

Dangerous Crossroads: Will China send its Warships to Syrian Coast?

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China has reportedly sent its “Jinggangshan” amphibious dock landing ship to the coast of Syria. In case this information is confirmed, it will offer proof that China has changed its attitude towards the local conflicts with the involvement of the US.

It is possible that soon China will start, like Russia, using its warships to demonstrate its presence in the given region or for the allocation of political support, or for supplying necessary items to its allies which are subjected to pressure from the West, expert with the Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies Vasily Kashin says.

by Vasily Kashin

One can't rule out that soon such operations will be carried out jointly with Russia, and the large-scale Russian -Chinese naval exercises that were conducted in the past few years were aimed exactly at practicing strategic coordination and mutual trust.

The Missile Frigate Xuzhou of the Chinese naval flotilla deployed in the Gulf of Aden was sent to the coast of Libya in 2011, to ensure the safety of the Chinese citizens during their evacuation from Libya. However, in this case – meaning the reports saying that the Chinese “Jinggangshan” amphibious dock landing ship was sent to the coast of Syria – the reasons, as it appears, are different.

According to the Chinese media, there were only 46 Chinese nationals in Syria at the end of last month. Thus, it is rather doubtful that sending a large amphibious landing ship of 28,000 tons displacement is good. Motor transport could be used for this purpose.

Russia regularly sends its landing ships to the Syrian coast. On September 4th a source that is well aware of the development of the Russian-Syrian military-technical cooperation said that they are being used to supply weaponry to Syria. Russia started doing this after in 2012 Britain prevented the entry of the “Alaid” civilian transport ship which carried repaired helicopters meant for the Syrian army into Syria. As distinct from a civilian ship, a landing ship can't be detained, stopped or examined.

Regular voyages to Syria have become a heavy burden for the Russian technically outdated navy vessels. And still, amid the preparations for military action against Syria, which are being carried by the US, another two landing ships have already been sent to the coast of Syria. In case of need that can be used for the evacuation of Russian citizens from Syria.

Russia and China have achieved tangible results in offering political support to the Syrian

government, which is doing its utmost to resist pressure from outside. China's growing authority in the developing countries is urging it to take a more active stance on the most urgent issues of the world policy. There is reason to believe that soon China will get far more involved in coalition actions, and one cannot rule out that there will emerge a situation when China will be able to assume leadership.

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