



“Global climate change has a profound impact on the survival and development of mankind. It is a major challenge facing all countries.”

**Hu Jintao**, Former President of China<sup>1</sup>



China is the world’s fourth largest country by area (after Russia, Canada, and US) and largest in population. It is the largest country situated entirely in Asia. With a warming climate, water is a prime concern for China, particularly in the north.<sup>2</sup>

Draughts will multiply this problem as freshwater sources become scarcer for an expanding population. China also faces desertification and deforestation. Some estimates suggest losses of one-fifth of agricultural land since 1949 due to soil erosion. With severe impacts on water availability there could be internal migrations of displaced populations and ethnic minorities, along with heightened regional tensions due conflicts over shared water rights.<sup>3</sup>

## Summary

Country: **China**

Region: **East Asia**

### ASP Assessment:

|                               |                        |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| Vulnerability:                | <b>High</b>            |
| Perception of Climate Change: | <b>Security Threat</b> |
| Capacity:                     | <b>Good</b>            |
| Preparedness:                 | <b>Good</b>            |
| Overall Assessment:           | <b>Adequate</b>        |

## The Climate Threats

### Regional Disaster Vulnerability

- Droughts and decreased water supplies
- Flooding and super-typhoons in major coastal cities<sup>4</sup>

### Links Between Climate and Conflict

- Migrating populations due to failed crops
- Inundation of coastal and offshore islands that host military bases<sup>5</sup>
- Increased pressure on fragile relations with neighbors<sup>6</sup>

### The Need to Adapt

- Large, quickly urbanizing population
- Large production market
- Lack of funding and no national plan<sup>7</sup>

### Direct Threats to Homeland Security

- Air pollution effects on local population
- Relocation of rural populations
- Increased number of protests over environmental challenges<sup>8</sup>



## How is the Country Preparing for Climate Threats

### Preparing for Disaster Response

“China’s armed forces take an active part in international disaster relief and humanitarian aid operations organized by the government. They provide relief supplies and medical aid, dispatch specialized rescue teams to disaster-stricken countries, provide mine-sweeping assistance and carry out international exchanges of rescue and disaster reduction.”

- Central Military Commission, April 2013 Defense White Paper<sup>9</sup>

### Breaking the Link between Climate and Conflict

“Security threats posed by such global challenges as terrorism, economic insecurity, climate change, nuclear proliferation, insecurity of information, natural disasters, public health concerns, and transnational crime are on the rise.”

- Central Military Commission, April 2013 Defense White Paper<sup>10</sup>

### Adapting Installations

“We have deep concern of the negative impacts of climate change, like other developing countries. If you look at China we have a very long coastal line, and if you look at sea level rising, it will have a very big threat to our development. Typhoon Haiyan reminded the world adaptation is urgent. We think it’s the right time to pay more attention to adaptation, because the urgent thing is something that is happening.”

- Li Gao, Climate Change Deputy Director General at the NRDC<sup>11</sup>

### Planning for Homeland Security Threats

“China’s security and development are closely connected with the peace and prosperity of the world as a whole. China’s armed forces have always been a staunch force upholding world peace and regional stability, and will continue to increase cooperation and mutual trust with the armed forces of other countries, participate in regional and international security affairs, and play an active role in international political and security fields.”

- Central Military Commission, April 2013 Defense White Paper<sup>12</sup>

## Analysis

China is the one of the fastest growing economic and military powers in the world. Its leadership has ambitions for regional, if not global, geopolitical leadership. Many within its national security establishment are aware that climate change threatens global and regional security. They also see how increasing pollution is driving unrest within the country, and are concerned that the impacts of climate change, particularly water insecurity, could lead to further unrest. One danger of this is that the Chinese control the headwaters of almost all the major rivers of Asia and in protecting their own people, they could divert water originally flowing to Southeast Asia or India, leading to cross-border security threats. The challenges for China are high, but the government and military are aware of them. Therefore, China ranks as “Highly vulnerable, but prepared.”

The American Security Project’s Global Security Defense Index on Climate Change is an examination of how international governments and militaries plan for and anticipate the strategic threats of climate change.

For more information and references see:

[globalsecuritydefenseindex.org](http://globalsecuritydefenseindex.org)