

New Global Role of the Chinese Military



On 01 08 2017, the People's Liberation Army, the world's largest military force, celebrated its 90th anniversary. The global role of the Chinese military has significantly increased in recent years

China held a massive military parade at the Zhurihe military base in Inner Mongolia dedicated to the anniversary, involving some 12,000 servicemen, 129 aircraft and 571 military vehicles.

Speaking at the parade, Chinese President Xi Jinping said, "The Chinese military is able to defeat any aggressor and is determined to defend the national sovereignty, security and the interests of the country."

At the same time, the Chinese leader added that the PLA's main responsibility is to ensure that people can live in peace.



In recent years, Beijing has been actively engaged in military diplomacy efforts, including taking part in peacekeeping operations and humanitarian missions abroad.

What is the new global roles of the Chinese armed forces?

Of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, China contributes the largest number of military and civilian personnel to peacekeeping operations.

China has its largest peacekeeping presence in Afghanistan, usually involving over 2,000 personnel. Such efforts give the Chinese military the experience of operating in foreign regions and in complicated situations. Thousands of Chinese personnel have been through this.

Peacekeeping missions contribute to strengthening China's influence in different regions of the world, especially in Africa.

In political terms, such activities are very reasonable.

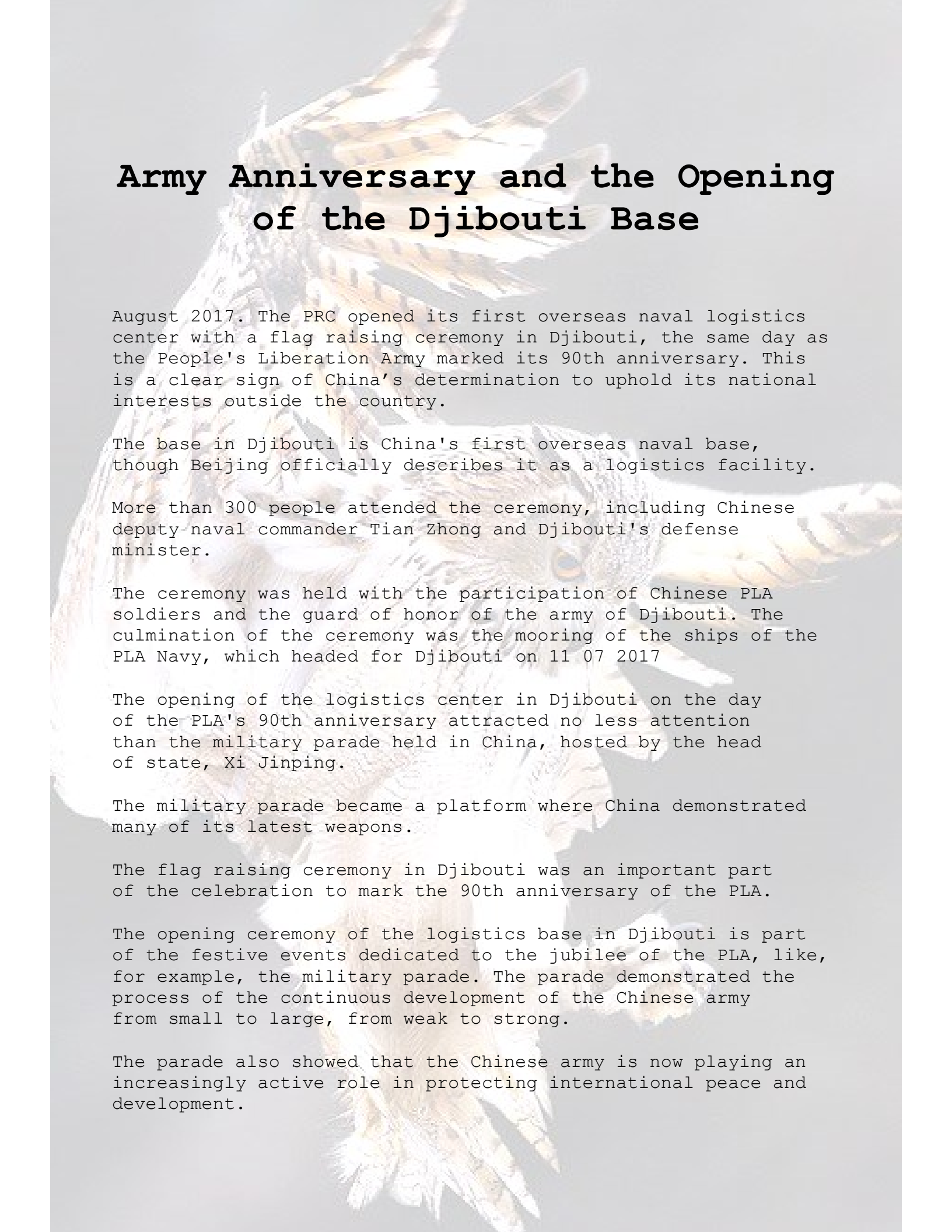
The PLA's Navy has been involved in rescue operations. In addition, Chinese naval ships regularly visit certain of the poorest developing countries, delivering medical aid to their people. The Chinese military has also taken part in dealing with the consequences of floods, earthquakes and other natural disasters.

All of the above really contributes to building a positive image of the Chinese armed forces in foreign regions. One of the most memorable examples is Chinese efforts in rescue operations in Haiti which involved the People's Armed Police Force. These efforts received global acclaim.

The PLA was founded on 01 09 1927, during the Nanchang uprising against the then-ruling Kuomintang. The subsequent civil war resulted in the founding of the People's Republic of China in mainland China, on 01 10 1949.

In recent years, the Chinese military has been undergoing large-scale reforms aimed at improving its organizational structure and boosting its defense capabilities.

China's military spending is constantly increasing and the country's defense budget is the world's second-largest after that of the United States, soon to quickly surpass that.



Army Anniversary and the Opening of the Djibouti Base

August 2017. The PRC opened its first overseas naval logistics center with a flag raising ceremony in Djibouti, the same day as the People's Liberation Army marked its 90th anniversary. This is a clear sign of China's determination to uphold its national interests outside the country.

The base in Djibouti is China's first overseas naval base, though Beijing officially describes it as a logistics facility.

More than 300 people attended the ceremony, including Chinese deputy naval commander Tian Zhong and Djibouti's defense minister.

The ceremony was held with the participation of Chinese PLA soldiers and the guard of honor of the army of Djibouti. The culmination of the ceremony was the mooring of the ships of the PLA Navy, which headed for Djibouti on 11 07 2017

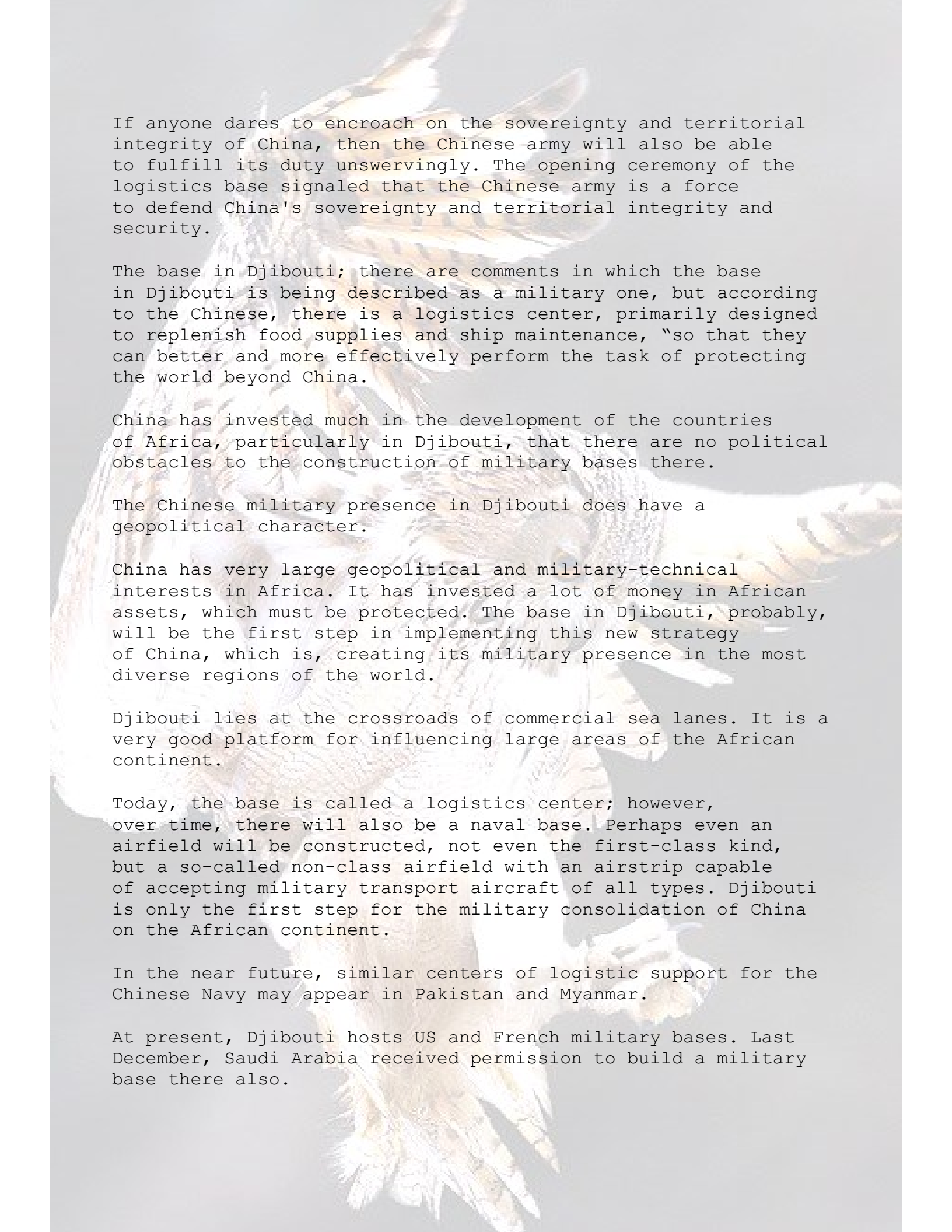
The opening of the logistics center in Djibouti on the day of the PLA's 90th anniversary attracted no less attention than the military parade held in China, hosted by the head of state, Xi Jinping.

The military parade became a platform where China demonstrated many of its latest weapons.

The flag raising ceremony in Djibouti was an important part of the celebration to mark the 90th anniversary of the PLA.

The opening ceremony of the logistics base in Djibouti is part of the festive events dedicated to the jubilee of the PLA, like, for example, the military parade. The parade demonstrated the process of the continuous development of the Chinese army from small to large, from weak to strong.

The parade also showed that the Chinese army is now playing an increasingly active role in protecting international peace and development.



If anyone dares to encroach on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of China, then the Chinese army will also be able to fulfill its duty unswervingly. The opening ceremony of the logistics base signaled that the Chinese army is a force to defend China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and security.

The base in Djibouti; there are comments in which the base in Djibouti is being described as a military one, but according to the Chinese, there is a logistics center, primarily designed to replenish food supplies and ship maintenance, "so that they can better and more effectively perform the task of protecting the world beyond China.

China has invested much in the development of the countries of Africa, particularly in Djibouti, that there are no political obstacles to the construction of military bases there.

The Chinese military presence in Djibouti does have a geopolitical character.

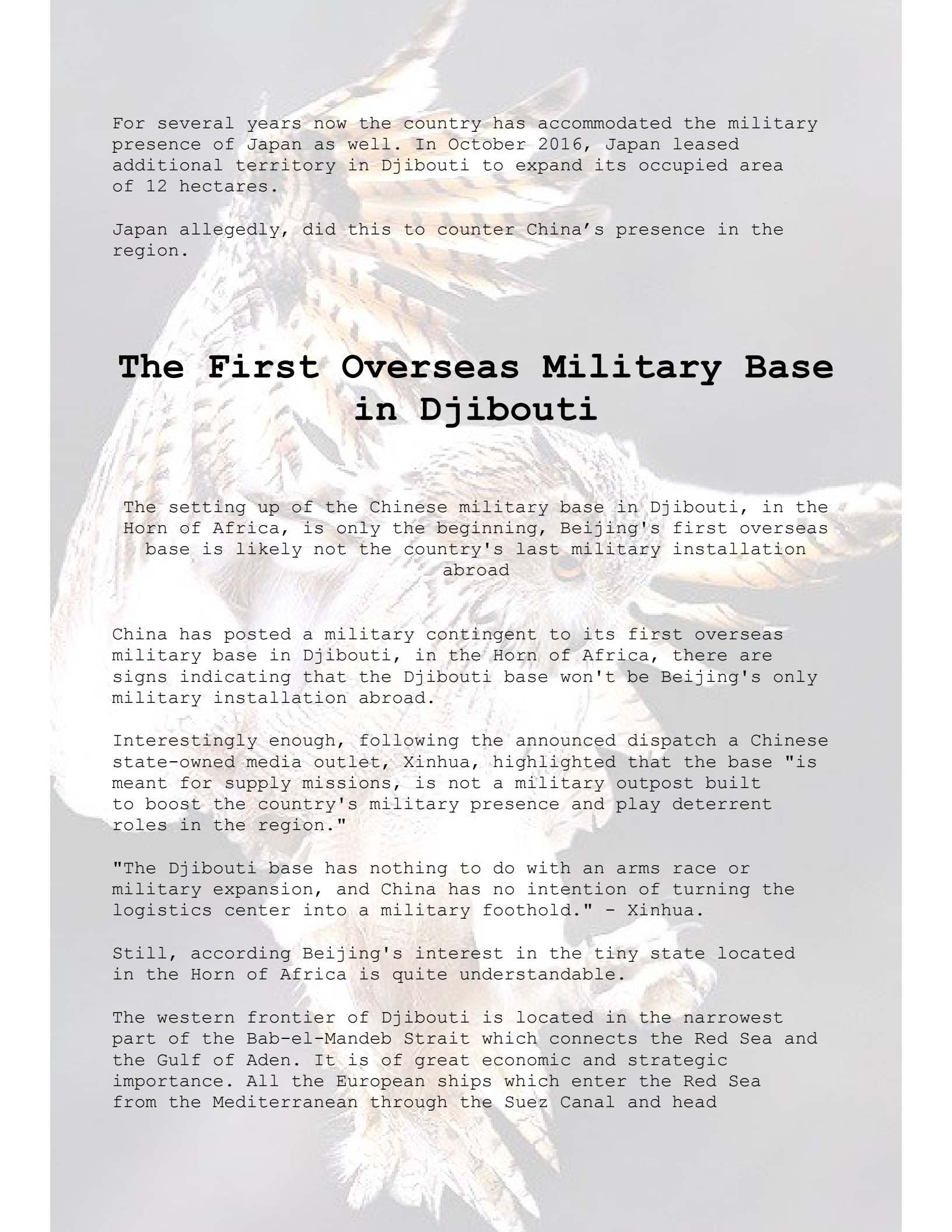
China has very large geopolitical and military-technical interests in Africa. It has invested a lot of money in African assets, which must be protected. The base in Djibouti, probably, will be the first step in implementing this new strategy of China, which is, creating its military presence in the most diverse regions of the world.

Djibouti lies at the crossroads of commercial sea lanes. It is a very good platform for influencing large areas of the African continent.

Today, the base is called a logistics center; however, over time, there will also be a naval base. Perhaps even an airfield will be constructed, not even the first-class kind, but a so-called non-class airfield with an airstrip capable of accepting military transport aircraft of all types. Djibouti is only the first step for the military consolidation of China on the African continent.

In the near future, similar centers of logistic support for the Chinese Navy may appear in Pakistan and Myanmar.

At present, Djibouti hosts US and French military bases. Last December, Saudi Arabia received permission to build a military base there also.



For several years now the country has accommodated the military presence of Japan as well. In October 2016, Japan leased additional territory in Djibouti to expand its occupied area of 12 hectares.

Japan allegedly, did this to counter China's presence in the region.

The First Overseas Military Base in Djibouti

The setting up of the Chinese military base in Djibouti, in the Horn of Africa, is only the beginning, Beijing's first overseas base is likely not the country's last military installation abroad

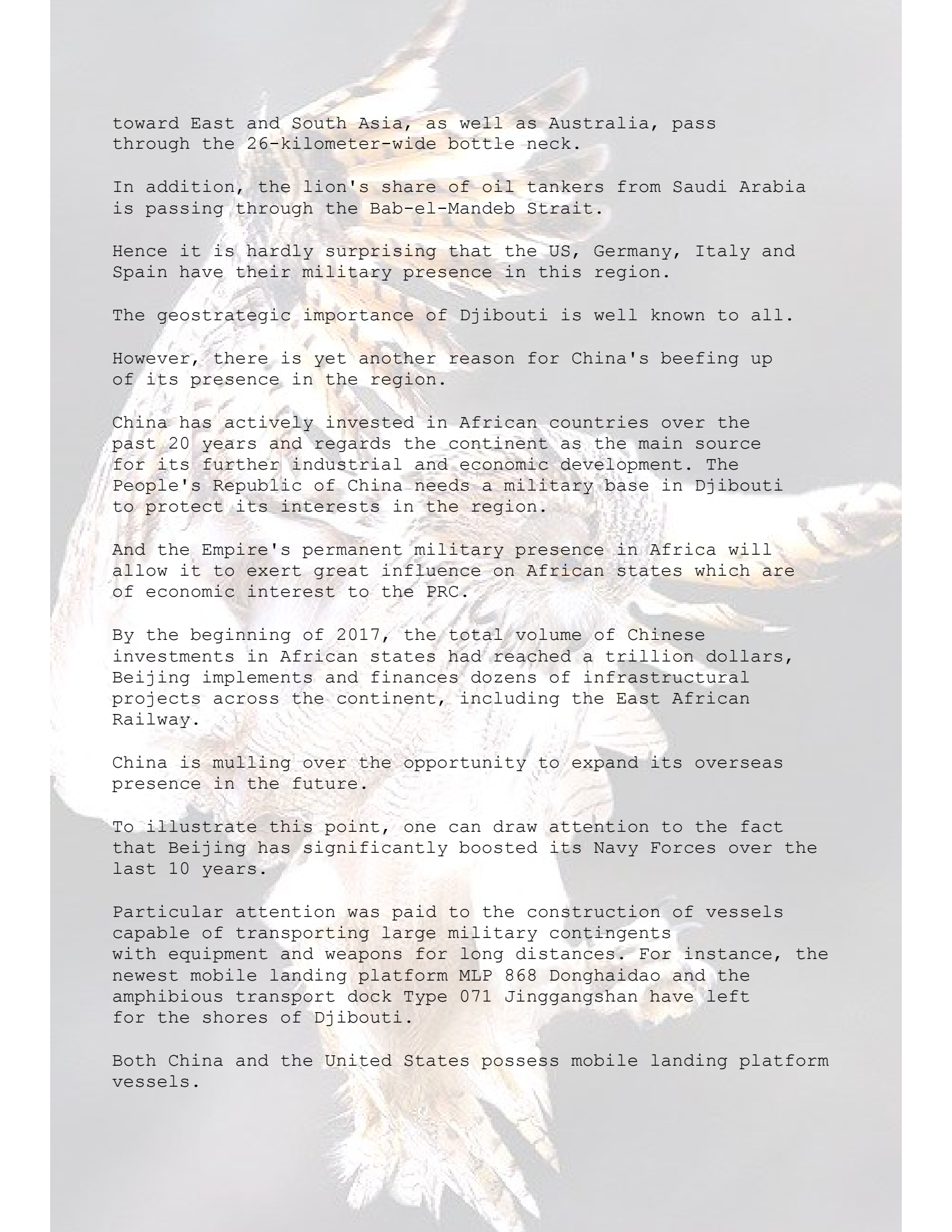
China has posted a military contingent to its first overseas military base in Djibouti, in the Horn of Africa, there are signs indicating that the Djibouti base won't be Beijing's only military installation abroad.

Interestingly enough, following the announced dispatch a Chinese state-owned media outlet, Xinhua, highlighted that the base "is meant for supply missions, is not a military outpost built to boost the country's military presence and play deterrent roles in the region."

"The Djibouti base has nothing to do with an arms race or military expansion, and China has no intention of turning the logistics center into a military foothold." - Xinhua.

Still, according Beijing's interest in the tiny state located in the Horn of Africa is quite understandable.

The western frontier of Djibouti is located in the narrowest part of the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait which connects the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. It is of great economic and strategic importance. All the European ships which enter the Red Sea from the Mediterranean through the Suez Canal and head



toward East and South Asia, as well as Australia, pass through the 26-kilometer-wide bottle neck.

In addition, the lion's share of oil tankers from Saudi Arabia is passing through the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait.

Hence it is hardly surprising that the US, Germany, Italy and Spain have their military presence in this region.

The geostrategic importance of Djibouti is well known to all.

However, there is yet another reason for China's beefing up of its presence in the region.

China has actively invested in African countries over the past 20 years and regards the continent as the main source for its further industrial and economic development. The People's Republic of China needs a military base in Djibouti to protect its interests in the region.

And the Empire's permanent military presence in Africa will allow it to exert great influence on African states which are of economic interest to the PRC.

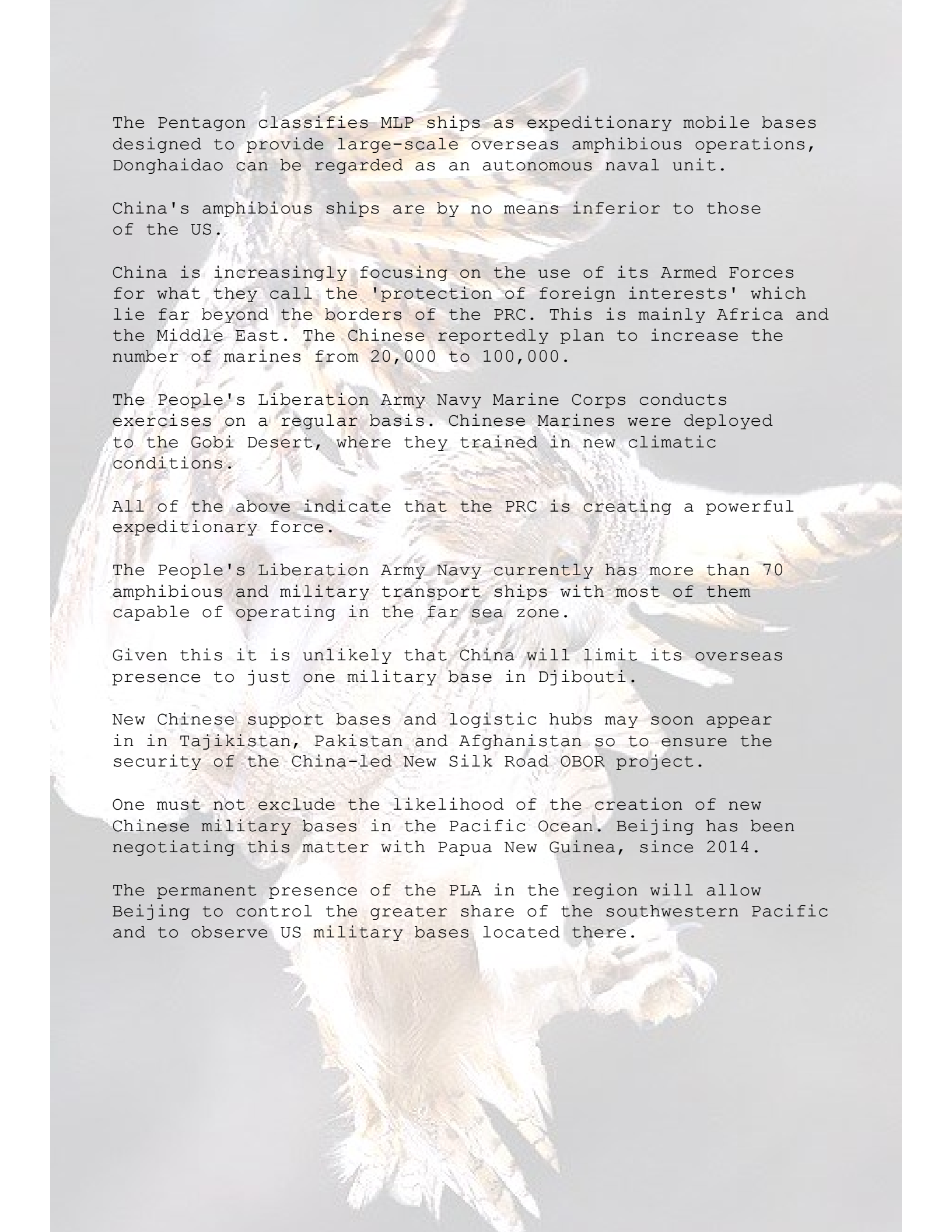
By the beginning of 2017, the total volume of Chinese investments in African states had reached a trillion dollars, Beijing implements and finances dozens of infrastructural projects across the continent, including the East African Railway.

China is mulling over the opportunity to expand its overseas presence in the future.

To illustrate this point, one can draw attention to the fact that Beijing has significantly boosted its Navy Forces over the last 10 years.

Particular attention was paid to the construction of vessels capable of transporting large military contingents with equipment and weapons for long distances. For instance, the newest mobile landing platform MLP 868 Donghaidao and the amphibious transport dock Type 071 Jinggangshan have left for the shores of Djibouti.

Both China and the United States possess mobile landing platform vessels.



The Pentagon classifies MLP ships as expeditionary mobile bases designed to provide large-scale overseas amphibious operations, Donghaidao can be regarded as an autonomous naval unit.

China's amphibious ships are by no means inferior to those of the US.

China is increasingly focusing on the use of its Armed Forces for what they call the 'protection of foreign interests' which lie far beyond the borders of the PRC. This is mainly Africa and the Middle East. The Chinese reportedly plan to increase the number of marines from 20,000 to 100,000.

The People's Liberation Army Navy Marine Corps conducts exercises on a regular basis. Chinese Marines were deployed to the Gobi Desert, where they trained in new climatic conditions.

All of the above indicate that the PRC is creating a powerful expeditionary force.

The People's Liberation Army Navy currently has more than 70 amphibious and military transport ships with most of them capable of operating in the far sea zone.

Given this it is unlikely that China will limit its overseas presence to just one military base in Djibouti.

New Chinese support bases and logistic hubs may soon appear in Tajikistan, Pakistan and Afghanistan so to ensure the security of the China-led New Silk Road OBOR project.

One must not exclude the likelihood of the creation of new Chinese military bases in the Pacific Ocean. Beijing has been negotiating this matter with Papua New Guinea, since 2014.

The permanent presence of the PLA in the region will allow Beijing to control the greater share of the southwestern Pacific and to observe US military bases located there.







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