

CHINA AND THE FUTURE OF HA/DR OPERATIONS IN GREAT POWER COMPETITION

18 October 2021

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Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the interviewees for graciously donating their time and providing deep and learned insight into how to think about this paper's topic. Thanks also go to the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's China Strategic Focus Group and the U.S. Naval War College's China Maritime Studies Institute for their early guidance and assistance.

This research was made possible by a grant from the Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies at the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, Brown University as part of the Carnegie Corporation of New York-funded project *Civilian-Military Coordination in Humanitarian Response: Expanding the Evidence Base*.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Navy, the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

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Introduction

The People's Republic of China (PRC) has set a national strategy for "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" by 2049.¹ In support of this strategy, China is investing heavily to develop the diplomatic, informational, military, and economic (DIME) capabilities necessary to realize its strategic goals. One area likely to be an element of China's great power competition (GPC) strategy is improving its ability to project influence via humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR) operations. HA/DR operations are a blend of DIME elements, and since World War II, the PRC has watched as the world largely defaulted to the US and other Western nations with the global means necessary to lead such complex operations.

Although the US and much of the world are studying and assessing what impact China's rise will have on their nation's future, little thought has been given to how HA/DR operations might change if China does what is expected and asserts itself in this area. For example, would China try to mimic the US's worldwide HA/DR reach or limit its efforts solely to their periphery? Would China operationally cooperate in overlapping China/US areas of interest (e.g., a disaster in the Philippines or Taiwan)? In the future, what will the PRC's approach to HA/DR look like? This paper seeks to define the likely PRC approach to future HA/DR operations and their implications. Our findings can serve as the foundation for developing an appropriate US response to the coming changes.

This paper is based on a review of the HA/DR literature and interviews with 14 subject matter experts. The interviewees represented a broad perspective on the issues surrounding China and HA/DR, including experts from the military, diplomatic, academic, and relief communities. The paper's key points and conclusions are our interpretation and distillation of these inputs.

In discussing HA/DR, one consideration to keep in mind is that China defines humanitarian assistance terms differently from most of the international community and the West. For example, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) stated:

*"Humanitarian assistance seeks to save lives and alleviate suffering of people affected by a crisis, be it a natural disaster or conflict. It focuses on short-term emergency relief, to provide basic life-saving services that are disrupted due to the crisis. Humanitarian assistance is needs-based, with the sole purpose to save lives and reduce human suffering that originated from a crisis."*²

UNOCHA goes on to point out that HA "is distinct from development programmes." The term disaster relief is closely related, with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) defining it as "immediate, life-sustaining assistance provided to disaster victims."³

For the PRC, the term closest to the international meaning of HA and DR is 'emergency humanitarian aid' to mean 'the short-term provision of food, goods, materials and personnel in times of emergency outside of China.'⁴ As will be discussed in the section on **PRC Approach**, the PRC specifically emphasizes "development programmes" that UNOCHA excludes from

humanitarian assistance efforts. Therefore, unless highlighted, when the term "HA/DR" is used in this paper, we mean the more common Western/international meaning of the term.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows:

PRC's View of the Competition Ahead. This section describes the PRC's view of the competitive future and will help the reader understand why they approach HA/DR the way they do and how it may evolve in the future.

PRC Approach. This section describes the PRC's current approach to HA/DR and its growing resources and capabilities. Several operational examples of the PRC on the HA/DR world stage are also discussed.

Outlook. This section summarizes key points where we believe the PRC is headed in HA/DR over the coming 10 to 15 years.

Implications. This section summarizes the key implications of the PRC's rise on the future of HA/DR operations.

Annex, Interview Methodology. This annex describes the interview methods used to support this paper's research.

PRC's View of the Competition Ahead

President Xi and the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) clear ambition to elevate the PRC into global power status has precipitated a competition with the United States that is having global repercussions. However, the nature of this competition is hotly debated. Is the PRC simply seeking preeminence within an Indo-Pacific sphere that leaves the existing global order largely intact, or are their goals more global and revolutionary? Experts with extensive diplomatic, academic, and military experience with the PRC were interviewed for this research and presented a diverse perspective on this question.

For this paper, we take President Xi's view as an underlying assumption in our research. In a January 2013 speech not fully revealed until 2019, President Xi stated in an address to the CCP Central Committee that:

"There are people who believe that communism is an unattainable hope, or even that it is beyond hoping for—that communism is an illusion. ... Facts have repeatedly told us that Marx and Engels's analysis of the basic contradictions in capitalist society is not outdated, nor is the historical-materialist view that capitalism is bound to die out and socialism is bound to win. This is an inevitable trend in social and historical development. But the road is tortuous. The eventual demise of capitalism and the ultimate victory of socialism will require a long historical process to reach completion."⁵

President Xi describes the competition with the West in global terms - not spheres of influence - and views capitalism as antithetical to communism. If the PRC is seeking Western capitalism's demise, the competitive stakes are about creating an alternative world order. In the same January 2013 address to the CCP Central Committee, Xi directed the party leadership to learn the advantages of capitalism to strengthen the socialist position and broaden the PRC's national comprehensive power, resulting in the PRC being dominant against the West.⁶ A key point of contention is whether President Xi is describing a natural evolution in the capitalist/communist competition or is he actively seeking to impose the changes he foresees and desires? For this paper's purposes, it does not matter except for three key factors that we assume about the future of HA/DR within the US/PRC competition:

- The competition is global
- PRC supports the demise of capitalism
- The competitive stakes are ultimately zero-sum

For the PRC to achieve global power status, continued expansion of their economic and military strength is required. A key element of its plans centers around the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a robust plan for economic interconnectedness via land, sea, and digital lines of communications. The PRC presents BRI as an attempt to share China's financial success with other developing nations.⁷ Although the focus of BRI is South-South cooperation⁸, to date, 140 nations have signed onto BRI, encompassing over 70% of the world's sovereign nations and two-thirds of the global population.⁹ There is great debate about the nature and motivation behind the PRC's BRI effort (ranging from beneficial to nefarious) and is likely to become a key aspect of the emerging competition with the US. Irrespective of their motivations, BRI matters to the future of HA/DR because it will significantly expand the PRC's interests and infrastructure (e.g., ports, airports) across the globe – and consequently, their likelihood in participating in HA/DR operations much further from their periphery.

PRC Approach

The PRC's State Council Information Office published a January 2021 White Paper, *China's International Development Cooperation in the New Era*. In it, the PRC stated that international development cooperation refers to:

*"... China's bilateral and multilateral efforts, within the framework of South-South cooperation, to promote economic and social development through foreign aid, humanitarian assistance, and other means."*¹⁰

From the PRC perspective, HA/DR falls under the definition of *international development* and includes emergency humanitarian aid in response to natural disasters or public health emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic. While this supports UNOCHA's focus on "establishing and maintaining access to affected people,"¹¹ China's approach differs significantly from the West's concept of humanitarian assistance, which tends to be event-driven and shorter-term. It also appears that by the PRC's official guidance, BRI should be viewed, in part, as a key component to their approach to HA/DR. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, if BRI is a key element of the PRC's competition with the West, will the PRC's interpretation of HA/DR be guided by UNOCHA's four core humanitarian principles of "humanity," "neutrality," "impartiality," and "independence?"¹²

A common theme of PRC HA/DR operations is the preference for working bilaterally with partner nations, and consequently, disinterest for coordination mechanisms and norms. Interviewees with first-hand experience in international relief operations with the PRC support this view as well as many academic and news articles on the topic. One observer concurred with this assessment, pointing out that China is not a member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC), Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative, or UNOCHA's Donor Support Group. She explained China "has been careful to maintain some distance between itself and the structures of the international humanitarian system."¹³ She also adds about China:

*"In the context of complex emergencies, however, the country remains uneasy about the norms of the current international humanitarian system, and sometimes shows signs of becoming a 'norm modifier', rather than necessarily framing its humanitarian policies in line with the traditional principles of the international humanitarian system. In particular, it is a strong proponent of the role of host governments in the provision of humanitarian assistance, and of the importance of development assistance in reducing poverty and humanitarian need."*¹⁴

Recent official CCP documents (such as the PRC's 2019 Defense White Paper) have described a more prominent role for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in overseas HA/DR operations. An example of the PLA's prominence is its role in China's internal fight against COVID-19. President Xi listed the PLA first among Party heroes who have conquered the virus in Wuhan.¹⁵ As with other militaries, the PLA has used HA/DR events as a practical opportunity to build working relationships and political capital, support South-South cooperation, and improve warfighting-related skills (e.g., such as combat medicine, expeditionary logistics and command and control). The PLA has promoted their successful role, highlighting the experience "to measure and improve the PLA's combat effectiveness in battlefield medicine" and expand their role in China's military diplomacy.¹⁶

However, there appears to be a distinction from the international norm with respect to oversight. Although HA/DR is typically a heavily military effort because of the expeditionary nature of the operations, when the West assists a foreign country, there will be a civilian or international entity overall responsible for the relief effort. In China, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) is purported to have an oversight role similar to the US's USAID. However, like much of China's HA/DR efforts, the CIDCA's role is not clear, and according to one of our interviewees, it was "hard to imagine a ministerial-level entity overseeing a PLA disaster-relief mission. The Party's Army is incalculably higher in the pecking order."¹⁷ The CCP's recent advocacy of the PLA's role in fighting COVID-19 bolsters this view.

Placing the PLA in the lead for HA/DR operations without true civilian oversight (other than the CCP) makes it more likely that political/military objectives will compromise humanitarian decision-making. The militarization of Mischief Reef by the PRC could be interpreted as an early example of this concern.

Mischief Reef is located off the Philippines' Palawan Island in the South China Sea and within that country's exclusive economic zone (EEZ). The PRC claims this area as their territory as well. In 1995 and without advance notice, the PRC erected a Chinese fishermen's sanctuary atop Mischief Reef and placed a Chinese flag over the structure.¹⁸ The explicit PRC message to the international community was that this was a humanitarian measure to protect Chinese fishermen from storms in the South China Sea. However, over time and a series of land reclamation projects, the reef became militarized and now supports an airfield suitable for fighter jets, surface-to-air missiles, and radar systems.¹⁹ A similar scenario has been recently playing out at Whitsun Reef.²⁰ Given the PRC's decades-long campaign to establish essentially the entire South China Sea as "indisputably" theirs,²¹ it is fair to ask whether the 1995 events at Mischief Reef were ever about humanitarian issues. The 2013 Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, the 1999 earthquake in Taiwan, and the COVID-19 response are a few additional examples that similarly point to the likely compromise of the primacy of humanitarian objectives in PRC HA/DR.

For over three decades, the PRC has invested heavily in military capabilities to achieve its objective of becoming a "world-class military" by 2049.²² The CCP does not define "world-class military," but it implies being equal or superior to the US military. As PLA capabilities expand and improve, their presence in HA/DR operations has also expanded and improved, enabling an improved ability to project international influence beyond its periphery – particularly in the maritime domain.

Like other branches of the PLA, the PLA Navy (PLAN) has grown significantly. The PLAN is now the world's largest maritime fleet capable of supporting a broad set of missions.²³ The quality of the units has also significantly improved. As with the other service branches, the PLAN is focused on the "active defense" of China and its periphery, and on protecting its expanding regional (and eventually global) economic interests. Similar to Western military forces, the improved PLA capabilities are well-suited for HA/DR operations, and the PRC has started to employ them in this role.

Prominent PRC HA/DR Operations

To provide insight into how the PRC may operate in the future, below are a few prominent examples of PRC HA/DR (or HA/DR-related²⁴) operations in the 21st Century (not a comprehensive list).

Libya. In February 2011, the Libyan revolution against the Gadhafi regime saw violent protests erupt throughout the nation.²⁵ The deteriorating security situation triggered the PRC's largest non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO) to date to protect the 75 Chinese-operated businesses and their employees trapped by the conflict.²⁶ The PLAN diverted a 4,000-ton missile frigate from its anti-piracy escort mission in the Gulf of Aden to the Libyan shores to oversee the operation and protect the international vessels the Chinese government had enlisted to extract the Chinese nationals. While the PLAN frigate did not physically evacuate Chinese citizens, it represented the first overseas deployment of a PLAN ship to support a civilian evacuation. The operation was narrowly focused, seeking only to secure Chinese citizens and not intervene in the developing humanitarian disaster created by the Libyan war. In the end, the NEO successfully evacuated 35,680 Chinese citizens (by air, sea, and ground platforms) and showcased the PRC's ability to conduct fast-paced, long-range, multi-service operations.²⁷

Philippines. In November 2013, Super Typhoon Haiyan hit the province of Leyte in the Philippines, resulting in the deaths of over 6,300 citizens.²⁸ Despite a global disaster relief operation flowing significant relief forces and millions in financial aid to assist the Philippines, China initially contributed only \$100,000 to the effort via the Chinese Red Cross. Similarly, one month earlier, the PRC donated only \$80,000 to the Philippines in support of relief efforts associated with a severe magnitude 7.1 earthquake.²⁹ The extent of financial support contrasted sharply with China's \$5 million in aid just one month earlier to Pakistan following a magnitude 7.7 earthquake. After severe domestic and international criticism, China reversed course and pledged additional aid to the Philippines' Typhoon Haiyan relief effort, including deploying their hospital ship Peace Ark (even though, according to an interviewee who participated in the relief operations, the medical relief was no longer needed). Many suspect that China's anger towards the Philippines' filing an early 2013 arbitration case with a UN tribunal against China's jurisdiction claims in the South China Sea can explain the contrast in initial support.³⁰

Yemen. After a Saudi-led coalition invaded Yemen in March 2015, the PRC responded to the crisis facing Chinese companies and their employees in Yemen by deploying its PLAN frigates operating in the western Indian Ocean to the Port of Aden. During the "humanitarian rescue mission," the PLAN transported almost 600 Chinese nationals and 225 foreign nationals from ten nations to safety in Djibouti. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement confirming it was the first time foreign governments directly reached out to the Chinese government for help evacuating their citizens from a danger zone.³¹ And similar to Libya in 2011, the PLA operation was conducted far from the homeland. The unprecedented move also supported the PRC narrative that its presence in the western Indian Ocean was benevolent.

Nepal. In April 2015, a severe 7.8 magnitude earthquake hit Nepal, causing nearly 9000 deaths. With expertise gained from earthquakes in their homeland, China responded quickly with significant assets to assist in the relief effort (assets included fixed-wing and vertical lift aircraft, PLA troops, search and rescue team, medical assistance teams).³² The PLA also placed representatives within the military-to-military coordination center in

accordance with international disaster relief best practices. (This center is designed to encourage proper coordination of the multinational effort.) However, the PLA initially did not coordinate with other nations at the practical level – except bilaterally with the Nepalese Army. According to US participants in the relief operation, when the key supporting countries were assigned sectors of responsibility (US, India, PRC), the PLA "treated their sector like sovereign territory, rather than an area where they would lead the coordination of response." After credible claims by civilian aid organizations that their needs were not being met within the PLA sector, the US had to appeal directly to Beijing to intervene with their PLA commanders in Nepal to enable increased relief support.³³

COVID-19. During the 2020/21 global pandemic, the PRC aggressively moved to exploit its strengths in manufacturing and logistics to provide aid to nations across the globe. After initially emphasizing the delivery of personal protective equipment (PPE), Chinese-developed vaccines later became a focus. The PRC has been aggressive in both its relief efforts as well as its global messaging. However, despite PRC denials, there have been numerous reports of the PRC using the pandemic to further their global position and denigrate the efforts of others to include: a disinformation campaign against Western vaccines called out by the European Union³⁴, pressuring countries on the diplomatic status of Taiwan (e.g., Paraguay, Guyana),^{35 36} pressuring countries on the status of Huawei within their national networks (Brazil)³⁷, silencing of Ukraine's criticism of PRC human rights abuses,³⁸ and theft and embargo of vaccine intellectual property from Canada over a diplomatic spat.^{39 40} The PRC has denied using "vaccine diplomacy" to advance its national agenda, instead, labeling its vaccine efforts as humanitarian-minded.

Key Take-Aways on PRC's Approach

As mentioned earlier, our research and interviewees presented a broad interpretation of the PRC and its words and actions. Below summarizes our view on how to characterize the PRC's approach to HA/DR:

- Supports the "great rejuvenation." CCP employs HA/DR in accordance with its vision for winning the global competition with the West. Political/military considerations trump humanitarian considerations in PRC decision-making. However, PRC can be sensitive to international criticism. If there is sufficient pushback on roles/motives that negatively alters their original political calculus, the PRC may adjust their approach to an HA/DR event (e.g., Super Typhoon Haiyan in 2013).
- PRC HA/DR is different. The PRC's concept of HA/DR falls within their view of international development. Consequently, PRC HA tends to favor longer-term and large-scale (national scale) in contrast to the West's crisis-associated, shorter-term, smaller scale (individual-focused) efforts.
- PLA playing a more prominent role. Due to the prominence of the PLA in the hierarchy of the PRC (compared to the Western norm), the PLA plays a more dominant role in the oversight and execution of HA/DR. The importance of military diplomacy also appears to be growing in importance to the CCP.
- Play to their strengths. The PRC has demonstrated proficiency in conducting complex HA/DR operations at home and has employed some of their unique capabilities (e.g., manufacturing base, command economy, command society) for operations abroad (e.g.,

COVID-19, Libya NEO). Consequently, the PRC approach to HA/DR will often differ from the standard international approach.

- Bilateral approach. As with other areas of engagement (e.g., sovereignty issues in the South China Sea, anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden), the PRC seeks to engage bilaterally with the host nation in HA/DR and isolate itself from the international standard of multinational cooperation/coordination. This approach allows the PRC to preserve its leverage with the host nation and avoid appearing to be subservient to any entity but can also sub-optimize the humanitarian effort (e.g., in 2015 Nepal).

Outlook

If present trends continue, the PRC's increased economic might and political influence will enable China to possess the single largest and most capable set of assets to respond to natural disasters – across the DIME. Commenting on improving management in the PRC's 2021 whitepaper on international development, China declares that it has:

"... optimized its rapid response mechanism for emergency humanitarian aid to ensure prompt and effective assistance, and strengthened supervision and evaluation to improve the overall efficiency of its foreign aid."⁴¹

The PRC has emphasized an increasing role for the PLA in HA/DR, and President Xi has made clear how he sees the future of the PLA in his CCP centennial speech in 2021, saying:

"We will elevate our people's armed forces to world-class standards so that we are equipped with greater capacity and more reliable means for safeguarding our national sovereignty, security, and development interests."⁴²

The question for the West/international community is to what end these resources and capabilities will be employed in the HA/DR realm?

Key Take-Aways on PRC's Outlook

The below summarizes the key points from our study and interviews on where we think the PRC is likely to go in the coming 10 to 15 years.

- Expanding global interests will increase activism. As PRC power and influence expand globally, their interests will grow as well. Consequently, we can expect that the PRC will aggressively defend their growing global interests, at times far from the homeland (e.g., developmental interests via BRI). One element of this activism will be increased willingness to engage in HA/DR operations.
- Improved lines of communications and networks. In support of the PRC's global commercial and military expansion, a significantly improved global infrastructure (e.g., ports, airfields, railways, communications) will emerge capable of supporting complex, large-scale HA/DR operations. PRC's improved LOCs and more capable forces will translate into enabling assets to arrive on-scene first at the point of disasters - a powerful tool in determining operational leadership and messaging. The growing global Chinese diaspora is also expected to become an increasingly important advanced support/facilitator network for incoming PRC aid actors, including NGOs.⁴³
- Seek leadership role. As China's ability to project power grows, the PRC will attempt to supplant the West/international leadership role (particularly the US) in HA/DR operations - first along its periphery, then expanding outward along the LOCs they are now building. As a result, cooperation with the PRC in HA/DR operations will become more difficult and complex politically. Nevertheless, the PRC will eventually assert its leadership in areas of interest due to their early arrival and possession of a preponderance of the relief assets.

- Prohibit interference. When the PRC feels they have dominant power and key interests are in play, they will likely exclude outside HA/DR resources that they believe compromise their interests (an early hint of this approach was in 1999 when Russia was not granted overflight rights for HA/DR relief assets attempting to assist Taiwan following a major earthquake).⁴⁴
- Attempt to dominate HA/DR organizations and thought. As their power grows, we expect the PRC to resolve their "unease" with the international/NGO humanitarian system by attempting to rewrite relief standards and processes such that they better conform with CCP interests.

Implications

The elevation of a new power with global reach, extensive resources, and a worldview fundamentally opposed to the existing global order will challenge how future HA/DR operations are built and executed. As mentioned earlier in this paper, the rise of China and what it means for the world is hotly debated. But in the HA/DR sphere, the PRC is already demonstrating a troubling trend of disregarding OCHA's core humanitarian principles of "humanity," "neutrality," "impartiality," and "independence."⁴⁵ Is this due to inexperience and insecurity - and transitory - or is this the future?

What is clear is that the lifting of hundreds of millions of people out of poverty over the past few decades and the remarkable gains in resources becoming available for HA/DR operations is also presenting a great opportunity. How should researchers and decision-makers think about this challenge to build an effective response that creates the best chance for positive outcomes? As a first step, we believe the following key implications need to be researched and carefully considered.

- Great opportunity and great risk. China's economic and military rise represents a significant expansion of the reservoir of resources that could be applied for the global good through HA/DR operations. However, the risks emanating from the great power competition and the numerous HA/DR-related (and disaster-prone) flashpoints (e.g. Taiwan, Philippines, Korean Peninsula, Senkaku) warrant building a broad international consensus around a strategy that exploits the opportunity while minimizing the risk.
- Defend the international HA/DR consensus. Given that the existing HA/DR humanitarian principles will likely be challenged, a strategy needs to be crafted that defends and preserves the existing international HA/DR consensus. This consensus is built upon the core humanitarian principles and will require a united defensive front of countries, the United Nations, and humanitarian international organizations/NGOs to preserve it. The current crisis in Syria is a cautionary tale of a politicized humanitarian relief landscape that must be avoided.^{46 47}
- Expect Innovation. Regardless of China's path, the future of HA/DR operations will look different from how they look today. For example, China's massive civilian merchant fleet, unsurpassed manufacturing base, and extensive diaspora network could alter HA/DR in innovative and beneficial ways. Therefore, researchers and decision-makers need to carefully study and anticipate the coming changes to advance the humanitarian cause.
- HA/DR becomes competitive. Due to several factors (e.g., PRC objectives and assertiveness, growing overlap of spheres of interest), HA/DR will become an increasingly important aspect of the great power competition. To achieve the "*ultimate victory of socialism*" the PRC will more aggressively pursue information/disinformation campaigns to advantage their strategy. A Western/International counter-strategy will be needed.

HA/DR operations now sit squarely at the competitive seam between the PRC and the US. While the international standard for HA/DR conduct has historically been largely apolitical, it is likely to be less so in the future. The mix of highly contentious - and disaster-prone - areas

(e.g., Taiwan) with military-centric relief forces will magnify the risk that a future HA/DR operation will precipitate a broader crisis between the great powers. Our findings indicate further research is required to develop a thoughtful and calculated US response to meet this strategic challenge and preserve the existing humanitarian principles.

Annex Interview Methodology

Fifteen semi-structured interviews were conducted to inform this research paper. Interviewees were humanitarian practitioners (including actors associated with NGOs, multinational agencies, and US governmental agencies); military actors (in particular, interviewees who discussed experiences with the PRC and PLA); academic professionals (subject matter experts in Chinese studies), and donor agency representatives. Interviewees discussed their experiences engaging in humanitarian-military relations in various contexts, including natural disasters, pandemics, and situations of forced displacement. The interviews were conducted remotely via Zoom, with one interviewee also providing follow-up written comments via email. The interviews were conducted under a protocol by which interviewee names and organizational affiliations would maintain anonymity.

The interviewee pool had at least two significant limitations: 1) was Western-centric, and 2) had limited first-hand experience with the PRC in HA/DR operations. The second limitation in part reflects the apparent reluctance of the PRC to engage multilaterally in an HA/DR context. Future research in this area should attempt to correct these limitations.

The below questions shaped the structure of the interviews conducted for this paper. The interviews were semi-structured and conversational, so the questions actually asked and discussed varied slightly with each interviewee.

- From your perspective, what is the nature of China?
- What are your thoughts on PRC's use of HA/DR operations over the past decade? Have you seen any trends in their evolution of conducting these operations?
- Does PRC's approach to anti-piracy in the Gulf of Aden provide insight into their future approach to HA/DR?
- As the PRC matures its military capabilities, do you anticipate their HA/DR calculus will change (e.g., humanitarian benefit over national self-interest)?
- In the future, how might the PRC differ from the US in HA/DR operations?
- Does PRC's selective view of UNCLOS potentially impact HA/DR operations in the Asia-Pacific region? How so? Could this impact occur elsewhere?
- PRC is building a HA/DR track record of bilaterally-focused operations. What does this mean for the future of PRC HA/DR? What could this mean for US and other governmental HA/DR practitioners?
- What risk does US-PRC coexistence within the HA/DR sphere present that could affect civilians? How might these risks be mitigated in the future?
- Are there any cues that we should be looking for in determining PRC's path/attitude towards HA/DR in GPC?
- Any lessons learned from the PRC's response to COVID-19?

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