

2020 China Military Power Report – Talking Points

Today, the Department of Defense (DoD) submitted the 2020 report to Congress on *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China*.

- DoD publishes this statutorily required report annual on the People's Republic of China's (PRC)'s defense strategy and military developments.
- This report captures events that occurred during 2019. It does not cover events in 2020.

Key Themes:

- **China's Strategy:** The PRC's strategy aims to achieve “the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” by 2049. The PRC's strategy can be characterized as a determined pursuit of political and social modernity that includes far-ranging efforts to expand China's national power, perfect its governance systems, and revise the international order.
 - The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) frames this strategy as an effort to realize long-held nationalist aspirations to “return” China to a position of strength, prosperity, and leadership on the world stage.
 - Among the external elements of China's national strategy are its ambitions to create a “favorable” international environment.
- **Military-Civil Fusion (MCF) Strategy:** The PRC pursues its MCF Development Strategy to “fuse” its economic and social development strategies with its security strategies to build an integrated national strategic system and capabilities in support of China's strategy.
- **Defense Ambitions:** The PRC's strategy entails strengthening and adapting its armed forces to the long-term trends in global military affairs. This includes advancing a comprehensive military modernization program that aims to “basically” complete military modernization by 2035 and transform the PLA into a “world-class” military by the end of 2049.
 - The CCP has not defined what it means by its ambition to have a “world-class” military. Within the context of China's national strategy, however, it is likely that China will aim to develop a military by mid-century that is equal to—or in some cases superior to—the U.S. military, or that of any other great power that China views as a threat to its sovereignty, security, and development interests.
 - China will likely develop its “world-class” military in a manner that best suits the needs of China's armed forces to defend and advance the country's interests and how the PLA—guided by the Party—adapts to the changing character of warfare.
- **Military Modernization:** The PLA continues to make progress implementing major structural reforms, fielding modern indigenous systems, building readiness, and strengthening its competency to conduct joint operations.
 - The PRC is seeking to enhance the PLA's joint command and control systems, joint logistics systems, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance systems.
 - The PRC is also modernizing, diversifying, and expanding its nuclear forces as well as deepening the PLA's interoperability and integration with the PRC's paramilitary and militia forces.

- China’s nuclear warhead stockpile—currently estimated to be in the low-200s—is projected to at least double in size over the next decade as China expands and modernizes its nuclear forces.
- **The PRC’s Global Military Activities:** CCP leaders believe that the PRC’s global activities, including the PLA’s growing global presence, are necessary to create a “favorable” international environment for China’s national rejuvenation.
 - The CCP has tasked the PLA to develop the capability to project power outside China’s borders and immediate periphery to secure the PRC’s growing overseas interests and advance its foreign policy goals.
- **PLA Overseas Basing and Access:** The PRC is seeking to establish a more robust overseas logistics and basing infrastructure to allow the PLA to project and sustain military power.
 - A global PLA military logistics network could interfere with U.S. military operations and provide flexibility to support offensive operations against the United States.
- **Science and Technology Goals:** The PRC seeks to become a leader in key technologies with military potential, such as AI, autonomous systems, advanced computing, quantum information sciences, biotechnology, and advanced materials and manufacturing.
- **Foreign Technology Acquisition:** The PRC pursues many vectors to acquire foreign technologies, including both licit and illicit means.
 - The PRC leverages foreign investments, commercial joint ventures, mergers and acquisitions, and state-sponsored industrial and technical espionage, and the manipulation of export controls for the illicit diversion of dual-use technologies to support its military research, development, and acquisition.
- **U.S.-China Defense Relations:** Pursuit of a constructive results-oriented relationship with China is an important part of U.S. strategy in the Indo-Pacific region. DoD’s long-term aim is set the military-to-military relationship on a path of strategic transparency and non-aggression, and to encourage China to act in a manner consistent with the free and open international order.

Key Changes:

- The most significant change in this year’s report is its analysis of China’s strategy as articulated and understood by the CCP. It explains the logic of China’s strategy and offers insights into the motivations behind Beijing’s actions, policies, and long-term goals, as they relate to developments in the PRC’s security policy and military.
- The report provides a clear and detailed explanation of the links between the CCP’s ideology and political systems to: China’s national strategy, foreign policy, economic policy, MCF Development Strategy, defense policy, military strategy, and the PLA’s modernization goals.
- The report expands upon previous assessments of the PRC’s MCF Development Strategy.
- The report discuss the PLA’s growing global military presence in detail and the alignment of the PRC’s foreign policy and defense policy.