



China military power

Modernizing a force to fight and win

DIA - Robert P. Ashley, Jr Lieutenant General, U.S. Army Director Defense Intelligence Agency

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Relations internationales

In September 1981, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger asked the Defense Intelligence Agency to provide an unclassified overview of the Soviet Union's military force. The objective was to provide U.S. leaders, the national security community and the public with a comprehensive and accurate overview of the threat, resulting in the first edition of the document "The Soviet Military Power". The DIA produced more than 250,000 copies, and it quickly became an annual publication that was translated into eight languages and distributed around the world. In many cases, this report was the first time the United States and the public were aware of the scope and scale of Soviet military power.

In the spirit of "Soviet military power", the DIA began in 2017 to produce a series of unclassified defense documents by presenting a perceived the major military challenges we face abroad from an intelligence perspective.

This volume provides details on China's military and defence objectives, strategy, plans and intentions, the organization, structure and capabilities of its armed forces in support of these objectives, as well as the enabling infrastructure and industrial base.

This and other reports in the series are intended to inform our public, our leaders, members of the national community and partner countries about the challenges we face in the 21st century.

translation proposal :

The Defense Intelligence Agency - indeed, the U.S. intelligence community as a whole - continually asks, "What do we need to know about China?" What is China's view of the world and its role in the world? What are Beijing's strategic intentions and what are the implications for Washington? How are the PLA's roles and missions changing as it

becomes a more capable military force?

Since Mao Zedong's communist revolution in October 1949 brought the Chinese Communist Party to power, China has struggled to identify and align itself with its desired place in the world.

The first factional struggles for control of the party leadership, decades of negotiations to define territorial boundaries, and ongoing claims to territories not yet reThe early factional struggles for control of the party leadership, decades of negotiations to define territorial boundaries, and ongoing claims to as yet uncharted territory sometimes seemed at odds with the self-described nature of the Chinese as peaceful and oriented solely towards peace, their own defence.

Historically, Chinese leaders have always been prepared to use military force against threats to their regime, whether foreign or domestic, sometimes as a preventive measure.

Lack of significant involvement in military operations :

In recent decades, there has been a sense of insecurity within the PLA as it seeks to modernize itself into a major military power.

Yet the United States has at times found itself in direct conflict with China or Chinese forces. China supported two major conflicts in Asia after World War II, introducing Chinese volunteer forces into Korea and providing direct air and air defence support to Hanoi in Vietnam.

In addition, China fought border skirmishes with the Soviet Union, India and a unified Vietnam. In all three cases, military action was an integral part of China's diplomatic negotiations. Since then, China has concluded negotiations for most of its land borders (India and Bhutan being the outliers) but remains in conflict with Japan, the Philippines, Brunei, Indonesia and the United States. This may partly explain the motivation for the impressive growth of the PLA navy and the new emphasis on the maritime capabilities of the police force.

China's double-digit economic growth has recently slowed, but it has been used to finance several successive five-year defence modernisation plans.

While international concerns about Beijing's human rights policies hampered the PLA's search for increasingly sophisticated technologies, China has shifted funds and efforts towards the acquisition of technology by all available means.

Domestic laws forced foreign partners in Chinese-based joint ventures to release their technology in exchange for entry into China's lucrative market, and China used other means to obtain the necessary technology and expertise. The result of this multi-faceted approach to technology acquisition is a PEMT that is about to be implemented. Some of the weapon systems are the most modern in the world, in some areas it already leads the world.

Chinese leaders describe China's long-term military modernization programme as essential to achieving great power status. Indeed, China is building a robust and deadly force with air, maritime, space and information capabilities that will enable it to impose its will in the region.

As China grows in strength and confidence, our leaders will face a China that insists on

having a greater voice in global interactions, which can sometimes run counter to U.S. interests.

With a better understanding of the military power behind China's economic and diplomatic efforts, we can offer our national political, economic and military leaders the broadest range of options for choosing when to counter, when to encourage and when to join China in actions around the world.

This report provides an overview of the modernization of China's military power from a defensive and inflexible land force charged with internal and peripheral security to a highly agile, joint expeditionary force and power projection of Chinese foreign policy that engages in diplomacy and military operations around the world.

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