it makes military intervention less overt.¹⁰ The domestic divergence in *why* both states pursue similar policies on UAV usage displays an important variation.

Why Chinese drones?

The existing literature on the proliferation of military technology focuses on material and immaterial drivers. States will pursue military capacity when faced with a tenuous security situation. In those cases, states in dangerous regions of the world are

⁸ There is exists a substantial number of unclassified reports on Chinese UAV technical capacity including but not limited to Jane's Defence "All the World's Aircraft: Unmanned" database (<http://www.ihs.com/products/janes/defence/det-products/worlds-aircraft-unmanned.aspx>) and Ian Easton and LC Russell Hsiao. "The Chinese People's Liberation Army's Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Project: Organizational Capacities and Operational Capabilities". Project 2049. 11 March 2013.

⁹ Chris Cilliza. "The American public loves drones". Washington Post. 6 February 2013. Using polling data from Washington Post-ABC News survey: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/polls/postabcpoll_020412.html

¹⁰ This is not to say that domestic actors in both countries uniformly support the use of drones.

more likely to seek out new technologies. Although not necessarily contrary to the security driver, states may pursue new technologies due to their regime type. More militaristic or even autocratic nations will be interested in increased capacity. Complicating this conceptualization, drones could be seen as beneficial not only to autocracies (particularly those facing domestic threats) but also to democracies where collateral damage is minimized by the use of UAVs. Finally, states may pursue technologies for not purely material interests, such as domestic pride or international prestige. The development of drone capacity, therefore, impacts the existing research on motivations for state pursuit of military technologies.

The prevailing logic concerning the expansion of the Chinese drone program is that military actors would prioritize the program due to a permissive context along with the efficacy of developing the capacity. As Kreps and Zenko argue, “Countries adopt new military capabilities based on how other states have -- or have not -- already used them and on their perceived effectiveness.”¹¹ Following this logic, it is virtually inevitable that China would pursue a drone program. Furthermore, that program would be “invariably shrouded in secrecy and misinformation.”¹² Drone technical capacity does suit the Chinese tactical strategy; however, the program has been far from secret or opaque. The program seeks to send both domestic and regional signals of Chinese foreign policy assertiveness particularly on territorial and nationalistic areas of contestation.

Along with a domestic motivation of national pride, an expanding drone program complements other foci of Chinese military spending such as improved naval technology. Drones can benefit Chinese regional power aspirations particularly in terms of

¹¹ NOTE

¹² NOTE

surveillance and response to the US presence in Asia-Pacific through A2/AD. At the same time, the visible qualities of the drone program have already created tensions with other nations. As Erickson and Strange write: “with its leaders attempting to allay notions that China’s rise poses a threat to the region, injecting drones conspicuously into these disputes would prove counterproductive.”¹³ In terms of motivations, the Chinese drone program has discrete advantages for the A2/AD strategy, a mixed impact on regional relations, but strong domestic support.

There are significant parallels between the US and Chinese programs. Both countries make international legal arguments based on national security to support their use of drones.¹⁴ The Chinese program lacks the activity, particularly abroad, of its American counterpart; however, both militaries recognize the utility of drones. While the US drone program has an international focus targeting terrorism, domestic security concerns currently motivate the Chinese program. However, these domestic security concerns extend to contested territories, which give the approach more of an international quality than assumed. The focus of Chinese activity has been on the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands rather than South China Seas territorial dispute, but China has explored using drones in Southeast Asia operations. The domestic security motivation for a drone program lends support to the concept of Chinese preoccupation with securing its borders.¹⁵ Chinese motivations for a drone program extend beyond the technical usefulness of drones to domestic affairs both related to nationalism and internal security.

¹³ Erickson and Strange. “China has drones. What now?” 23 May 2013. Council on Foreign Relations. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/139405/andrew-erickson-and-austin-strange/china-has-drones-now-what>

¹⁴ Harold Koh. “How to End the Forever War?”. Oxford Union, Oxford, UK. 7 May 2013.

¹⁵ Alan Wachman. *Why Taiwan? Geostategic Rationales for China's Territorial Integrity*. Stanford University Press, 2007.

Chinese efforts mirror those of the US in terms of activity, legality, and popularity. China has already taken advantage of a range of drone capabilities even claiming several strikes by UAVs at the 2012 Zhuhai Air Show.¹⁶ Legally, both countries assert that drones can be used to protect national security even abroad. The popular support of drones in China is generally strong just as in the US. Despite this trend, there is a slightly dichotomous public relationship with drones in China. The majority of the Chinese population is opposed to drones but only in the context of US strikes.¹⁷ At the same time, there is significant nationalistic support for the Chinese drone program. These differences highlight two possible outcomes for the Chinese drone program: a more assertive usage of drones contrasting more restrained. China will be willing to be assertive in its use of drones; however, quotidian drone usage will be limited to surveillance. The area for concern would be rogue elements in the Chinese military and, notably, the range of actors with drone capacity within the military apparatus writ-large is significant.

Chinese Capacity and Motivations

The technical qualities and capacity of the Chinese drone program has received attention from several analysts¹⁸; however, a systematic study has yet to explore motivations for developing such a robust program. The common assumption is that China

M. Taylor Fravel. *Strong Borders, Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes*. Princeton University Press, 2008.

¹⁶ Marck McDonald. "Growth in China's Drone Program Called 'Alarming'" *International Herald Tribune*. 27 November 2012.

¹⁷ See Annex 2: Global public views on drone usage. "Global Opposition to U.S. Surveillance and Drones, but Limited Harm to America's Image". PEW Global Attitudes Project Report. 14 July 2014. <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/14/global-opposition-to-u-s-surveillance-and-drones-but-limited-harm-to-americas-image/>

¹⁸ Easton and Hsiao. "The Chinese People's Liberation Army's Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Project: Organizational Capacities and Operational Capabilities". Project 2049. 11 March 2013.

appreciates the increased surveillance abilities, strike capability, and limited military loss associated with drones. Along with this assumption, the overall modernization of the Chinese military places priority on improving technological capacity, thereby making a strong drone program salient. Beyond technical advantages, drones also fit well with the Chinese A2/AD strategy to counter the US presence in the Pacific. At the same time, the regional impact of a robust drone program is mixed as increased capacity comes with increased threat perception of China. In placing a priority on analyzing the operational qualities of the Chinese program, analysts have neglected the range of motivations beyond the technical benefits of a drone program, particularly that of national pride. Understanding Chinese motivations further link to a deeper conceptualization of Chinese foreign affairs particularly with respect to the way that domestic politics in China can shape major policy decisions.

The range of motivations for pursuing and prioritizing a drone program are not mutually exclusive nor is the set provided exhaustive. In reviewing key motivations, Chinese foreign policy goals can be envisioned as: balancing against US hegemonic power, increase relative power either overtly or covertly, achieve domestic/periphery security, and appeal to domestic national pride. Certainly, the activities associated with any power pursuit or domestic security could be characterized as also appealing to nationalism. The five motivations can be generalized with expected behavior extrapolated:

Motivation	Expected behavior and approach to drone program
Balance against US power	Drone program capacity geared to support A2/AD
Increase relative regional power covertly	Less disclosed program with focus on targeting regional actors' capabilities
Increase relative regional power overtly	Public drone program with a focus on targeting regional actors' capabilities
Domestic security and periphery	Activity limited to local level surveillance or strike capacity
Appeal to domestic national pride	Public drone program that displays technological innovation matching US

Despite the complementarity of many of these motivations and expected behaviors, there are three areas of note in the current characteristics of the Chinese drone program. First, the program has a significant public profile both domestically and regionally. Chinese air shows and news reporting regularly touts technological developments or demonstrations. Second, the drone program has already begun to explore activities beyond Chinese territory, expanding the scope of action to include the possibility of surveillance and even strikes abroad. While the areas considered for action are limited, these include areas of contestation such as the border with North Korea and areas in Myanmar. Finally, the research and development of the Chinese drone program directly compares itself to its American counterpart. There are some accusations of technological espionage that might account for the technical similarities but also the signal goes deeper to China seeking to become a peer competitor in terms of UAV capacity.

The three unique features of the Chinese drone program indicate a set of complex motivations for pursuing high levels of UAV capabilities. The public nature of the program can be linked to national pride. At the local level, there is a palpable obsession with drone technology. The popular user-generated video website in China Youku (similar to Youtube) has videos of drones with hits in the millions on short videos and over 24 million for a longer series on Chinese air and drone capabilities.¹⁹ Even the American platform of Youtube received a massive number hits over 250,000 when China flew its first Lijiang drone with the majority of comments coming from Chinese users.²⁰ On Youku videos, there have been copious vitriolic comments on an American drone video included: “America isn’t that strong at all...too soft and lagging behind China”.²¹ Similarly, another user stated that, “China will be stronger. Chinese win. Long live China”. Chinese twitter, Weibo, has a set of user profiles dedicated to promoting Chinese UAV programs and progress.²² Furthermore, there are an increasing number of air shows and demonstrations that are open to the Chinese public. The biannual Zhuhai show beginning in 2006 has been supplemented with air shows in Hong Kong, Tianjin, and Beijing.²³ The September 2014 Beijing aviation show touted the Chinese CH-4 drone as being superior to American Predator.²⁴ The most recent Tianjin Expo offered a model of inflatable drone that attracted domestic news and media attention.²⁵ The implications of such a public drone program for China include an appeal to national pride in military

¹⁹ http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNzg2NjIwNjAw.html

²⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nvQfrOgYjuc>

²¹ http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNzg2NjIwNjAw.html (“中国一定会强大。中国必胜。中国万岁”)

²² Sample: http://photo.weibo.com/3901927524/talbum/detail/photo_id/3712977095872860

²³ NOTE

²⁴ <http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?id=20140903000137&cid=1101>

²⁵ <http://www.cdsexpo.com/eng/index.html?partner=bd3>

technology innovation, regional signals about increasing capacity, and a statement of seeking to approach the level of American UAV capabilities.

The possibility of using drones abroad has been explored by China despite little to no actual missions, displaying a commitment to domestic security yet not inexorably limiting the program to only domestic use. The major areas of interest for Chinese drone operations include the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, North Korea, Myanmar, the region of Tibet, and, allegedly, India. Some commentators argue that Chinese interests are not geared to international usage: “few [Chinese] scholars, however, have publicly considered the use of drone strikes overseas.”²⁶ However, in early 2013 the Chinese public security bureau reported that it had considered using a drone strike to target the Myanmar-based drug cartel led by Naw Kham.²⁷ The China also regularly surveys its border with North Korea. While China does not nearly match the international character of the American drone program, it still has strategic interest in keeping open the possibility of use abroad.

Extending the international qualities of the Chinese drone program are the August 2014 multilateral exercises in Inner Mongolia through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. During these exercises, China used drone strikes to support other military actions. The Inner Mongolia demonstrations reveal China’s interest in combining drone technology on a host of operations with a focus on combating terrorism. As the government news outlet *Xinhua* reported, there was overwhelming popular support for

²⁶ Erickson and Strange.

²⁷ http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/21/world/asia/chinese-plan-to-use-drone-highlights-military-advances.html?_r=0

“Peace Mission 2014: China’s drone blasts off missile in drill”.²⁸ The exercise included troops from China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.²⁹ The multilateral quality of the activities point to a desire for regional approval of Chinese drone usage through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Furthermore, the areas targeted indicate a priority not only on domestic security but also initial forays into areas where the country that contains the target lacks capacity to counter or condemn Chinese actions.

In contrast, the amounts of Chinese drone usage in territorial areas contested by stronger powers is much less. The argument against using drones in these areas includes both strategic limitations and concerns from the Chinese side about setting norms of intervention in the region. As Erickson and Strange note, “China also fears setting a precedent for the use of drones in East Asian hotspots that the United States could eventually exploit.”³⁰ The Chinese drone program offers a host of complex considerations. These considerations indicate a desire for the UAV technological innovations to serve both further regional strategic interests and national pride.

Increasing capacity, disconcerting decentralization

The Chinese drone program has seen growing domestic attention and funding. Chinese defense spending has increased exponentially since the early 2000s and with it the drone program.³¹ Despite a multitude of defense sectors receiving more financial support, the Chinese navy, cyber force, and drone program are a primary focus of the

²⁸ Popularity of “Peace Mission 2014: China's drone blasts off missile in drill” garners huge attention as China with support of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (proxy for Chinese regional power) conducted missions in Inner Mongolia in late August 2014. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/photo/2014-08/27/c_133586659.htm

²⁹ “A total of 7,000 troops from China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have participated in the drill, including ground and air forces, special operations and airborne troops as well as several supporting roles.” (http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-08/26/c_126921067.htm)

³⁰ Erickson and Strange.

³¹ See Annex 1: Chinese military spending.

military modernization and development program. The exact division of support is impossible to ascertain. By focusing on these three areas, China achieves complimentary of its capacities as part of its A2/AD approach. Notably, a drone program supports the maritime security and strategy of China. The drone program is the least studied of these three despite being on display at regular air shows in China. While clear estimates are difficult to come by, experts agree that there are many players in the production of drones with a “highly competitive domestic market for UAV system design” and well over the 2011 total of 280 UAVs in service.³²

The capacity of the Chinese drone program alludes to the domestic security focus. As Easton and Hsiao argue, Chinese UAVs are directed towards missions such as “intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance; precision strike missions; electronic warfare missions; and data relay missions.”³³ The current focus of the program is on research and development to strengthen domestic security but also with an attention to surveillance of contested territorial areas.

The Chinese drone program compares its development to its American counterpart. While the US has a vastly superior program, there has been a surge in Chinese technical capacity. Retired major general and director of China Arms Control and Disarmament Association XU Guangyu “American UAV technology is very sophisticated. We can only envy their technology. Right now, we’re learning from them.”³⁴ The most publicized Chinese drone types have direct parallels to American models including but not limited to the CH-4 which is similar to the Reaper, the Wing Loong matching the Predator, and the Xianglong similar to RQ-4 Global Hawk. The

³² Easton and Hsiao. Pg 5

³³ Easton and Hsiao. Pg 5

³⁴ McDonald, Mark. NYTimes article: “Growth in China’s Drone Program Called ‘Alarming’”

Chinese stealth drone model is the Lijiang, which compares to the Northrup Grumman Corporation X-47B but with cheaper cost of an estimated 1 million USD.³⁵ To date, these models have primarily been operationalized for surveillance; however, they have the capacity to be outfitted for strikes. In fact, the Chinese media reports that one drone of the Wing Loong model had, “20 airborne missions and 15 missile firings.”³⁶

Beyond technical capacity seeking to mirror the US, the Chinese program is exploring selling its drones and technology. According to World Bank and SIPRI data, China became a net exporter of military technology/weapons in 2010.³⁷ Chinese arms sales have garnered significant criticism.³⁸ Exporting drones has not been a major element yet of Chinese military exports. However, the US Department of Defense finds that China has entered the market: “Israel, Britain, and the United States have pretty much had a corner on the global drone market, but the recent Chinese air show and a Pentagon report have exploded that notion.”³⁹ Furthermore, Chinese military exports are not as regulated as in many other major military exporters. As US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asia, Michael Schiffer notes, “China, with no such constraints, has made UAVs a new focus of military exports.”⁴⁰ As the Chinese program expands, the expectations are increased exports of drones and technology.

Despite the fact that there is an overall trend in Chinese defense spending towards a more robust drone program, there is less centralization when it comes to which sectors in the military apparatus have drone capacity. Most analysts presume a centrally regulated military structure in China; however, the drone program offers a mix of top-

³⁵ King, Byron. “A Drone of their Own: US Eyes China’s Drone Program”.

³⁶ McDonald, Mark. NYTimes article: “Growth in China’s Drone Program Called ‘Alarming’”

³⁷ See Annex 1: Chinese military spending.

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³⁹ McDonald, Mark. NYTimes article: “Growth in China’s Drone Program Called ‘Alarming’”

⁴⁰ McDonald, Mark. NYTimes article: “Growth in China’s Drone Program Called ‘Alarming’”

down financial support but significant variation in dispersal of the actual drones. The decentralization of the Chinese drone program operates on several levels. First, research and development comes from wide range of domestic companies. The decentralization of research keeps the program opaque at the same time as providing an over-abundance of relevant actors and . There are several key institutions, notably the Xi'an Aero Technical University, that oversee official government drone research, but these rely on contributions from a range of domestic companies that are less monitored.

The decentralization of the Chinese UAV program additionally speaks to the domestic audience motivation although less at the popular level and more attributable to individual military commanders. The number of branches of the Chinese military that are exploring either independently or collectively drone capabilities matches decentralization on the supply side in the Chinese drone program. Each area of the armed forces in China has some level of UAV technology.⁴¹ In many ways, the nationalistic motivations for a drone program play out in this decentralization. Each head of a military regional or functional unit has pursued discrete efforts to gain UAV capacity. Neglecting the benefits of a centralized program beyond the aforementioned centralized research efforts in Xi'an display the jingoism of the various military apparatuses.

Legal aspects of the Chinese drone program

In keeping with the literature on the legal aspects of US use of drones, the author finds that norms on drone strikes in foreign countries have been established that may present issues for the US in the future.⁴² Norm setting of the American drone program

⁴¹ Easton and Hsiao.

⁴² David Knoll. "Will America's Addiction to Drone Strikes Backfire?" The Diplomat. 23 October 2012. <http://thediplomat.com/2012/10/ok-drone-the-global-proliferation-of-uavs/>

could have significant consequences with respect to China particularly in the context of China combating its own perceived terrorist threats. Erickson and Strange argue that China will remain “cautious” in its use of the drones due to a priority on protecting the norm of national sovereignty.⁴³ A contending argument based on the same concept of protecting sovereignty can be made that China would be open to using drone strikes to secure its periphery or protect citizens from terrorist threats abroad. The fact that China has already explored the option to strike in a foreign country challenges this assumption. Using the mix of Chinese behavior in the context of the drone program, the author argues that the assertiveness of Chinese foreign policy is debatable but perceptions of assertiveness are strong. The drone program offers an example where perceptions of assertiveness, regardless of intention, can create tensions.

What gets missed in the debate is that the norms have already been set. In this case, the question is whether China would challenge its own hallmark of non-intervention. Answer to this appears to be mixed as China has considered the use of drones on foreign soil (Myanmar) but not taken action yet. Despite a lack of empirical evidence of Chinese usage, the legal context has already been set. Chinese media proclaims that the, “Chinese drone program and testing in line with international law and practice.”⁴⁴ Notably the only areas beyond domestic regions and claimed territory that have been discussed as targets are near or within ‘fringe’ states such as North Korea and Myanmar.

Conclusion: Chinese drones and major debates

⁴³ Erickson and Strange. “China Has Drones. Now What?”. Council on Foreign Relations. 23 May 2013.

⁴⁴ Global times: <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/820484.shtml#.Um3Tufmsim4>

1) Chinese foreign policy assertiveness; 2) not just about democracies as China also has domestic audience costs; 3) posing problems without catching up (drones present some major issues)

Assertiveness

Johnston describes assertiveness as “a form of assertive diplomacy that explicitly threatens to impose costs on another actor that are clearly higher than before”.⁴⁵ Assertive because of domestic motivations (national pride) not necessarily because of desire to have an assertive foreign policy which leads to perception of assertiveness regardless of foreign policy intent

Drones and signaling Chinese resolve in the region

Assertiveness (Ross says China has become assertive but Johnston says not); really not just about assertiveness but also perception of assertiveness; not fully opaque program makes it even worse with increased threat perception; nature of the program. Even without assertiveness, the perceptions of belligerent Chinese behavior.

Chinese foreign policy as assertive but not for international reasons; debate on sovereignty preserving versus protecting borders.

Easton argues that the expanding Chinese program presents a significant and immediate challenge.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Johnston, pg 9.

⁴⁶ Easton and Hsiao. “The Chinese People’s Liberation Army’s Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Project: Organizational Capacities and Operational Capabilities”. Project 2049. 11 March 2013.

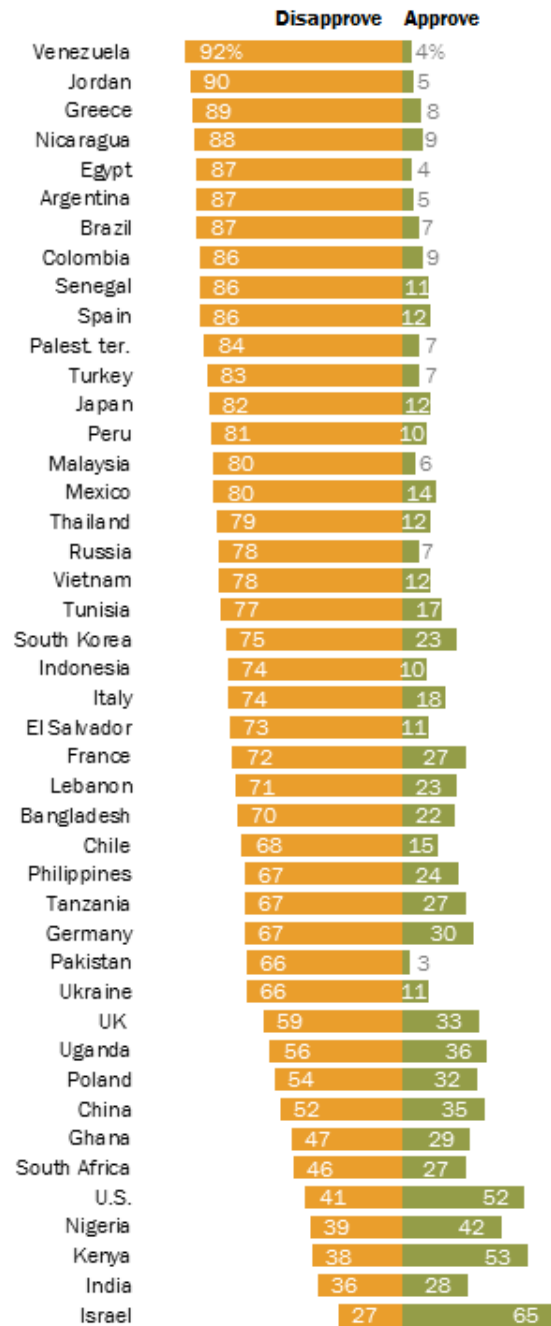
*Annex 1: Chinese military spending*⁴⁷

Year	Military expenditure	Military expend (% of GDP)	Armed forces (% of labor)	Armed forces personnel	Arms exports	Arms imports
2004	\$331,000,000,000.00	2.07	0.50	3755000.00	\$381,000,000.00	\$3,291,000,000.00
2005	\$379,000,000,000.00	2.05	0.49	3755000.00	\$315,000,000.00	\$3,519,000,000.00
2006	\$452,000,000,000.00	2.09	0.47	3605000.00	\$625,000,000.00	\$2,883,000,000.00
2007	\$546,000,000,000.00	2.05	0.38	2885000.00	\$466,000,000.00	\$1,693,000,000.00
2008	\$637,000,000,000.00	2.03	0.37	2885000.00	\$581,000,000.00	\$1,992,000,000.00
2009	\$764,000,000,000.00	2.24	0.38	2945000.00	\$1,077,000,000.00	\$1,453,000,000.00
2010	\$835,000,000,000.00	2.08	0.38	2945000.00	\$1,419,000,000.00	\$943,000,000.00
2011	\$952,000,000,000.00	2.01	0.38	2945000.00	\$1,342,000,000.00	\$1,020,000,000.00
2012	\$1,059,000,000,000.00	2.04	0.38	2993000.00	\$1,704,000,000.00	\$1,631,000,000.00
2013	\$1,168,000,000,000.00	2.05	\$1,837,000,000.00	\$1,534,000,000.00

⁴⁷ World Bank Data. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS>

*Annex 2: Global public views on drone usage*⁴⁸

Widespread Opposition to Drones



Source: Spring 2014 Global Attitudes survey, Q63.

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⁴⁸ PEW Global Attitudes. <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/14/global-opposition-to-u-s-surveillance-and-drones-but-limited-harm-to-americas-image/>